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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, before we begin our proceedings, I would like to say a few words.

[*English*]

Pursuant to orders made on Monday, July 20, the application of Standing Order 17 will be suspended until Monday, September 21 to allow members to practise physical distancing. I encourage all members to follow this and other recommended best practices during today's proceedings.

[*Translation*]

Therefore, members desiring to speak and address the Chair may do so from any seat in the House.

[*English*]

Finally, I ask that all members tabling a document or moving a motion sign the document and bring it to the table themselves.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

NAVIGABLE WATERS ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Canadian Navigable Waters Act (North Thames River, Middle Thames River and Thames River).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reintroduce this bill to amend the Navigable Waters Act in order to ensure the integrity of the Thames River. The Thames River stretches 273 kilometres, extending from southwestern Ontario to Lake St. Clair. It flows past many communities, including, of course, the city of London.

The Thames is the only major river in Canada with the majority of its watershed within the Carolinian life zone. This region is recognized as one of the most biologically significant and diverse regions in Canada, with more 2,200 species of vascular plants identified, including the only two locations of the wood poppy in

Canada. The Thames also contains the largest diversity of clams, the threatened eastern spiny softshell turtle and one of the most diverse fish communities in Canada.

In 2000, the Canadian heritage rivers system named the Thames River a designated heritage river. Its existence is a crucial part of our heritage and it must be protected.

The bill, which would amend the Navigable Waters Act, was first introduced in 2013 by my predecessor, but was ignored by the government of the day. During the 2015 election, the Liberals promised the Canadian people that they would prioritize the amendment to the Navigable Waters Act. Today, I am calling upon the government once again to keep its word, protect the Thames River and support my bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1010)

NATIONAL FRESHWATER STRATEGY ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy in relation to fresh water.

She said: Mr. Speaker, there definitely is a theme today for me as I rise to introduce my second bill.

This bill comes after consultations with local environmentalists, conservation authorities and members from the Oneida Nation of the Thames. It calls on the government to commit to a national freshwater strategy.

The Thames River runs through my riding of London—Fanshawe, but we also are so fortunate to have several wetlands and environmentally significant areas such as Meadowlily Woods, Pottersburg Valley and Westminster Ponds. These areas are home to an incredible number of birds, wildlife and vegetation. Of course, we are influenced by the beauty of the Great Lakes, which provides all our communities with environmental benefits that deserve targeted protection and sustainable planning.

Privilege

It has been well over 20 years since the government established a policy on fresh water, and environmental conditions have certainly changed since 1987. While Canada has seemingly abundant freshwater resources, very little of it is actually renewable. We need a modernized national freshwater strategy.

The protection of our fresh water is vital. Whether for tourism, agriculture, recreational use, health or household needs, the health of our water is instrumental to our regions and our country's sustained growth, environmental stability and safety.

I hope I can count on all-party support for the bill to protect our fresh water for generations to come.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to bring forward a very important petition.

As Canada, and indeed the entire world, slowly reopens its economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital that workers are protected.

Across Canada, we have already seen examples where companies have put their profits ahead of the safety and health of their workers. Whether it is a migrant worker in Ontario or meat-packing plant workers in my home province of Alberta, workers' rights to a safe environment must be protected, and the ability of workers to continue to support themselves and their families is a key piece of a successful reopening.

The petitioners note, as provinces increase the list of businesses that can reopen, that many front-line workers may not feel safe returning to work for many reasons, including an inability to physically distance or higher risks for individuals and their families. They call on the government to amend the CERB eligibility requirements to include workers who cannot return to their jobs voluntarily due to concerns related to COVID-19.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, I am rising to address the question of privilege raised yesterday by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I would note that this matter was previously raised in a meeting of the committee of the whole on July 8.

The member raised concerns about the Prime Minister's response to a question in the committee of the whole on July 8. The exchange concerned the Ethics Commissioner's investigation on a matter last year. The member argued that the Prime Minister misled the House when he stated that the government took the unprecedented step of waiving cabinet confidentiality and solicitor-client confidentiality so that the Ethics Commissioner could fully investigate the matter at hand. The member argued that the matter was not fully investigated, because the Ethics Commissioner reported that he did not have access to additional cabinet confidences.

The Prime Minister's response is not being taken into proper context. It is clear that the Prime Minister was speaking about the government's rationale for taking an unprecedented step to co-operate with the Ethics Commissioner. Furthermore, fully investigating a matter does not mean that the Ethics Commissioner must have full access to all cabinet confidences and to all solicitor-client privileged information. It means that the commissioner has the information he needs to fulfill his duties under the Conflict of Interest Act. This means that the commissioner is able to examine a matter and to produce a report that sets out the facts in question and provides the commissioner's analysis and conclusions.

As a result, the issue raised by the member is, at best, a dispute as to the facts and does not meet the threshold of constituting a prima facie question of privilege.

The Conflict of Interest Act does not provide the Ethics Commissioner authority to access cabinet confidences or solicitor-client privileged information for an investigation. Parliament did not grant this authority to the commissioner when it passed the act in 2006. Authority to disclose cabinet confidence or waive solicitor-client privilege rests with the executive branch of government.

