



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 007

Thursday, November 26, 2020

Chair: Mr. Sean Casey



Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Thursday, November 26, 2020

• (1535)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Good afternoon, everyone.

[English]

Welcome to meeting number 7 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

I regret to inform you of the unavoidable absence of our chair. He has encountered some travel delays, but he should be joining us within the hour. In the meantime, I will preside as vice-chair until his arrival.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23, 2020. Proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So that you are aware, the website will always show the person speaking rather than the entire committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I'd like to outline a few rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of "Floor", "English" or "French".

As a reminder, all comments by members should be addressed through the chair, and when you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. With regard to a speaking list, the clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Now I will get to our business.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) and the order of reference of Wednesday, September 30, 2020, and pursuant to Standing Order 81(5) and the order of reference of Thursday, October 22, 2020, the committee will continue our consideration of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, and the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

We have the Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors, and from the Department of Employment and Social Development, we

have Benoît Robidoux, associate deputy minister; Mark Perlman, chief financial officer; Alexis Conrad, senior assistant deputy minister, income security and social development branch; Cliff Groen, senior assistant deputy minister, benefits and integrated service delivery branch, Service Canada; and Stephanie Hébert, assistant deputy minister, Service Canada.

Minister, welcome. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[Translation]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors): Thank you, Mr. Chair and hon. members of the committee.

[English]

As Minister of Seniors, I thank you very much for inviting me to speak about the 2020-21 main estimates and supplementary estimates (B) for Employment and Social Development Canada.

It's a pleasure to be here with you, and also to be here with my officials.

As Minister Qualtrough and Minister Hussen shared with you a few weeks ago, the main estimates for 2020-21 represent a total of \$68.6 billion in planned budgetary expenditures for ESDC. This is a net increase of \$3.8 billion over the 2019-20 main estimates of \$64.8 billion. This is primarily due to normal increases in the number of beneficiaries of old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, as well as inflation adjustments.

In the supplementary estimates, ESDC is requesting \$1.2 million related to government advertising programs, and this funding will support two advertising campaigns. One will raise awareness of federal programs and services that benefit seniors and the other will support accessibility in the workplace for persons with disabilities.

Ensuring that seniors are aware of their benefits and the benefits that are available to them is vitally important, especially during this pandemic, and these programs will help keep seniors informed.

[Translation]

As Minister of Seniors, it is my responsibility to ensure that federal programs and services meet the needs of seniors.

[English]

Our government has been working to provide Canadian seniors with greater financial security and quality of life. We restored the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 65. We increased the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors and increased the earnings exemption. We increased the Canada pension plan's maximum yearly benefit for future retirees by about 50%. It is well recognized that the pandemic has brought stress and challenges to Canada's seniors. In response, we've put in place a number of measures to support seniors' financial security and well-being during these challenging times.

In April, we provided a GST credit supplement to over four million low- and middle-income seniors, and in July we provided a one-time payment to seniors eligible for old age security, plus extra support for those eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. Through these measures, we've provided about \$900 for low-income single seniors and over \$1,500 for low-income senior couples, all tax-free, in addition to their existing benefits.

Through the New Horizons program for seniors, the federal government funded over 2,000 community projects across the country to support seniors. Many of these projects have helped seniors connect online for the very first time by providing low-cost Internet access, tablets and help on how to use them, and group activities like exercise classes and meditation. Others help seniors continue to access food and critical services such as medical appointments.

Furthermore, we temporarily extended the guaranteed income supplement and allowance payments for seniors who couldn't file their income information on time. While long-term care facilities fall under provincial and territorial regulation, we invested in infection prevention, wage top-ups and PPE, and we opened up federal infrastructure funds to long-term care homes.

Looking forward, our government will work with the provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care so that seniors can get the support they need. We'll take additional action to help people stay in their homes longer, and we remain committed to increasing old age security by 10% once a senior turns 75.

[Translation]

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to explain the measures we're taking to meet our commitments.

[English]

It's my pleasure to respond to your questions.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister.

We'll proceed to the first round of questions now, a six-minute round, with Ms. Falk of the Conservative party.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

We all know that seniors have been hit particularly hard during this pandemic, whether it's social isolation or their health. It's been a very difficult year. We know this is true, and even more so for seniors who are living in long-term care facilities.

These challenges in long-term care are not new challenges. This committee actually has a report from the previous Parliament called "Advancing Inclusion and Quality of Life for Seniors". There were a number of recommendations to address this issue in it. We do know that there have been outbreaks happening, and this is continuing. Now we're in the second wave. Fatalities are on the rise. There's need for immediate action from every level of government. Every level of government has some type of jurisdictional responsibility.

Chronic understaffing, recruitment and retention are major concerns in long-term care. Minister, how are you working with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion to address the labour shortage?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much for that question.

We are very focused on supporting the provinces and territories in helping them to deliver health care during this pandemic and to make the system more robust for infection and prevention.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Are you working directly with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Yes. Minister Qualtrough and I are working within the committee that we have set up to help work on issues that are being addressed in this pandemic, so yes, we are both on the committee. We've been working since the pandemic was declared to work together on multitude of initiatives. Obviously, we are aware that the workforce of PSWs is not adequate and that the shortage was causing stresses—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Have there been actions to address that?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Yes. Just so you know, we provided funding to the Red Cross. The Red Cross has been working—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I mean for staffing particularly.

Hon. Deb Schulte: Yes, it was particularly in staffing. They have been training up people to be able to fill PSW roles in long-term care—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: The Red Cross is training PSWs.

Hon. Deb Schulte: We have provided funding to the Red Cross. This is a multi-level approach to support. Provinces and territories are doing it. We are also supporting them through the Red Cross in long-term care facilities. The Red Cross is training up people to be able to go in and fill those positions. As you see in the supplementary estimates (B), we've also been working to make sure that we also are supporting getting more PSWs into the system. That's in our program.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: How many PSWs have been trained?

Hon. Deb Schulte: We just received the authority to move forward on this in September, so we're working to rapidly ramp that up.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: So it hasn't happened?

Hon. Deb Schulte: I know that you've had good discussions already with Minister Qualtrough on this point. Maybe what I could do is turn it over to the officials if you'd like to get some more details.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That's okay. I can follow up with them in the next round.

I have a question for you, Minister, regarding your provincial counterparts. Have you met with them thus far during the COVID-19 pandemic to discuss long-term care specifically?

Hon. Deb Schulte: The discussions specific to long-term care are occurring under the provincial-territorial ministries of health. They are having those discussions almost weekly. I am following up on other initiatives to support seniors with my counterparts. We've met one time already, but I've had many phone calls. I just recently had one yesterday with Minister Pon in Alberta as we're preparing for our next meeting next week. We are in constant contact. I'm getting texts and emails and I'm making phone calls to my colleagues to make sure that we are there to support seniors during this very challenging time.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you.

Minister, I have had the opportunity to speak to many individuals working in long-term care and to groups that represent those who do. We know that the throne speech included a commitment to explicitly penalize those who neglect seniors who are under their care. Some of these groups have expressed a serious concern with long-term care workers being vilified for care standards that are impossible to meet, given the lack of resources and supplies that are provided for them.

There's a concern that this would actually only further make recruitment and retention in the long-term care sector more difficult and ultimately lower the care that is available to them.

Minister, are you aware of these concerns? If you are, have you brought them forward to the justice minister?

• (1545)

Hon. Deb Schulte: Yes, I am working closely with my counterpart, the Minister of Justice, to make sure that we are strengthening the—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: To criminalize workers?

Hon. Deb Schulte: No. It's to make sure that we hold people accountable when they have neglected—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Right, but Minister, if there is not proper PPE and there aren't proper supplies that these PSWs and nurses, whether it's LPNs or RNs, need to do their job, isn't that actually setting them up for failure and for criminalization, if that's the route that your government decides to go?

Hon. Deb Schulte: There's no intent to set anyone up for failure. The intent here is to hold people accountable for wilful neglect and abuse of seniors.

What we have done is made sure that we do have PPE going to the provinces and territories, and they're distributing that to the long-term care facilities. We're making sure that we have helped bolster them with the resources for the employees, the PSWs who are required to be in the system, and we are providing additional funding for a wage top-up, because we know wages are an issue and need to be addressed as well.

In the pandemic, we temporarily topped up wages to make sure that we had the resources that were needed in those facilities to help strengthen the response.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister; and thank you, Ms. Falk.

For the Liberals now, Mr. Dong, you have six minutes.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Thank you, Chair Kent. It's great to see you in the chair's seat. Thank you for doing a wonderful job so far.

I want to talk to the minister about the New Horizons program. It's not a new program. I remember it was created under Prime Minister Chrétien's administration, but it has done a wonderful job in the last little while. I know in my riding there are a lot of active seniors groups and service agencies that benefit from this program. They have been very innovative in facing the pandemic. I've been reaching out to them and hearing a lot of positive feedback on this program.

First of all, can you speak to the specific measures that you put forward that positively affect the seniors, and also the organizations, that are applying for and receiving funding under this New Horizons program?

Hon. Deb Schulte: The New Horizons program for seniors has been incredibly effective on the ground, in helping seniors communities. We made sure that additional resources were there. We allowed organizations to pivot during the pandemic in the projects they had been funded for, if they could step up and deliver for seniors. Many did step up and helped to provide food, resources and access to important doctors' appointments, and they made sure they addressed isolation, providing tablets and support for using those tablets, and programs. I can tell you many stories. I've heard from lots of colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have told me how important this program has been in their communities.

We were able to support over 2,000 projects this year, in all corners of Canada. We also provided an additional \$9 million to United Way Centraide to offer support through their networks as well. Through the \$350-million emergency community support fund, they've also been reaching out to more vulnerable Canadians, including seniors, and I've seen that money also flowing in communities to help support our seniors.

It has been an incredibly positive program. As you know, we've made some changes to enhance it even further. The intake closed in October, and we're looking to review those programs and get them going early next year.

• (1550)

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Minister.

You mentioned that you had heard stories or had seen evidence that these organizations and service delivery groups actually pivoted their programs in the context of the pandemic. Can you share with the committee some of the evidence and some of the stories you've heard of the changes they made to help senior Canadians during this pandemic?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Absolutely. I have a group in my riding, for example, called Human Endeavour. They ran the HOPE program. They used to bring seniors together. They had over 50 seniors who regularly came together for exercise programs and support programs. They pivoted quite quickly. They provided tablets and devices. They worked out a program with a provider to give low-cost access to these seniors. It's not always about having the tablet; it's about having the Internet access they need. Sometimes that is a cost barrier. They provided that access.

They run programs I think seven or eight times a week. They have over 1,000 people now signed up. They went from smaller, I would say, at maybe 50 to 100 people, to now up to 1,000 because of the incredible programs they are able to deliver with the support from the Government of Canada to make this possible.

If there is a silver lining—and it's very hard to say there is a silver lining in the pandemic as it's been so horrific—it's that it has allowed seniors to find other ways to connect and get the supports they need. They've been able to use those resources to connect with not only those programs but also family overseas and around the world. It's been a very, very powerful program.

Mr. Han Dong: Great.

Minister, earlier I heard my colleague from the Conservative Party asking questions around the long-term care facilities and PSWs. It's not only the seniors at those facilities who are facing great chal-

lenges and a lot of times life-threatening situations. The seniors in our communities and our ridings, despite the fact that they've seen additional top-up or income coming from the federal government, are still facing a lot of challenges. I hear from seniors that their daily routine had to be changed. The support they used to get is no longer there, or it's been decreased, and they need that additional income support to help them.

Can you talk about the importance of overlapping with those additional supports, the funding coming out of your ministry, and how important that funding was to help seniors get through this pandemic?

Hon. Deb Schulte: You're absolutely right that it's not just about providing resources in the community to support seniors. It's also about giving seniors additional support directly.

As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, we were giving seniors a one-time tax-free payment of \$300 for those on old age security, and an additional \$200 for the more vulnerable seniors who were receiving the guaranteed income supplement. A senior couple on guaranteed income supplement would have received over \$1,500 to help them with the additional costs during the pandemic.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister. We're at time.

Thank you, Mr. Dong.

[*Translation*]

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Chabot of the Bloc Québécois. You have six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chair.

Madam Minister, we're pleased to welcome you. Thank you for taking the time to be with us.

I listened carefully to your speech. I have two questions for you.

We all agree that, during this particular period we're experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, our seniors across the country have suffered greatly in many ways, both financially and health-wise.

I imagine that even though you've had discussions with all of your colleagues, you're fairly close to what's going on in the health field and in caucus.

I hear about staff shortages, I hear about staffing and I hear about national standards for long-term care. With all due respect to my colleagues, that's not the solution. Health care is exclusively a provincial responsibility.

If there's a solution to effectively address the needs of seniors and health needs in our provinces, it's through an increase in the Canada health transfer. This increase must also take demographics into account, which the program doesn't do. In fact, the provinces are unanimous on this issue.

As Minister of Seniors within the government, close to health, do you have any work that will highlight this response to the pressing issues facing our seniors?

• (1555)

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte: It is a pleasure to be here with you all today.

You're absolutely right. Our focus has been on the health of Canadians, especially during the pandemic, and we have been working very closely alongside the provinces and territories to make sure that as they identified where their needs were, we have provided the resources, not just in money but in actual resources. The extreme example is the Canadian Forces. When there was a crisis in some of the long-term care homes, we stepped up and provided the Canadian Forces. Then we supported the Red Cross to also be there, and we supported with personal protective equipment—

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Minister, but my question was on the Canada health transfer.

Do you believe that the solution is sustainable through increased transfers, as requested by the provinces?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte: The health transfer is really the purview of the Minister of Health. I'm trying to explain that right now we have been supporting the premiers. They've been identifying what their needs are in additional money. We've been giving additional money from early in the pandemic to help make the health system more robust. That was part of the \$19 billion of safe restart money, and \$740 million of that went specifically to help more vulnerable Canadians in long-term care by helping those systems to be more robust. That could be with resources of staffing or with protection, prevention protection, PPE.

These are the kinds of things that were identified that were needed, and we stepped up with additional money and also resources in contact tracing and testing and with the military and the Red Cross. We have been there not just in money but in resources as well, standing with the provinces and territories and supporting them as they deal with delivering health care to Canadians in this pandemic.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: As I understand it, the answer is no. You are not there yet: we are talking about solutions to meet short-term needs, not looking at long-term solutions. Thank you.

In another area, I am going to talk about the precarious financial situation of seniors. I may not have the time to give you all the figures, but I feel that you are well aware of the fact that, starting at 65, the income of a single person, particularly 65-year-old women, adding up the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement, scarcely comes to \$18,000, on average. That figure does not even allow for the range of services that seniors deserve.

The Bloc Québécois' position is clear: the old age security pension must be increased by \$110 for seniors as soon as they reach 65, not 75, as you propose. If we do not, we will create two classes of seniors.

A one-time amount of \$300 was added to the old age security benefit, and that is all. That's very little. Financially, seniors have been ignored. I feel that the solution also lies in protecting the social safety net that the old age security pension represents.

Are you ready to provide them with that amount on a permanent basis?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte: I really appreciate your comments and your questions, and I'm hearing the same thing from seniors and senior stakeholders across the country—that seniors need more support—which is why you heard in the throne speech that we are continuing with our recommitment of increasing old age security once a senior turns 75. We have obviously focused right now on the pandemic, making sure that seniors get more supports directly and also through the community.

I want to repeat that the support we gave over the summer—the one-time payment to OAS and the guaranteed income supplement in addition to the GST credit—gave senior couples on guaranteed income supplement over \$1,500 tax-free to help them.

I recognize that this is now—

• (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister. We're at—

Hon. Deb Schulte: —and we need to look at doing more in the future. Thank you.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

We'll move to the NDP now, and Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair. Thank you to the minister for being here today.