This government is committed to transparency and accountability. This government has co-operated with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that the commissioner is able to examine matters and produce reports.

Regarding the matter at hand, the government recognized that certain cabinet confidence and certain solicitor-client privileged information could be important to the commissioner's investigation. The Prime Minister's response on July 8 explains the basis for the government's decision to take an unprecedented step of issuing an order in council to authorize the disclosure of cabinet confidences to the Ethics Commissioner and to waive solicitor-client privilege.

The government wanted to co-operate with the Ethics Commissioner so that he could fully investigate the matter on the merits and produce a report, and this is what the Ethics Commissioner was able to do.

The commissioner stated as much in his report when he wrote, “In the present examination, I have gathered sufficient factual information to properly determine the matter on its merits.” The member himself quoted this statement when he raised this issue on July 8.

Accordingly, I submit that the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has raised a matter that is a dispute as to the facts and does not constitute a prima facie question of privilege.

• (1015)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member and we will take that under advisement.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FURTHER COVID-19 MEASURES ACT

The House resumed from July 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Vimy, who will be giving her maiden speech in this venerable House.

It is an honour for me to be in the House today and to speak on behalf of the residents of Davenport.

It is also an honour to join my colleagues to participate in this important debate on Bill C-20, which includes three key parts. The first part makes a number of adjustments that will expand the eligibility criteria around the Canada emergency wage. Part two covers a number of changes that must occur in order for us to provide a one-time payment to persons with disabilities for reasons related to COVID-19. In part three are a number of appropriate changes to certain acts that will provide some flexibility to certain time limits that were difficult or impossible to meet as a result of the exceptional circumstances produced by COVID-19. I will be talking to part two.

This bill would allow information sharing among several federal departments and agencies and Employment and Social Development Canada, so that a one-time payment can be made to support persons with disabilities during this pandemic. We have to allow for information to be shared among several departments in order to deliver this one-time payment as soon as we possibly can.

This one-time payment of \$600 will help approximately 1.7 million Canadians with disabilities who are recipients of the disability tax credit certificate, CPP disability or QPP disability benefits and/or disability supports provided by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Bill C-20 is just one part of a much larger plan that our government has dedicated to supporting Canadians with disabilities. Today I want to talk about the evolution of our plan, the actions we

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have undertaken and our government's next steps toward creating an inclusive and barrier-free Canada.

In 2015, our government named the first-ever cabinet minister responsible for persons with disabilities and promised Canadians that we would pass legislation aimed at removing barriers to inclusion. This signalled our commitment to doing things differently in order to ensure that all Canadians have an equal chance at success.

One of the key milestones on this journey was the National Disability Summit that we held in May 2019, in the days prior to COVID. The summit provided an opportunity for participants to exchange best practices and to create and build on partnerships. It allowed us to understand the next steps to truly realize an inclusive and accessible Canada.

At the same time as the summit was taking place, the federal government's landmark legislation for the Accessible Canada Act was being finalized, following the most comprehensive consultations with the disability community in our country's history. More than 6,000 Canadians and 100 disability organizations shared their views and ideas about an accessible Canada. As we know, the act received royal assent on June 21, 2019 and came into force in July of that year.

The legislation builds upon existing mechanisms and ensures compliance and accountability. The Accessible Canada Act takes a proactive and systemic approach to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility in key areas within federal jurisdiction. The goal was to ensure that the act was based on safeguarding human rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The act also created new entities such as Accessibility Standards Canada, which creates and reviews accessibility standards for federally regulated organizations.

I am proud of this legislation because it sends a clear message to Canadians that persons with disabilities will no longer be treated as an afterthought. From the start, systems will be designed to be inclusive for all Canadians. This is because it is our systems, our policies, our practices and our laws that need to be fixed, not our people.

I also want to point out that in the mandate letter of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, a number of important additional measures will continue to ensure that we promote disability inclusion. These include, among other measures, undertaking initiatives to improve the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, targeting barriers to full participation in the labour force including discrimination and stigma, raising public awareness, and working with employers and businesses in a coordinated way.

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• (1020)

As the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion has said, we move from “Nothing about us, without us” to “Nothing without us”, because everything in society touches the lives of Canadians with disabilities.

The Government of Canada is leading the way in ensuring communities and workplaces are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities. It is the largest federal employer. It is also the single-largest purchaser of goods and services in the country, and provides vital programs and services to Canadians. As such, we have committed to hiring at least 5,000 persons with disabilities over the next five years in the federal public service. We are also committed to applying an accessibility lens to government procurement and project planning.

Over the last five years, our government has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Canadians with disabilities. I wish to share some of the highlights over our two mandates, which began in 2015.

Our government applied a disability lens to our flagship policies and programs such as the Canada child benefit, the national housing strategy and the infrastructure program. The result is that families of children with disabilities receive an additional amount under the CCB. For example, from 2017 to 2018, 1.75 million children benefited from the disability supplement.