Lions Place, in my riding, has recently had their 35-year federal housing subsidy agreement come to an end, which included a rental subsidy for seniors. Many seniors I've spoken with, who were choosing literally between medication and rent even with a rental subsidy, are now worried about being on the streets. Unfortunately, the provincial government in Manitoba has yet to sign the agreement with the federal government to get dollars flowing under the national housing strategy. We have found other ways and other avenues to get money to people in our community, considering the behaviour of the current Conservative provincial government.

Are you going to find different ways to address this issue, or are you going to continue to leave this so that seniors in my riding—seniors who deserve to be treated with dignity—end up on the streets?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much for raising that important question and important concern.

We know that housing is a fundamental necessity for security for Canadians and for seniors. We know every senior deserves to have a dignified place to call home—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Just because of limits of time, I think we all can agree that everyone should have a house and live in dignity. I'd like you to answer my question.

Do you have any plans in place to ensure that monies are given to ensure that seniors continue to get rental subsidies so they don't end up on the streets?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Obviously, as you mentioned, we've been working through the provinces and territories to provide our programs through our national housing strategy.

Through the national housing strategy, you don't have to have the province involved. In some of the streams, you just need to have a really good project and be able to come forward with that. We'll be working with municipalities, not-for-profits and organizations to be able to bring forward great ideas that will help us—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Because this is a dire situation, will you commit to working with the seniors at Lions Place to ensure that they have what they need, so that they don't end up on the streets?

Hon. Deb Schulte: I would like you to bring forward the details of that particular request to me. We will take a look at it and see what we can do to assist. We have the national housing strategy that is there to help—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Just because I have other questions.... Your answer is "maybe". I will follow up. I appreciate that.

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: In August, I submitted a motion to convert the CERB into a permanent, guaranteed livable basic income. This is an idea, as many people around the table know, that's supported by the majority of Canadians. We already have guaranteed income programs such as the GIS. We know, however, it's not livable. I've been bringing that up a lot recently, particularly with the extra costs that seniors face in regard to pharmacare.

Are you in support of a universal pharmacare program to ensure that seniors get the medication they need and don't have to choose between medication and rent?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Absolutely. That is a choice we don't want seniors to have to make. We don't want any Canadian to have to choose between trying to take their drugs and putting food on the table. Yes, through the throne speech—

• (1605)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Sorry; I have limited time and I'm quite concerned about seniors in my riding. Will you vote in favour of the universal pharmacare bill being proposed by the NDP?

Hon. Deb Schulte: We have committed in our throne speech to accelerate steps to achieve national, universal pharmacare. That's what I'll be working hard to provide and deliver.

Ms. Leah Gazan: With all due respect, Minister, we've been waiting 30 years for the Liberal government to put in place pharmacare. I think seniors have been patient enough, seniors in my riding who are literally not taking medication so that they don't end up on the streets. That's the point it's at.

Minister, we know that seniors have been the most impacted during the pandemic, which is why, in light of everything that they are facing, including mental health impacts as a result of social isolation—

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Ms. Gazan. You're just over time.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. I have a million questions.

Thank you, Minister.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Moving now to the second round of questions, a five-minute round, we begin with Mr. Schmale, representing the Conservatives.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister, for your comments today.

Minister, I understand there were some changes to the New Horizons due to COVID-19 and that recipients could use funding from 2018 through 2019 on activities not previously approved in response to the pandemic, as long as it was spent on eligible activities.

Can you provide details on how much money was redirected to these eligible activities, and can you comment on how the department makes these decisions on changes? How is it monitoring the effectiveness of these changes?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much.

We allowed organizations that received money in January—that was 2019-20 money—to see how they could modify their programs. We had a series of potential opportunities that they could modify to deliver.

These would include helping with transportation of seniors to necessary appointments, connecting them with devices and even paying volunteers. We know that in many cases the volunteer pool was drying up, because volunteers are often seniors and they were staying home. It was, then, to help get services and to be able to pay volunteers. There were a series of things that we had not done ever before that allowed these organizations to change their programs so as to deliver in a pandemic environment.

I'll turn it over to the officials to give you the actual numbers, because I don't have the numbers in front of me right now.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: For the sake of time, I'll follow up with them in the next round, if that's okay, Minister.

Hon. Deb Schulte: That's fine with me.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: I will ask them the same question. This will give them time to prepare.

I notice on your website, Minister, that a proponent needs to follow up on a proposal through an online form, if I'm correct.

There are no service standards mentioned on that page. I trust there are some. If there are, what are the service standards that you're using to respond to these requests?

Hon. Deb Schulte: What we're looking at is the number of seniors served and how well the organizations are meeting the intent of our program.

I'm not sure what exactly you're getting at, but in terms of allowing them to proceed with delivering a change in the program from the one they had been approved to deliver, it was a question of how well they were able to meet the new criteria and how many seniors they were going to be able to support.

We then basically approved them to move ahead to make that change and deliver.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Okay.

Hon. Deb Schulte: I think, though, that what you're talking about is going forward—or are you talking about the past? That's what I wasn't quite clear on.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: It was more about the past, with regard to proponents' needing to follow up.

Hon. Deb Schulte: What you're seeing on the website now is the going forward.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Perfect. Thank you.

Minister, an organization in my riding, Globus Theatre in Bobcaygeon, has been trying to get information from your department for two intakes now.

In an email to me, they state, "We have been trying to get an answer from the department for quite awhile. It's too bad. We would love to provide more opportunities for seniors at Globus Theatre so this would be a great program for us. I wish there was more communication from that department."

It really is too bad. Their message rings true; it is a great organization. They do a lot of great work for seniors and the community at large.

Minister, are there any plans to make it easier for proponents to contact your department, COVID or no COVID?

• (1610)

Hon. Deb Schulte: Absolutely. I am very disappointed to hear that Bobcaygeon is having difficulty connecting with us, because I have been hearing lots of good alternative stories from people who have been having excellent service from our department in terms of getting answers to questions.

Why don't you make sure that I get that detail from Bobcaygeon? We will then get back to them to let them know what they can do to strengthen their applications so as to be successful in the future. We can hopefully help them be better equipped in their application to be successful.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: That's very kind of you. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate it.

Minister, as was mentioned in earlier questioning, we all know about isolation during COVID-19. Rural Internet connectivity is an issue coming up all over the place, and it affects people of all ages, but it's seniors who are feeling isolated the most, in many cases.

I know you're aware of this. You recently took part in a town hall with some of your colleagues, as we heard in earlier questioning.

We have a serious problem. Can you tell me what your department is doing to raise this issue on behalf of seniors with other ministers within your government?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much.

I can tell you that I sit on several different caucuses with my colleagues, and this issue is raised. We have had a good response with the minister who's responsible, Minister Monsef, and recently there was an announcement of some excellent funding for the universal broadband fund and having a quick stream to have short-term solutions and then a longer-term solution. We put additional funding as a government into it because we recognize how incredibly important being connected is to be able to have good health services, education services, and for seniors social services too.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Chair, how much time do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): You have just over a minute, Mr. Schmale.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Perfect. Thank you.

Minister, we're glad that there is now a Minister for Seniors in the government. Unfortunately, it took a while from 2015 to get one, and we're glad there is one in place now.

I have had many constituents, including Marie and Keith Traynor from Lindsay, contact my office to express their very deep concerns regarding the lack of support for seniors during COVID-19. We heard little in the throne speech in regard to seniors. There were a few reannouncements and that type of thing.

I think we all can agree that seniors have been paying taxes their whole lives. They need to live without worry in their golden years.

Seniors want to know if the government has plans to increase the age credit to put more money in their pockets, and is there anything in the works to protect pension funds by requiring federally regulated companies to report on fund solvency?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much. There's quite a lot in that question.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: There was.

Hon. Deb Schulte: I want to re-emphasize what we did put in the throne speech that is important to seniors. Obviously, we are recommitting to that old age security increase once a senior turns 75. We're going to take action to help people stay in their homes longer. This is an important initiative that I hear from all across the country, that people don't want to go into long-term care and want to stay in their homes, so we're going to be working on additional actions to help with that. Obviously, we will work with the provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care.