Under the national housing strategy, there is a commitment to promote universal design and visitability. This includes a requirement that public and shared spaces meet accessibility standards, and that at least 2,400 new affordable housing units for persons with developmental disabilities are created.

In the area of infrastructure we have approved nearly 800 accessibility projects, including almost 500 new para-transit buses and improvements to 81 existing transit facilities to make them more accessible to Canadians. This was made possible by ensuring that accessibility was an eligible expense in public transit projects. In just one year, almost \$800 million was invested into our public transit systems to make them more accessible.

We have also increased our investments in existing programs such as the enabling accessibility fund, the social development partnerships program and the opportunities fund. All three of these programs were significantly enhanced, allowing people to keep doing the good work they are doing to improve the lives of Canadians with disabilities.

Current COVID-19 supports have been amply covered by my colleagues over the last 24 hours, but I want to bring them to mind briefly. Since the pandemic was declared, our government has taken a disability-inclusive response to the pandemic. This included adhering to the principle of “Nothing without us”, from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the creation of the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group to bring the lived experience of persons with disabilities to our government's response to the pandemic.

We provided additional support to students with permanent disabilities and the one-time payment that is part of the debate today.

We invested in mental health for the Wellness Together portal. We launched calls for proposals under two components of the enabling accessibility fund, and created a national workplace accessibility stream of the opportunities fund to help people with disabilities find jobs right now. Finally, we added funding to the social development partnerships program to enhance accessibility communications during this crisis, and invested \$1.18 million in five new projects across the country through the accessible technology program to help develop dynamic and affordable technology.

In conclusion, from the Canadian Survey on Disability, we know Canadians with disabilities are underemployed compared with the general population, a situation made worse by this pandemic. As the economy opens up again, this represents an opportunity for a vast and largely untapped pool of talent: people who are available to work, who want to join the workforce and who are ready to apply their innovative ideas to our new normal.

In the meantime, I call upon my colleagues to quickly pass the legislation before us so we can get support out to the people who urgently and immediately need it.

I am now ready to take questions.

• (1025)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the number of disability payment recipients in Canada now?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I actually do not have the answer to that question.

I do know that the changes we are about to make would, we believe, benefit 1.7 million Canadians. The other thing to point out is that the changes we want to make would make it more inclusive. We want as many people as possible, who have disabilities and need emergency support, to be able to access it. That is the reason we are proposing these changes in the legislation today.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the disability tax credit application is quite arduous. I am not sure if the member has had a chance to go through that with some of her constituents, but it is a very heavy bureaucratic process and does take time.

I am wondering if she is aware of that process, the challenges that many Canadians have in applying for that credit and the fact that those who are either in the midst of applying or do not qualify are being left behind by aspects of this legislation.

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Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I was listening very intently to the minister yesterday. She spoke about the system behind the benefits available to persons with disabilities in Canada, and basically said that the system needs to be changed. It has to be simplified as it is not easy to navigate. She has made a commitment to do everything in her power to simplify the system and make it easier for us to get benefits directly to those who need them immediately.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I heard my colleague mention social housing, it occurred to me that if we wanted to make life easier for people living with disabilities, maybe we should fund the health care system properly. Health care is still underfunded. As for social housing, Quebec is still waiting for the transfers from the federal government.

Would my colleague agree that it is urgent to transfer that money if we want to truly support people living with disabilities?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I read a number of the elements of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion's mandate letter and we are going to take a number of additional steps to try to be more helpful to our disability community.

In terms of health care, my understanding is that we have health agreements with every single province, except Quebec, and we are very happy to step up to the plate and continue those discussions with Quebec to ensure that persons with disabilities, as well as all Quebecers, will have access to better health.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that members of the opposition would question how long it takes for these disability tax credits given that we would be two months further ahead had they not been playing politics with this issue a couple of months ago.

The member talked about the lower employment levels of people with disabilities. I know first-hand that my cousin Aidan, who has Down syndrome, has all the supports he needs to get through his education, but after that there is a real lack of opportunity for employment. What this bill seeks to do, in particular, is create the economic environment for people with disabilities to prosper to their fullest potential. The federal government is looking to employ 5,000 more people with disabilities.

I am wondering if the member can comment on how she sees this impacting people in her own community of Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I would have also liked to see this legislation pass two months ago. One of the positive aspects of waiting, turning lemons into lemonade, is that this time we expanded on who can apply and access this one-time emergency funding.

We are providing a number of avenues for more people to apply for the disability tax credit. If more people apply for the disability tax credit, more of them will be able to access the one-time emergency support. I know that is going to benefit many more people in my riding of Davenport.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, our government has followed the guidance of public health officials. Governments across Canada put lockdown measures in place to slow the spread of the virus and ensure that our health care systems were well prepared.

The lockdown measures that governments put in place to control the outbreak meant that many Canadians lost their jobs or a significant portion of their incomes. Without question, the nature of this crisis is completely unprecedented. We are confronting a public health and economic crisis. Canadians have managed to control the virus, and gradually and safely, our economy is restarting across the country.