Also, we mentioned about accelerating steps to achieve national universal pharmacare, and we're going to bring forward a new disability benefit that's modelled after the guaranteed income supplement that's going to help—

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Mr. Schmale.

Hon. Deb Schulte: There's lots to say.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): We go to the Liberals now, and Mr. Turnbull, for five minutes.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Schulte, it's great to see you, and thank you for being here this afternoon. I know we can always count on you for your genuine commitment and authentic leadership. I have a few questions for you.

Minister, while I know you work with the Minister of Health and closely with provincial and territorial governments, the COVID-19 situation in long-term care homes and seniors homes across the country has perhaps been the most significant pandemic wake-up call for us as elected officials and for leaders at all levels.

Canada's seniors deserve the best care after a lifetime of hard work. I'm sure you agree. Right now seniors of today and tomorrow are looking at the system that is designed to support them as being full of cracks.

Folks in my riding, including my local seniors' council, say that this is one of their top issues, so I wanted to ask you if you can tell us what the federal government is doing with partners at all levels on this topic.

• (1615)

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much, Ryan.

I want to let you know that this issue is very close to my heart. I had my mother-in-law in a long-term care facility, and she passed away in the summer. I also have my father-in-law in a seniors residence, so I am very aware of the challenges that Canadians are facing with their loved ones in these facilities.

I am as shocked and outraged as all of you at what we've learned has been going on in terms of the lack of care for seniors, especially with the crisis of the pandemic. Therefore, you have our commitment that we will be, and are, working with the provinces and territories to establish long-term care national standards. Okay?

What's really important—and it sounds as though it's rhetoric, but it's not—is that we need to be working with them right now. They're on the ground, and they have jurisdiction over health delivery and over long-term care. They are not the same across the country. Right now, we need to be working very closely with the provinces to make sure we're giving them the resources they need and that they are aware of what they need to do, and they are. I know they are working hard on it.

We've been supporting with PPE, supporting with wage subsidies, supporting with training personnel through the Red Cross and through what you already are hearing in supplementary estimates (B). We're going to be continuing on that important work to make sure we have enough resources and enough people trained to be able to go in and support our loved ones in these facilities.

We also provided funding through the infrastructure program to be able to do upgrades in long-term care and to be able to do it through the safe restart funding of \$740 million. We provided a lot of money and a lot of resources to the provinces and territories just to beef up their long-term care facilities and better support the seniors who are living those facilities.

There is lots more to be done. We are working very closely with them. When they ask for more support, which they are doing again, we are there, and we are going back in with support from the military where it's being requested and where it's required.

Therefore, we're there. We have been there all along, and we'll continue to support our provinces and territories to deliver, but we also will be working with them on creating national standards.

However, right now it's a pandemic time; it's all hands on deck, and that's what we're focused on doing.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Minister. That's reassuring for people such as my mother, who is in long-term care as well, so I can relate.

I have another question. It is related to mental health, which has come up a lot among my seniors council members.

Do you have a message for the seniors, their families and the provinces and territories as we go into a challenging winter? It has been eight months at least, which has strained the mental health of everyone, but none more than seniors, who are isolated and have been isolated for long periods of time. What can we do to connect with folks, the seniors who are out there? They need our help more than ever.

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much for that.

You're absolutely right, but I do want to send a message to seniors, your loved ones.

There is light at the end of tunnel, but we need to recognize that we're not there yet. We still have to be implementing and holding on to those public health measures that we're being asked to practise, such as keeping a safe distance, keeping your family circle close and wearing a mask.

Wear a mask. I think that's pretty much a good message. Wear a mask when you're interacting with other people. Keep yourself safe and keep them safe. Wash your hands frequently. These are things that we need to keep doing.

If you have a device, download the COVID app, because it will give you information on whether you've been close to someone who has tested positive, and then you can go and get tested. We need to make sure that we have the resources to keep people safe.

As I said, we are continuing to work with the provinces and territories, but be hopeful. We are very hopeful. We are working very hard to deliver the resources that people need, and the vaccines when they are certified safe. We will then have the mechanisms in place to deliver those as well.

I just want to send a message to be hopeful. There is light at the end of the tunnel, but please be careful. We need people to not let their guard down now. We really need everybody to pull together.

Thank you, Ryan.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Kent): Thank you, Minister; and thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

Colleagues and Minister, I see that our chair has landed, so I will return our virtual gavel to Mr. Casey.

• (1620)

The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)): Thank you very much, Mr. Kent. Thank you for so ably fulfilling the duties of the vice-chair. It appears that everyone is still getting along, so by any measure that's a resounding success. Thanks again.

[*Translation*]

The next person to ask questions is Ms. Chabot, from the Bloc Québécois. She has two and a half minutes.

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you. A very good afternoon to you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, I have a quick comment.

I feel that, in Quebec, the response was clear in terms of national standards for long-term care that you keep mentioning. We have no national standards in long-term care. It is up to the provinces to organize health care services. What we want, however, is for the Canadian health transfer to match the needs including, let us not forget, the aging population. The demographics are clear.

My question is about the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. You are certainly aware that GIS beneficiaries are among the most impoverished in our society, with an annual income of scarcely \$18,000. They have no real life, they just survive.

Last May, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities heard from Canada's Association for Retired People. Their suggestion was to not count emergency benefits in the income of seniors when calculating the guaranteed income supplement for next year.

Is that a possibility you could foresee?

[*English*]

Hon. Deb Schulte: I'm not sure I understand. I don't know if the translation didn't come across properly or what. I'm quite fine if you want to turn the clock back and have the question asked again, because I don't think I understand the intent of the question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Let me put the question a different way.

You know that those who receive the guaranteed income supplement do so because they are very poor. The GIS is based on the previous year's taxable income. Because of the pandemic, Canada's Association for Retired People suggested that emergency benefits not be calculated in income when determining the amount of guaranteed income supplement benefits for the following year.

Is that a possibility that you could foresee?

[*English*]

Hon. Deb Schulte: I understand the question now. Thank you so much.

What I was trying to get at is that we made sure that the benefit we provided to seniors in the summer was tax-free so that it would not impact on any of their benefits. We were very careful to make sure of that. The benefits that we provided seniors through the one-time payment and the GST credit were not taxed, which means that they wouldn't affect their GIS payments.

You're absolutely right. Those who are on the guaranteed income supplement are our most vulnerable seniors. I believe that you may be referring to other benefits that have been provided by the government. We are still looking at how those other benefits interact. We will see what their implications are. We'll have more to say in the near term.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

The floor now goes to Ms. Gazan.

[*English*]

Ms. Gazan, you have two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The number of deaths in long-term care homes, including in my riding, where Parkview Place is located, has been a national tragedy. It's a Crown corporation. We know that seniors are not disposable, but they've been treated like that. We've seen that during the pandemic.

I have families in my riding that are trying to get their family members out of the long-term care homes to be with them at home, to try to save their lives. Unfortunately, they don't have adequate support.

You mentioned that your government is in the process of putting together a plan to provide more support for seniors wanting to live at home and to live closely connected with their families in community. I want to know a date when that plan will roll out and what the dollar figure is that's attached to that fund.

• (1625)

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much for the question.

I know you're quite aware that our government, back in the previous term, had negotiated an agreement with the provinces and territories for \$6 billion to flow to support improved home care and mental health across the country. This is something that we are obviously very much wanting to see delivered through—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I only have two and a half minutes. My question is, when? I need a date, because people are currently passing away—

Hon. Deb Schulte: Well, that—

Ms. Leah Gazan: —from COVID in my riding. I'd like to respect their concerns and give them a date.

Hon. Deb Schulte: That money is already out to the provinces and territories. That has flowed. They are delivering those enhancements to the service.

For us, what we've been doing is making sure that we are supporting people in their homes through the New Horizons for seniors program in the short term for the pandemic, and we are also supporting them with additional funding of \$19 billion to the provinces and territories through the safe restart program.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm almost out of time. How much money has been provided to Manitoba—Winnipeg, specifically—through the

New Horizons program? Our province, and certainly the city of Winnipeg, and Revera facilities more specifically, and long-term care homes in northern Manitoba, have been really seriously hit. I want to know a dollar amount. Because of the crisis, are you planning to provide more to ensure that seniors are safe and can survive the pandemic?

Hon. Deb Schulte: There are a variety of different programs being provided. I will turn to my officials to see if they have that information in front of them right now. Otherwise, we'll make sure we get that information to you.

For an example, one thing that we have been doing through the program is providing some of the long-term care facilities with tablets and devices to help seniors connect with their family members and stay connected. There are a variety of different programs. That's not the home care that you were talking about, but it is a way for us to be able to improve the connections and—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm not talking about that—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gazan. You're well past time.

Thank you, Madam Minister.

Next we have Mr. Schmale for the Conservatives. You have five minutes.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): I believe it's Brad Vis.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Vis. You have the floor.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you.

Minister Schulte, it's nice to see you, as always. I thought about you last night when I wrote a speech on Bill C-57. It hasn't been put into force yet, but I remember our fun work together in 2016.

The first question is for clarification. You mentioned the national housing strategy. Are long-term care facilities able to apply for funding under the national housing strategy?

Hon. Deb Schulte: That is an excellent question. The answer is yes. However, it is a bit more complicated, because they have to have approval from their provinces for those beds. The delivery of health care is within provincial jurisdiction, but there's a portion of long-term care that we deem to be housing.

Mr. Brad Vis: It would be dependent upon whether or not there was a provincial-federal agreement in each respective jurisdiction.

Hon. Deb Schulte: It would be dependent on whether the jurisdiction in the province is providing the support to those long-term care beds that are being intended to be built. That's the step that you need to make sure of, that you have the support from the province that they're going to fund the health care portion of that long-term care facility.

Mr. Brad Vis: That's very helpful. Thank you.

I noticed in the 2020-21 departmental plan that there were going to be funds made available to help seniors understand the benefits that they're entitled to.

Just recently we had to help my mother-in-law do her new EI application under the new system. She's in her 70s, but still working. She's an immigrant from the Philippines. For a woman whose third language is English, even though she's been in Canada for over 30 years, that was a very complicated process. I would encourage the department to look at ways that we can improve the delivery of those services. They need to be comprehensive, but it is super-challenging. My wife and I had to get on.... For me as a member of Parliament, it was challenging. I would encourage the department to look at that very closely.

• (1630)

Hon. Deb Schulte: Can I ask that you share with us the observations or the interactions you've had? We're always looking at ways to try to improve access.

Not everybody is going to be able to access online, but when they do, we want to make it better. We did those changes with the New Horizons for seniors program, because we know that it had challenges. We're always looking to make it better, so please share with us what your experiences were so that we can do that.

Mr. Brad Vis: On EI and as it relates to the Canada Pension Plan, figuring out those intricacies within the application is where it was very challenging for a senior whose first language wasn't English or French. I think the department could do some good faith work to improve that, but I can follow up with you on that.

We are here for the estimates, and I noticed in the Library of Parliament briefing that for 2020-21, there was a total voted spending of close to \$4 billion, total statutory spending of close to \$65 billion, and total budgetary spending of close to \$69 billion. Those are huge sums of money.

I don't expect you to have an understanding of where all that money goes, but if you're looking at it from the perspective of a taxpayer, where is one area in ESDC that we could look at or that you've noticed might be able to do a better job with the federal funds they've been allocated?

Hon. Deb Schulte: I really appreciate your question, because if you look into the main estimates, and I'm sure you have, we're talking \$68.6 billion in planned expenditures in the main estimates. You're going to wonder and say that's a heck of a lot of money. However, if you look at it, you would see how much of that is actually going to OAS and GIS. A significant majority of the funding is going to support our seniors—

Mr. Brad Vis: I know—

Hon. Deb Schulte: People really need to look at that, because we talk about making sure that we give more and we are always looking for ways to continue to help seniors, but we need to also be aware of how much of our tax dollars is going to support our seniors with these really important programs.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you. I'm going to cut you off there.

I do understand the difference between the expenditures directly on Canadians, but maybe I'll rephrase it.

ESDC is the largest government department. According to your judgment, which department within ESDC is not living up to its standards and doing a good enough job on behalf of taxpayers?

The Chair: Madam Minister, we're out of time.

Mr. Brad Vis: Oh, you gave the NDP a bit more time. Come on. That was a fair question.

The Chair: Madam Minister, I'd like you to respond to it briefly, please.

Hon. Deb Schulte: All right.

I want to assure you that all our colleagues and the departments have been working extremely hard this year, in addition to past years, to make sure that we're there to deliver for seniors. Of all years, we should all be very grateful for the hard-working officials and public servants who have been making sure that these services have been delivered.

We really had very minimal problems with our seniors programs and our seniors payments, and I think 6.7 million seniors got an extra bonus to help them through.

Mr. Brad Vis: Then everything in the department is 100% A-okay and there's no need for the Auditor General to get those funds they really need, because nothing is wrong at ESDC.

Thank you so much, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vis, and you're welcome.

Next is Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor for five minutes.

Please be aware that Mr. Lauzon will be the last to ask the Minister questions.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Thank you for being here, Madam Minister. It is always a pleasure to see you and to hear you talk about seniors with such passion.

The importance and urgency of taking measures with regard to the health and safety of our seniors came up in many discussions in the course of your Canadian tour, which, during the pandemic, was essentially virtual.

What were the concerns most raised by the seniors you consulted during your national tour?

Second, in the light of that, what are the government's objectives that we are seeking to achieve as our priorities?

• (1635)

[*English*]

Hon. Deb Schulte: Thank you very much for that question and also for your support in doing those virtual town halls and tours across the country. It has been a fantastic opportunity to connect with stakeholders and with seniors and to listen directly to them and have them share with me their concerns and their issues.

Financial security is one that we hear a lot of, but the one that I actually heard about the most was social isolation, mental health, and getting connected to their family members while they were being asked to isolate at home and stay safe.

This is why, for our New Horizons for seniors program, we asked for additional funding, and we got it. It was to make sure we could give even more support to those in their community through the groups that know who are vulnerable and need the help in those communities.

I've already mentioned some amazing programs that communities have done to connect with those seniors and to make sure that we don't leave anybody isolated at home without the connections that they need to stay safe and stay healthy.

I want to make a call-out, because it is important to mention what the government has done. We provided a new Wellness Together portal that people can connect with to get advice and to get the help they need if they're struggling with their mental health. This is transformative. It's a very powerful tool that Canadians now have to be able to connect.

That's just a little bit about what I've heard and where the government has been responding to specifically help seniors to follow the public health measures and stay safe and stay home.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: We have seen a number of projects come along, like New Horizons for Seniors. We also have seen that a lot of tablets have been requested, in order to combat isolation.

Can you tell us about the tools that have helped to combat isolation?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte: I wanted to connect with MP Turnbull because he's very much into social enterprises.

Many organizations have taken a little bit of funding from the government and turned it into very powerful mechanisms to help seniors. It's not just with connectivity. It ranges from programming and being able to connect with Internet providers so that they get special, very low payments for seniors to being able to take advantage of these programs and opportunities within the community.

Everybody is working together. It has really inspirational this year to see how many people and companies have stepped up and how many seniors have now been able to access services in different ways that they never did before. It's has opened up a world of opportunities for those very creative and innovative community leaders to be able to provide even better services as we move forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Minister, do you have a message for all the organizations that are helping to support seniors?

What would be your best message to all those organizations that have managed to adapt to programs that are helping seniors socially, like New Horizons?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte: The message is, "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

I cannot thank them enough for stepping up. That is not just organizations but not-for-profits and individuals as well. So many people have come forward and volunteered their time and their resources, and companies have been donating food and stepping in to give seniors little care packages. So many people have been stepping up and coming forward and providing meals to those support workers in these long-term care homes. They're angels for what they've been doing and the environment they've been working through, both in our hospitals and in our long-term care homes. People often forget about all those who are serving seniors in the home care system.

The last thing is our caregivers. So many families are working so hard to support their loved ones. I think everybody just needs...a big communal hug and a big thank you to everyone for stepping up. We're going to get through this. We're going to get through it together.