Canadians have made great sacrifices to get here. Businesses of all sizes closed their doors during the emergency phase and are still facing uncertainty.

Our government acted quickly in March, when we launched the first measures of our COVID-19 economic response plan. Through rapid and broad support, the government has been able to protect millions of jobs, provide emergency income support to families and help keep businesses afloat during the worst of the storm. This support is helping Canadians get back on their feet and has prevented serious, long-term damage to our economy.

With the Canada emergency response benefit, we are providing temporary income support to Canadians across the country who have stopped working because of COVID-19. More than eight million Canadians have applied for the CERB.

We provided a special, one-time \$300 top-up to the Canada child benefit for the month of May, delivering almost \$2 billion in additional support to families who needed it. The government also provided a special top-up payment in April through the goods and services tax credit for low- and modest-income individuals and families, giving on average a single adult almost \$400 more and couples almost \$600 more.

We have worked to support our most vulnerable as well, providing support for the food banks, charities and non-profits that provide services to those in need. We have also provided \$158 million to support Canadians experiencing homelessness, ensuring that the shelters they rely on have the equipment they need to prevent outbreaks.

We know that during the lockdown, home was not always a safe place to be. We provided funding that has helped over 500 organizations that support women and children experiencing violence. We want to work to keep our communities safe and vibrant.

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We know that preserving the small businesses that give our neighbourhoods life is key to keeping our community strong. The Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, has helped over 690,000 small businesses. Through this support, small businesses and non-profit organizations can receive an interest-free loan of up to \$40,000, 25% of which is forgivable if paid back by the end of 2022. We recently expanded the CEBA so that more small businesses can access it. The CEBA is making a real difference in addressing the cash-flow challenges we see businesses facing as a result of COVID.

We know making rent can be a challenge for our hardest hit businesses. That is why we launched the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance, or CECRA, which provides eligible small-business tenants with a rent reduction of 50%. We recently announced that we are extending the program to cover eligible small-business rents for July. The program provides support by offering forgivable loans to qualifying commercial property owners, whether they have a mortgage on their property or not.

The CECRA also offers another key support to help businesses through the current challenges. Overall, since the beginning of the COVID-19 global outbreak, the Government of Canada has taken swift and significant action to support Canadians and protect jobs. The Canada emergency wage subsidy is one of the cornerstones of the government's economic response plan.

That is why with this week's legislation we are proposing to extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy until November 21, 2020. Furthermore, the government is announcing its intent to provide further support through the wage subsidy, up to December 19, 2020. The bill would make the program accessible to a broader range of employers and would help protect more jobs and promote growth as the economy continues to reopen.

• (1035)

To ensure strong subsidy support for those who need it, effective July 5, 2020, the Canada emergency wage subsidy would consist of two parts: a base subsidy available to all eligible employers experiencing a decline in revenues with a varying subsidy amount depending on the scale of revenue decline, and a top-up subsidy of up to an additional 25% for employers that have been most adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. If businesses are experiencing a revenue drop of 50% or more, they would receive the maximum base subsidy rate. If they are experiencing a decline between 49% and zero, their base subsidy rate would gradually decline in accordance with their revenue decrease. By removing the 30% revenue decline threshold, these adjustments would make the Canada emergency wage subsidy accessible to a broader range of employers. The introduction of a gradually declining base subsidy would allow the program to be extended to more employers and continue to support recovering businesses.

As well, the top-up subsidy rate of up to 25% would be available to employers that were the most adversely affected during the pandemic, which is to say those having experienced an average revenue drop of more than 50% over the preceding three months. This would be particularly helpful to employers and sectors that are recovering more slowly.

We will also make sure eligible employers that were making plans for the next two CEWS periods based on the existing design would be entitled to an amount of subsidy not less than the amount they would be entitled to under the wage subsidy rules that were in place before that period. This would provide a safe harbour so employers that already made business decisions for the period between July 5 and August 29 would not receive a subsidy rate lower than they would have under the previous rules.

By helping more workers return to work and supporting businesses as they recover, these changes would make businesses more competitive and would ensure that our economy returns to growth.

In conclusion, with this legislation the government is addressing the challenges employers are facing and is providing the support they need to participate in the restart. Therefore, I strongly recommend that all members of the House support the bill so that together we deliver on our collective commitment to be there for Canadians and help them bridge through to better times.

• (1040)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and agree with the fact it has been two months since this was first presented. However, significantly more people with disabilities are included now because of the time that was invested in making the bill better.

One area the bill improves is support for veterans. They are included in this payment. Over 50,000 of them are without funding. I have a concern regarding what the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion said when she presented this in the House and referred to veterans. She said, "this is going to be super complicated at the back end".

Does the member have any idea of the process that has been put in place to do this in an expeditious manner for veterans so that they do not lose hope again and this isn't another situation where the government is not providing them something they have been promised?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, our government is listening actively and working with various partners to make sure that no one is left behind. Certainly, we should not forget our veterans.