• (1640)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you very much, Minister.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

Minister, that's a very nice note to end on. Thank you so much for being with us. We do appreciate your coming in to discuss the estimates with us before they were deemed to be adopted. We're grateful for your time.

We're going to move now to hear from officials. Minister, you're welcome to stay, but you're free to leave.

We're going to suspend for two minutes while we let the minister disconnect. We'll welcome one more witness before we recommence.

We stand suspended.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1640)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We're now back in session. I'd like to welcome one additional witness, Elisha Ram, associate assistant deputy minister, skills and employment branch. Welcome back, Mr. Ram.

We're going to get right into questions, beginning with the Conservatives. We have Ms. Falk, please, for six minutes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you, Chair. Thank you to the department officials for being here. Long time, no see for almost all of you. It's nice to see you again.

I want to follow up on a question that I asked previously with regard to supplementary estimates and the allocation of just under \$12.5 million. These were funds for personal support workers, training, and measures to address labour shortages in long-term care and home care. From what I understand from the previous meeting, no funds have been given out, or very few. Is that correct?

Mr. Elisha Ram (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can certainly respond to that question. Thank you, honourable member, for the question.

We are working actively to get those funds out and running. We expect to make an announcement in the coming weeks. Certainly it's taken us longer than we would have wished, but we're confident that we'll be in a good position to get that money out and working and getting more people trained up.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: What are the expected outcomes of this program?

Mr. Elisha Ram: We're looking to train up a significant number of new personal support workers, as well as to get some better-quality training materials for them.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Does the department have a specific estimation of how many workers?

Mr. Elisha Ram: We are still finalizing those numbers. As I say, we hope to be making an announcement in the very near future.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I assume that within that announcement there will be a determination of what the parameters are, I guess, for applicants. Can you divulge that information now?

Mr. Elisha Ram: That information will certainly be part of the announcement, because we want to be sure that people who are interested in the training are going to be able to have access to it.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: The CRA's website has a disclaimer on the web page that there are processing delays for paper income tax returns. This isn't something new. We've definitely heard about this, especially in the House. We know that many direct financial supports are linked directly to seniors filing their income tax returns. I'm just wondering if the department has any indication on the scope of these delays. How is ESDC coordinating with CRA to ensure that no seniors lose their benefits because of processing delays at CRA?

● (1645)

Mr. Benoît Robidoux (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Employment and Social Development): I can take that question, and Cliff can develop that more.

It would really affect seniors on the GIS. As the minister mentioned, usually we update the payments on the GIS in July, based on their income of the previous year. This year we have postponed this update because there's a pandemic and because later returns at CRA were allowed as well. We postponed this exceptionally to December for those who have not filed a tax form, paper or not.

We are right now in contact by phone and by letter with those who have still not sent us the information on the GIS side. If they couldn't fill out their tax form for any reason, they could still provide the information on their income last year to Service Canada through a simple form, and they would be put in pay. Right now

they're still being paid at the same level that they were last year. We didn't change their GIS payment.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Will payments be cut?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: If, by December, we still don't know the information, they will; but they will be put back in pay as soon as they get back to us about their income.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: What if that's sitting on the desk of a CRA agent? It's no fault of the senior if they've sent it away and it just hasn't been processed yet. I don't think it would be fair to penalize seniors who are already vulnerable, especially in the state of this pandemic, by cutting their benefits if the form is sitting on the desk of a CRA agent.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: As I said, Cliff could give you more details, but we are in communication by phone and letter to these people. If they have completed the tax form and it's sitting at CRA, they would be able to tell us that, and we would adjust their GIS according to that information. I don't think that kind of punishment is going to apply, given the effort we made this year to connect with all these seniors who have not yet—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Has the response rate been good? I'm assuming correspondence has gone out already, because it's practically December. Has there been response?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I have been impressed, and I will ask Cliff to give you the exact numbers.

Mr. Cliff C. Groen (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Benefits and Integrated Services Branch, Service Canada, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you very much, Benoît.

The response rate has actually been very good. We're very pleased to confirm that this year there will be by far the lowest number of GIS recipients who might be suspended than in any other previous year. It has been because of significant outreach that we have done. There are approximately 40,000 clients for whom we have not received income information. We've actually sent additional letters and telephone calls out to all 40,000 of those individuals. We are very pleased with that outcome.

As Benoît indicated, they do not need to file their income tax as long as they give us their income tax information.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you.

Mr. Ram, I have a quick follow-up from my previous question.

The minister had mentioned that the Red Cross will be training PSWs. Is that tied in with this estimate line expense? Is that part of that program?

Mr. Elisha Ram: It is not.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay. That's separate. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Falk.

Next we're going to Mr. Long, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Kent did an admirable job, but it's great to see you back in the seat.

Certainly I want to thank all the department officials for being here this evening. I want to make a comment that the work you've done at the department in looking after Canadians, especially through this historic pandemic, has really been noticed and certainly appreciated. Again, thank you very much.

Mr. Robidoux, I'll ask my questions through you, and maybe you can direct them to the appropriate person.

There's no question that seniors are one of the most vulnerable groups in Canada. That was clearly evident through the pandemic. Whether it was the GST or \$300 or the \$200 top-up if you got the GIS, it was so appreciated.

I want to focus also on retirement savings. First, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the cost of living for vulnerable seniors and their retirement savings?

Mr. Robidoux, that question could go to you, or maybe to Mr. Conrad.

• (1650)

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I can take the question, sir.

In terms of retirement savings, they have been affected by a lower rate of return, as has every other Canadian, potentially. That's affecting them.

In terms of the cost of living, although inflation has not been very strong, some of the components of the cost of living, such as food, have been quite strong in terms of price increases, so they have been affected by that, and I would say more than maybe the rest of the population, which sometimes uses more transport. For them, the cost has been going down because of the drop in the price of oil and gas.

Overall, I would say they have been potentially more affected on the price side, and again, affected generally on the rate of return. In terms of what the government has done for those seniors who have to take part of their retirement income out of their savings account every year, early in the year it reduced by 25% the amount they had to withdraw from their account, which helps them preserve more of their savings if they didn't need the income for this year.

Mr. Wayne Long: Are you able to give me some comments on how the department, the government, is monitoring the issue? Do you have any data on this issue?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I don't, and I don't believe we have. This is a program that is managed by the Department of Finance. I think asking them if they have monitored the withdrawal this year would be a good question.

I would say they are probably not in a position to answer that, because we're still not at the close of the year. It would be more after this year that there might be a possibility of getting into the data, through the data that StatsCan releases, on how much seniors have reduced their savings compared to other years.

Mr. Wayne Long: That would be good to know. Thank you very much.

Elder abuse has been on the rise during the COVID-19 pandemic. How, if at all, has the department changed the way it assesses needs and delivers assistance to help reduce elder abuse during this pandemic?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: As the minister mentioned, the main tool we have.... Again, we supported provinces to a large extent. We provided financial payments, but also a one-time payment to seniors with a GST credit, which many seniors benefited from.

In the New Horizons for seniors program, we have elder abuse as part of the priorities for the people in communities who receive funding through the pan-Canadian stream or through the better-known community stream. Those are the main channels by which we are trying to provide support to the community for different ways that they could help seniors to avoid elder abuse.

Mr. Wayne Long: Okay.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: As the minister mentioned, the government has topped up the program overall, once by \$20 million from \$50 million, permanently. I can't remember the year exactly, but it was probably in 2018-19. Then we added at the beginning of the year, with the help of the United Nations, \$9 million, and then another \$20 million. A lot of funding is going to the New Horizons for seniors program to try to do our best to support communities that are helping seniors to avoid elder abuse.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thanks for that.

I want to switch and focus in on mental health for seniors, especially vulnerable isolated seniors.

I certainly see it daily in my office here in Saint John—Rothesay. We get calls from seniors who are isolated and lonely. I think we all can agree that mental health for our seniors during this pandemic is a major concern.

Are you able to tell me what data and information the department has gathered on the mental health of seniors during the pandemic?

• (1655)

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I don't, but I will ask Alexis if he has any information on that, or any other officials on the line.

Mr. Alexis Conrad (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you.

No, I am not aware that the department specifically has collected data. Certainly Health Canada and the Public Health Agency have been collecting data from various resources on the impacts of the pandemic on Canadians' mental health and on specific subgroups, including seniors.

If the committee would like, we can follow up and try to gather some information on that front.

Mr. Wayne Long: Okay, that would be appreciated.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Conrad. Thank you, Mr. Long.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Now we will go to Madame Chabot.

[Translation]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for being here.

I have a question about the guaranteed income supplement. I'm talking about the special amount of \$200, made available because of COVID-19. In a lot of cases, people applied well in advance but they never received that amount because Service Canada did not process the applications in time, that is before September 11.

Have you at Service Canada come up with any special measures to process those applications and rectify the situation? How much would that cost?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I will ask Mr. Groen to answer that.

Mr. Cliff C. Groen: Thank you very much for those questions.

In order to send the special payment to seniors receiving the old age security pension and those receiving the guaranteed income supplement, we made our priority to process all the applications we received. This was done by our processing centre. So we did process them as a priority. We wanted to assure you that, as much as possible, people eligible for those payments were going to receive them. That's why we first issued a payment in July for those who were eligible as of June 2020. Then, a second payment was issued for those whose applications were processed between July and September 11. It is possible that a few people—

Ms. Louise Chabot: I am sorry.

I wanted to know whether you have come up with any special measures that will allow Service Canada to process those applications and rectify the situation. There are people who applied correctly. Although their applications were on time, Service Canada did not process them before September 11 and told people that they were not on time. That was my question

As I understand it, those people are still in a difficult position and have not received the payment. It's quite odd that they would be victims of a delay in processing, given that their applications were in order. I hope that corrections will be made in this regard.

A number of seniors are eligible for the GIS, the guaranteed income supplement, and they have not registered for it, because they don't know it exists. Since you know full well that it is based on their income tax returns in the previous year, why don't you make it automatic?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Ms. Chabot, for some years, we have in fact made the payment to a number of seniors who are eligible for the GIS. We have a program for that, but, in certain cases, we do not have enough information to really know whether they are eligible. In addition, we can only make the payments to them when they are 65 years old. As a result, it is more difficult if they have slipped through the cracks.

So it is difficult to make the payments to them if they are older than 65 and do not choose to fill in the form. We communicate with them regularly. We have a sample of those who we know are probably eligible for the GIS benefit, but who have not asked for it. We often send them letters so that they can fill in the application.

We have also developed new tools. People can apply for the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement at the same time, with a single form, not with two different forms. That is to make the task easier for them. For seniors who have turned 65 more recently, it is much more simple than before, because of the improvements that we have made. But it is still difficult to make payments to those who are older than 65 and are eligible.

Mr. Groen, do you want to add anything?

● (1700)

Ms. Louise Chabot: No, that will do. I have a question on another subject.

I want to talk about contributions. In the main estimates, a fund of \$1.8 million is being made available to NGOs to establish programs to reduce violence and fraud against seniors. The amount was much higher in 2018-2019. I don't know why it was \$7.3 million. I don't know why it has been decreased so much.

Could you tell us what results those payments, those contributions, had? Were many initiatives supported from that fund to reduce fraud, considering that it is specifically an issue during this pandemic?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I am not sure I understand your question, Ms. Chabot.

I don't know which program you are referring to, or whether you are referring to the supplementary estimates (B), or to something else.

Ms. Louise Chabot: It's a payment to NGOs for projects intended to reduce violence and fraud.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Is it in the supplementary estimates (B)?

Ms. Louise Chabot: It is in the main estimates, on page 67 in the English version. It is the last item in the "Contributions" section, in the amount of \$1.8 million.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Let me ask Mr. Perlman if he has any information about that.

I have to confess that I don't know exactly what we are talking about.

[English]

Mark, would you have any idea what they're talking about?

Mr. Mark Perlman (Chief Financial Officer and Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Employment and Social Development): Yes, it's part of the New Horizons for seniors program at page 267 of the main estimates. I don't know whether we have any results for this one, though.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: We'll get back to you.

[Translation]

Ms. Chabot, we will get back to you later with the answer because I am having difficulty following.

I will come back to that question.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

The floor now goes to Ms. Gazan.

[English]

Ms. Gazan, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank everybody for being here today.

In my riding I have many seniors who are part of the shelterless community, many as a result of complex mental health and trauma issues resulting, for example, from being a veteran and from the PTSD that comes from experiencing war. Others are the many residential school survivors who are currently now shelterless.

This is disgusting, particularly for seniors, who we always say should be able to live with dignity and human rights.

Has your department explored ensuring an increase in the GIS benefit to a livable level so that all seniors, no matter where they're from, can live with dignity and human rights?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Thank you for the question.

I agree with you in your point that they have to live in dignity. The government has increased the GIS once for single people, the ones most affected by this, and I can assure you that we are always looking at options to improve the financial security of seniors—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. With all due respect, I really need an answer. Is your department committed to ensuring that the benefit is livable? We can all agree that we want seniors to live in dignity, but the way we demonstrate that is just not happening.

My question is, then, will you ensure that the GIS is increased to the point that it's livable, so that all seniors in this country can live with human rights and dignity?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: As a civil servant, I can ensure you that we are looking at options to help in that direction and to propose and advise when possible in that direction.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay, so that's a “maybe”. I felt that it was a non-government response, with all due respect.

My next question is with respect to a single-payer pharmacare system and a universal dental care system. We know that seniors, as I've indicated, have been among the hardest hit during the pandemic, and really, the one-time payment of \$600 doesn't cut it, particularly with the former example I used about many seniors being

shelterless. This is a tragedy, a tragedy on the watch of this government.

Can you speak to the importance of a universal single-payer pharmacare program and a universal dental care program as life-sustaining measures for seniors?

• (1705)

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Well, pharmacare is very good. As you know, the government wants to move forward on pharmacare. It's part of their commitment. I can't, however, speak to pharmacare. That is a Health Canada file, and you would have to direct that question to officials from Health Canada.

Ms. Leah Gazan: That's fair enough.

Concerning long-term care homes, I asked questions while the minister was here about deaths in long-term care homes and about providing extra support for those seniors who want to live at home but do not have proper support.

She was unable to give me a dollar amount of the money being invested to ensure that seniors can live at home. I'm speaking specifically of examples in my riding, where seniors want to leave long-term care homes because their lives are at risk but do not have the resources needed to live at home.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Thanks for that question.

As the minister mentioned, the government has already moved forward on home care, which is somewhat different from the broader idea of living at home and being supported to do so.

We read the Speech from the Throne, as you probably did, and I can tell you that since the Speech from the Throne was released, we've been working on options for the government to advance that commitment.

Ms. Leah Gazan: When will that be done?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I couldn't tell you that. We're working—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I ask because people want to know when they're going to get support. Certainly in my riding seniors who had no options have perished in the last couple of months. They are not disposable, and I think at least a timeline....

Do you have any sense of when this will be done, to ensure that we can assist seniors in being able to survive the pandemic?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Again I can't tell you timelines, but I can tell you that the government has announced this in the Speech from the Throne, because clearly it's a priority for the government, and that we're working on options. We're doing our best as quickly as possible to devise options that could be—

Ms. Leah Gazan: That, with all—

The Chair: Thank, you Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robidoux.

Next is Mr. Kent, please, for five minutes.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses this evening.

The minister mentioned in her remarks that to fulfill her responsibilities to seniors, she often has to work horizontally with other ministers and their departments—employment, labour and families.

I'm wondering how seniors with disabilities—working seniors or those who were working before COVID and those who were not—will benefit from the government's recently announced disability inclusion plan, particularly given that they've been hard hit by the pandemic.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Thanks for the question.

The plan on this in the Speech from the Throne is pretty detailed and comprehensive. A person with a disability would be in principle supported by the new benefit. Clearly, seniors with disabilities would fully benefit from the new benefits. That would not get into a guaranteed income, but with other benefits it would continue the building blocks of guaranteed income.