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As we all know, this is the first time we are dealing with this. The disability act should have been debated and changed two months ago. We lost precious time, but I am sure, and can assure the House, that the minister, her team and the great people of our public service are going to find the solutions we need to make sure our veterans have the support they need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech from my colleague, who sits on the Standing Committee on Finance.

I am going to ask her a somewhat technical question. I should probably ask the government, but I will see if she can answer. It is about support for people living with disabilities as drafted in Bill C-20.

In his announcement on June 1, the Prime Minister mentioned a refundable tax credit. However, Bill C-20 calls it a payment out of the consolidated revenue fund. On closer scrutiny, it seems like the payment could be considered taxable income for the taxpayer.

Does my colleague know whether this tax credit is taxable?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance for his question. I honestly do not know the details. I do not know if it is taxable or not, but I will find out and get back to him.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the recovery of the economy, obviously a huge part of it is child care. Workplaces have continually expressed the need for a national public system of affordable child care.

The government has put forward an economic recovery plan, but the \$625 million that has been allocated to child care is simply not enough. Some are calling for \$2.5 billion.

I am wondering what the member across the way has to say about the huge difference in realities and the need to do a lot more on child care.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I am part of the finance committee, and we have heard time and time again through our witnesses that there will be no recovery unless we have affordable and proper child care. Our government is committed to that. I know that our various ministers have been working very closely with partners in various provinces. It is not an easy fix, but I know the discussions are going on. Our goal is to make sure that affordable child care is in place as our economy starts to recover.

• (1045)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinipi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on her maiden speech. I recently had to do one and I appreciate the stress that comes with it.

I have a quick question on the CEWS legislation. In the backgrounder that is produced by the Department of Finance, there is an example that talks about businesses that now qualify because of the reduction in the 30% limit. In that example there is no reference, and in fact this is quite clear, to a retroactive application of this leg-

islation for some very significant businesses that would qualify now but have been waiting for over 100 days for help in this legislation.

I am curious if the member believes that there should have been a retroactive component to the CEWS legislation for businesses that now qualify for the benefit but only on a go-forward basis.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I know that the CEWS has supported over three million employees by helping them stay in their workforces or return to work. I am not certain whether at this moment we are looking to see whether we are able to give retroactive payments or not, but I am certain this government will do everything possible to listen. We are flexible. We were not looking for perfection. We do not want to allow perfection to stand in the way of the good. I can safely say, in my opinion, that if there is a way to give retroactive payments, I am sure this government is willing to listen to that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I want to let you know that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Manicouagan. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members of the House to visit that magnificent region this summer. It might be far, but it is worth the trip.

Bill C-20 leaves a bad taste in my mouth. It is the embodiment of everything I most abhor about this federation. It is a reminder that my people, my nation, is still controlled by the nation next door. I am sure my colleagues will have understood by now that I am referring to the Bill C-20 that was passed just over 20 years ago, the clarity act, which set out the majority threshold and was tabled by Stéphane Dion. This bill reminded Quebecers that Quebec would be ruled by the will of the Canadian majority to the very end. I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons applauding that. That is just pathetic.

Twenty years ago, this Parliament came out and said that Quebec is not the master of its own house, so much so that its neighbour decided to give itself a say and even veto power not just over the next referendum, but also over the very definition of a majority, since it felt 50% + 1 was not enough for a majority anymore. So much for a people's right to self-determination. Quebec does not know what is good for it. There are echoes of Lord Durham's lamentable report here. This gets applause to this day.

As for Bill C-20, which is being debated today, the Bloc Québécois will obviously support it. Our logic is straightforward. Quite simply, since the bill is good for Quebec, the Bloc Québécois will support it. However, I would like to address the manner in which the bill was introduced and will likely be passed.

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Over the past four months, the pandemic has shaped our daily lives. That is true for all of society and also for this Parliament. Its usual operations were suspended because of health guidelines. For four months, this Parliament and its legislators have no longer carried out their roles as they should. That is also true for the study of this bill. We will pass it with a sham procedure, ramming it through without being able to study it properly. I completely understand that it is urgent that we help those paying the economic price of health measures, namely our workers, businesses and people with disabilities. However, after four months, I feel that it is time to strike a balance and to put an end to this travesty of democracy, I would even say, this quasi-dictatorial government.

I will explain. Here is how it works. The government presents its bill to each party under embargo and then, just a day or two later, it introduces the bill in the House and insists that it be passed as is. In so doing, the government is short-circuiting the usual analysis and study process. We do not have time to examine the bill in detail, but, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. What worries me the most about this flippant approach is that, for the past four months, we have been passing bills without even giving members the opportunity to hear from the individuals and groups that are affected by those bills. The current process is too rushed. It does not make any sense.

I would like to give an example to illustrate this problem, that of Bill C-17. There was a section in Bill C-17 that sought to provide support to people living with disabilities. That support was intended for people who applied for the disability tax credit. However, since this was a non-refundable tax credit, many low-income people did not apply for it because they do not pay taxes. They were not going to fill out all the paperwork for something that did not apply to them. We know that far too many people with disabilities are living in extreme poverty. As written, Bill C-17 excluded the poorest people from the support program. Those who needed help the most were excluded, which was outrageous. This type of problem is usually fixed during the legislative process when committees have time to hear from the groups concerned and provide recommendations on how to improve bills.