There's also an employment and training plan for persons with disabilities to be able to work if they are able to, with some support that they would receive. Like other persons with a disabilities, they often face barriers in accessing the labour market. This plan would mainly help non-seniors, but it could help some seniors too.

Finally, the third part of the plan is to ensure that the delivery of benefits is streamlined and more accessible. The seniors with a disability would clearly benefit from that.

• (1710)

Hon. Peter Kent: Details of the plan haven't been rolled out. What's the timeline? What should seniors be looking at in terms of their expectations?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I have the expert with me. I will turn to Alexis to give you his best guess on when.

Mr. Alexis Conrad: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I can't trump the minister by giving a date when the government will make a major announcement, but I can tell you that Minister Schulte, with whom you spoke, with is very much supportive of Minister Qualtrough's efforts around a disabilities inclusion action plan. She has strong commitments in the Speech from the Throne and strong ambition. She has engaged the community. Minister Qualtrough has a disability advisory group, and she is very keen to move forward with as many of these initiatives as possible as soon as possible.

Hon. Peter Kent: Is it fair to say “soon”?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I would say “as soon as possible” would be her view.

Hon. Peter Kent: Okay. Thank you.

We've seen that the belated delivery of the \$600 one-time payment to the 1.7 million or so certified persons with disabilities originally left out more than six million people living with disabilities who weren't certified, but who are now told they can apply.

Given that a significant number are seniors, should they now be certifying themselves in expectation that the still-undefined disability benefit modelled on the GIS will be available to them?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Alexis, do you want to answer that?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] now identify themselves through government programming as eligible, as having a disability, so they can take advantage of a future benefit, absolutely, but our expectation would be that the government provides significant supports already, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Peter Kent: Should they be certified? I'm asking if is it wise for them to be certified, or will they be sort of off in that area where, with regard to the \$600 one-time payment, folks are now scrambling before the end of the year to apply to qualify for that.

Mr. Alexis Conrad: We would encourage anyone who's eligible for a tax credit or government program for disability to apply for it, because they are there to support them. Regardless of the new benefit, I would encourage them to do it anyway. If they are in the system, then we know they have a disability and it becomes easier later.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

Do I have time for a very short question, Chair?

The Chair: You do. Go right ahead. I owe you.

Hon. Peter Kent: I'm wondering when the New Horizons program for the next year will open. December is the usual date. It wasn't last year, and we've had a very unusual year this year. Do we have a date for the opening of applications for Canada summer jobs?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Is it for Canada summer jobs, New Horizons for seniors, or both?

Hon. Peter Kent: It's for both.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Okay, I have Stephanie Hébert with us. Stephanie is managing the implementation of both of these programs. She will tell us.

Ms. Stephanie Hébert (Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Operations Branch, Service Canada, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you very much for the question.

I have two points. On New Horizons for seniors, thank you to members of Parliament for all of your assistance in promoting the call. As you know, that call closed in October. We hope to be able to come back to you early in the new year to be able to advise you of the organizations that we are recommending for funding. We really did get an overwhelming demand. We were quite pleased by that.

With regard to the Canada summer jobs program, members of Parliament will be aware that we are currently engaging with you right now. We are working with you to set priorities in your respective constituencies. Those priorities will ultimately inform when we launch the public call for proposals. As my colleagues have noted, we never want to scoop a minister. Once that date has been announced, we will be able to share it. I am happy that we are starting to work with you. That should give you an indication that we hope to launch it very soon.

• (1715)

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kent.

Next is Ms. Young, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of the department officials for being here tonight. This has been a very interesting conversation, and a lot of information has been gathered about seniors.

As we all know, not all seniors have the same needs. I think it's evident in what this committee is doing with indigenous housing. We're in the process of taking a really close look at urban, rural and northern indigenous housing needs. Within that are seniors' needs.

In the supplemental estimates, there are allocations, including funding to co-develop a holistic long-term care strategy with first nations and Inuit partners. I wondered if you could expand on that and tell me how that will happen and how indigenous people will benefit from this portion of funding.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Thank you for the question.

I would love to develop an answer a bit more, but it's not a file that we in the department control directly. It's really between CMHC and the Department of Indigenous Services. I think it would be a very good question for them. I know they've been working for years to try to develop that approach. I'm sure they will be quite happy to come and explain it to you.

CMHC is really in charge of that file. I don't think anybody on this panel could really give you substantive information about their plan.

Ms. Kate Young: That's okay. It's something that I was very interested in. I will take it to someone else.

When you talk about seniors and the national housing strategy, how are they reflected in that? I know the minister talked about that briefly. Can you reflect on it?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I can. We often meet with our colleagues at CMHC about the national housing strategy. The minister is also connecting with them. We always talk with them, and whatever

new measure they bring, we always try to have a seniors lens in their new investments.

When the minister was here, we were talking about long-term care facilities and what could be done. We worked with them to try to ensure that funding was available for the capital spending. We always work with them on that. Often, they would come with a carve-up for seniors or include them in the approach they were taking. We are always working with them on that, to ensure that there's a lens for seniors on their approach.

Ms. Kate Young: Thank you very much.

We did briefly mention the extra flexibility with the registered retirement income funds. That was welcome news for a number of seniors, because reducing their withdrawals really did help, especially this year.

Do you see that extending into the next year as well?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Again, it's very hard for me to tell if it will be considered. If the pandemic keeps going the way it is, I think there are many things that we may consider again. At least we'll look at them for sure in the future, if the pandemic continues.

Ms. Kate Young: Yes, as we know, we are hopeful that in the next couple of months we will turn the corner with the COVID pandemic.

You mentioned earlier, though, various options. Have those options changed because of COVID?

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Our thinking is always influenced by the level and the direction of the pandemic. That has been the case since March. We explained that to the committee before, on the—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Yes, Ms. Chabot.

• (1720)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you. I did not report this, but the interpreters have twice pointed out to us that they are not able to do the interpretation, probably because of the sound from the microphone of the person speaking. I would like that to be rectified.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I wonder if we can get some guidance from interpretation. Is there a problem with one or some of the microphones? It appears that Madame Chabot isn't getting the translation from English.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson): Perhaps, Mr. Robidoux, if you could hold the microphone a little bit closer to your mouth, the sound would be better. It is fairly quiet in the room as well.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: I will.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Mr. Robidoux, I think you were in the middle of an answer. If you could, just complete your answer; then we're going to go to voting on the estimates, I think.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Benoît Robidoux: Thank you, Chair.

I was saying that when the pandemic struck in March and we were working on the CERB, we had to change the design of the benefit and the scope of it very quickly, week by week.

I think we all at ESDC are in pandemic mode still and are thinking in the same way. It's always influenced by the dynamic of the pandemic, I can assure you.

Ms. Kate Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Robidoux.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robidoux and Ms. Young.

Colleagues, we need to leave it there, because we have some committee business, this being the last date for adoption of the main estimates. We actually have to put them to a vote.

At this point I'm going to bid the witnesses adieu and say to each of you how much we appreciate having you back. We appreciate your patience and your professionalism, and that it's very important that you not trump the minister.

We understand that your role is to provide fearless advice, and the efforts you have made to guide the government, guide the ministry and guide the country through the pandemic have not gone unnoticed, certainly by the people in this room and I think in the country as a whole.

Thank you so much, then, for being here, and thank you for the work that you do every day. You're welcome to stay, but you're free to go.

Colleagues, we are bumping up against the deadline for the reporting of the main estimates, so we need to go through a couple of formalities.

Is it now time to call the votes referred to us under the main estimates, and is there unanimous consent to consider all votes at once?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I will now call the votes on the main estimates.

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Vote 1—Reimbursement under the provisions of the National Housing Act and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act.....\$2,919,967,012

(Vote 1 agreed to)

CANADIAN ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$9,121,581

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$5,500,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$4,814,487

(Vote 1 agreed to)

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$803,327,617

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$3,021,375,616

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates 2020-21 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: The vote is carried on division.

Thank you very much for the efficient disposition of that business.

The next meeting is December 1. If there is no other business, I will adjourn the meeting.

Do we have consensus to adjourn? We do.

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>