In fact, it was groups like those who contacted us to complain about that aspect of Bill C-17. The bill affected their members. They are in the best position to analyze it, and they must be given time to take a close look at it and analyze it so that the government can hear what they have to say and make changes accordingly. As I have said before, the whole process that is crucial to passing good laws has been on hold for four months. That has to change. We need to get back to a democratic process. Let me just remind everyone that the government was unequivocal: Bill C-17 had to be passed as it was, and there was no room for improvement.

● (1050)

Even though it is in a minority situation, the government is behaving like a dictator. That is unacceptable. We said that we were in favour of Bill C-17, but that we needed time to study and analyze it. The government refused, saying that there would be no changes, and it chose to withdraw the bill and pout.

Fortunately for Canadians living with disabilities, just over a month later, Bill C-20 corrects the mistakes of Bill C-17 by adding three flexible elements.

First, individuals receiving a disability pension from the Quebec pension plan, Canada pension plan or Veterans Affairs will be entitled to the payment, even if they have not applied for the disability tax credit. However, this does not include those who receive a disability pension from the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec following an automobile accident, or the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail following a workplace accident. That could be improved.

Finally, individuals who apply for the disability tax credit within 60 days will be entitled to the payment, even if they did not previously claim it. This flexibility was not found in Bill C-17.

I would also like to talk about another point concerning the assistance for people with disabilities, which my colleague was asked about earlier. In his announcement on June 1, the Prime Minister talked about a refundable tax credit. However, Bill C-20 talks about a payment paid out of the consolidated revenue fund. It is not inconceivable that this could mean the payment is considered taxable income for taxpayers. I would like the government to clarify this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to appeal to you and to my colleagues from all parties here, in the House. We need to change how bills get passed. This chamber, its elected officials, its legislators and its committees must be able to actually do their jobs. We need to find a way that complies with health guidelines, but it is possible.

The government is comfortable governing without Parliament, but that infringes on our democracy. This has been going on for four months, which is far too long, and it needs to change.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech.

I find it a bit ridiculous to hear members say that there was an opportunity to vote for a bill to help people living with disabilities last month, but today, a month later, they are justifying having voted against it.

Today, we have the opportunity to vote in favour of the bill. Once again, it is easy to say that the bill is not perfect. Could my colleague opposite tell us whether it would have been better to vote in favour the first time, thereby avoiding all the political games?

● (1055)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, this is our first opportunity to vote on support for persons with disabilities. In fact, Bill C-17 was not even introduced in the House. We were not able to vote on that bill. The government chose to sulk by not introducing it.

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Everyone in the House said that support for people living with disabilities was important. We just had to ensure that it was done right. My speech mainly focused on the fact that it was badly done and rushed. That is also the opinion of groups representing persons with disabilities.

Now, Bill C-20 is properly drafted. It is everything we asked for. The government must stop acting like a dictator and saying take it or leave it, and if we do not take it as it is, it does not work.

We have to return to a process that lets all elected members of every party participate fully as legislators.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has not responded to my colleague in a fully accurate way.

The Bloc, the New Democrats and the Conservatives were provided an opportunity not that long ago to give their unanimous consent. Unanimous consent is often given for a wide variety of bills, not only with this administration, but also previous administrations, so it is not as though it is unprecedented. There was an opportunity for us to see this legislation, or a form of it, pass.

It was not necessarily the Bloc as much as the Conservatives, but to try to imply that the government did not attempt to bring forward legislation that would have seen money in the pockets of individuals with a disability gives the wrong impression.

Would the member not acknowledge that there was a genuine attempt to make that happen?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, the government chose to introduce Bill C-17 as one bill made up of four different parts that could not be amended.

The part regarding support payments for people living with disabilities had the unanimous consent of the House. Had the government chosen to seek unanimous consent to pass that part of Bill C-17, it would have immediately gotten that consent. Every party publicly expressed its support for that part of the bill, so there would not have been any problem with that.

The government said no. The parties had to take the whole bill or leave it. That is the problem that we are once again seeing in this catastrophic approach to urgently passing bills imposed by the government. The part of Bill C-17 that helps people living with disabilities would have excluded the poorest members of that group because it was poorly written. The government is short-circuiting the usual process for passing bills in the House. That is what I have a problem with.

I hope I have made that clear to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. This way of doing things needs to change. We have been doing things this way for four months and that is too long.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I really liked what he had to say.

I think Bill C-20 would have been a good opportunity for the government to simplify to some degree the fairly complex measures introduced in Bill C-17. It is still complex. It is written in very complex jargon. We are afraid it might prevent some businesses and individuals from getting the help they need, which is what happened with the emergency commercial rent assistance. We realized that applying for it was so complicated, people just gave up.

Does my colleague think Bill C-20 would have been a good opportunity for the government to simplify the process?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, the Income Tax Act is such incomprehensible gobbledygook that a physicist or a mechanical or electrical engineer would struggle to do the math. The equations are full of variables. There are more letters than numbers. There are cross references. It is endless. It is impossible to understand.

During the technical briefing on this bill provided by officials, we were assured that the government would be able to present the extension of the wage subsidy and all its various forms in a comprehensible way. That is a huge but necessary challenge. As my colleague said, that was not the case at all for the commercial rent assistance.

• (1100)

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members bring their personal experiences to the House of Commons. I am here to represent the people of Quebec and my riding. I am also the critic for families, children and social development.

I want to talk a bit about my experience. There is a lot of talk about what is being proposed in Bill C-20, and it is clear that the matter of accessibility is a sticking point. I am a mother of three children, one of whom has a disability.

For several weeks now, I have heard people talking about the bill that was tabled and that would make certain things possible. I, of course, see the bill from a parliamentary perspective, but also from a personal perspective, as I think about people who are living with a disability and who are vulnerable. The government is implying that everything is easy and available and that these people were taken into account, but all along it has been dragging its feet and taking its time.

Today, listening to the questions being asked in the House, it is unclear how the assistance for people with disabilities will be provided. The government is unable to tell us whether the \$600 they get will be taxable. In my opinion, we are far from a comprehensive, clear proposal and from providing assistance for those who need it most.

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I wanted to mention that, not only is this measure long overdue, but there is still the matter of accessibility. That is why debates and committees are an important part of the process of perfecting bills, as my hon. colleague from Joliette mentioned earlier. Of course, for the Bloc Québécois, the goal is to help the most vulnerable.

I mentioned that it is too late and that it is unclear, and I feel the same way about the Canada emergency wage subsidy. I have spoken to a number of people and entrepreneurs in my riding who did not have access to the CEWS. Now the government is trying to improve it, apparently so that more people can have access to it.

I went to Gaspé, where I spoke to entrepreneurs. Applying for the wage subsidy is a burden for companies large and small. It is not an easy task. Some were ineligible, and now the government has made some adjustments based on other criteria that are so convoluted as to be almost incomprehensible. Once again, my concern is that the subsidy will not be accessible to people who cannot apply themselves or who cannot do so properly, since the program is so convoluted, as I was saying. We need to clarify and simplify things if we want people to benefit, and the same goes for the \$600.

Are we really providing assistance if people are unable to apply for it? In the case of the disability benefit, will people with disabilities be able to receive the whole amount, or will we only be sending them half? Once again, it is too late.

I would like to know if businesses that were not entitled to it may be entitled and may qualify. This could be good for those who were unable to before. The reason it is being adjusted is that we know there were problems with the emergency wage subsidy. Will businesses have retroactive access? Those are my suggestions for this bill.

There are other problems the government could have fixed. Members were talking about vulnerable people earlier. That brings to mind employment insurance sickness benefits. People who are sick now, people with cancer, for example, need money to keep fighting. My colleague from Salaberry—Suroît actually introduced a bill to extend the benefit period for these people, who really need it.

• (1105)

I had hoped that we would be able to add this element. That was what happened with Bill C-17, which included several elements. There are three elements here as well. This is something the government could very easily have done, and that people would have applauded, because they have been waiting a long time.

I will come back to the stories of other vulnerable people in my riding, in particular in seasonal industries where people are still waiting. We are halfway through summer, and we have not yet begun addressing their situation. They are wondering what is going to happen to them in the fall. The emergency wage subsidy is all well and good, but it does not apply to seasonal industries when people are not working.

We need to find something for them. We are being told that something is coming. However, when a seasonal worker knows that he is going to lose his job in the forestry or fishing industries, or in tourism, which has been struggling in many areas back home, he

needs to know if he will be able to feed his family in the fall, that he will be able to keep working in his field and supporting his community, and that he will be going back to work in 2021.

We want our communities to retain their vitality and to bounce back from COVID-19. These people truly need help. I want to see this happen fast; I do not want to wait for summer to be over. Once again, we are falling behind on getting assistance to the people who are most vulnerable and who bear the brunt of COVID-19.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a substantial piece of legislation that would bring in new support for individuals with disabilities. It makes significant changes to the wage subsidy program, a program that has, I would argue, saved millions of jobs. It has allowed employers to continue to employ their employees.

One of the concerns I have is the misinformation that has been put on the record in regard to the legislation itself. We have already had a couple of people speak about the disability aspect of the legislation, saying that it is taxable when, in fact, it is not taxable. The Bloc should be aware of that. If the members believe that it is taxable, they need to show me precisely what it is in the legislation that is giving them the impression that it is taxable. Not only is it not taxable, but it is also not reportable.

This is a direct benefit for individuals with disabilities, and this is something that we have previously attempted to get through the House of Commons. It is some members of the opposition who have caused the delay. This government has been aggressively trying to get it done as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, the opposition has the right to disagree with the government. I think that is one of our freedoms, however modest it may be.

I have here an excerpt from the June 1 announcement, in which the Prime Minister mentioned a refundable tax credit. However, Bill C-20 talks about the payment being paid out of the consolidated revenue fund, which indicates just a possibility. It is not stated explicitly, but it is also not ruled out. If I do not see something explicitly stated in a contract, I want to clarify it and have it stipulated. If that is truly what the government intended to do, why did it not just write it down?

I do not want to mislead people. I am simply being a responsible member of Parliament and I am asking questions that, I think, are of interest to my constituents and to the people of Quebec and Canada.

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[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated listening to what the member had to say. Today we had the opportunity to walk up the hill together and get to know each other a bit. We have a lot in common in our two ridings, and our concerns are very similar as well.

I do appreciate the Bloc members who have made the wise decision to tell the government that they are not happy with what it has done, with the help of the NDP, to our rights and privileges as the opposition on this side of the floor.

Would the member be interested in encouraging the rest of her caucus to fully support petition e-2629, which calls on the government to do the right thing and return, in full, to the House in September? We need to return so that we can carry on in the role we have to hold the government to account; bring forward our own supply day motions, which, as we have worked together, have been very successful; and have private members' bills.

All the roles we should have on this side of the floor have been hijacked by the government. We need to stand together, not just us parliamentarians in the House, but also every person in each of our ridings, and call on the Liberals to do what they should do and re-engage Parliament, rather than meeting virtually. We are no longer provided with opportunities to hold them accountable, other than through virtual means, or the Prime Minister stepping out of his door.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her question. In fact, I have not read the petition she mentioned.

However, I believe that members have heard me make a request in the House on several occasions. I find that the Wednesday sittings are committee meetings and not real sittings of the House of Commons.

The ten or twenty hours my colleague and I must spend each week to get here will not prevent us from working in the House to hold the government to account. That is what we are doing today, even though it does not really want to answer our questions and seems to believe that we are biased. We need answers and we need to be responsible, which is something I truly appreciate. I believe it is the duty of every parliamentarian.

The Bloc Québécois caucus wants to do its job of course. We, the members, want to do our job as parliamentarians as it is usually understood in the House, with concern for our safety and that of all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House today to discuss, in particular, part 3 of Bill C-20 that would enact an act respecting the suspension or extension of time limits and the extension of other periods as part of the response to the coronavirus disease 2019.

As members are all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges on several fronts, not only for individual Canadians and businesses, but also for the operations of federal and provincial governments. Governments are working hard to respond to the pandemic and protect the well-being and safety of Canadians. Today, I would like to speak about one particular set of challenges that we are proposing to address with this legislation.

This issue has important implications on the rule of law, as well as significant practical implications not only for our justice system but also for the federally regulated sphere in which individuals are governed and businesses operate. I am referring to the issue of fixed statutory deadlines.

Members may wonder what these deadlines are. Canadians normally rely on the certainty of knowing that, if they have a decision from a court, there is a limited time to bring an appeal. They want to know that if they are in a process of trying to comply with a requirement, such as working with creditors, they will not be in default and subject to serious consequences, through no fault of their own, if they continue to follow the steps set out in the law.

[Translation]

Overnight, the certainty offered by fixed time limits became an obstacle rather than a comfort. If an act provides no discretion to extend time limits, there could be serious consequences for Canadians.

Let us take the example of someone who wants to challenge the terms of a divorce settlement ordered by a judge. Suppose this person has lost their job and is caring for the children at home. If the current situation prevents the person from filing an appeal within 30 days as required by the Divorce Act, that person is out of options.

Let us also consider employees under federal jurisdiction who work in essential sectors like transportation and need valid certification. The pandemic could be making it hard or even impossible for them to renew their certification. Can we expect businesses to continue to operate without that certification, potentially putting themselves at risk?

The measures in this bill will provide a level of certainty that will enable individuals, businesses and the government to focus on maintaining or resuming operations in the context of the pandemic.

I am therefore pleased to present a series of measures grouped in one act, an act respecting the suspension or extension of time limits and the extension of other periods as part of the response to the coronavirus disease 2019. The short title of this act is the time limits and other periods act with regard to COVID-19.

The act would apply to two categories of problematic time limits that require immediate attention: first, time limits in civil proceedings, and second, legislative time limits and periods set out in federal acts and regulations.

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• (1115)

[*English*]

With respect to civil litigation, should deadlines not be extended, it would risk forcing people to choose between ignoring public health advice and protecting their legal interests for preparing for or attending court. This risk is highest for self-represented litigants, who may not know where to go or what to do to secure their legal rights in the current circumstances. Chief justices have done as much as they can within their powers and have asked for a more complete solution from the federal government. Other stakeholders, such as the bar associations, have also called for the federal government to act quickly.

[*Translation*]

A number of federal laws include deadlines, and failure to meet these deadlines could have serious and irreversible consequences for Canadians and for Canada as a whole. Even government activities have been affected by the pandemic. A large amount of resources is being allocated to the fight against COVID-19, which prevents us from supporting other activities and meeting certain deadlines.

Under the Food and Drug Regulations, the sale of drugs intended for clinical trials is authorized by default unless Canada sends a notice of refusal before the specified deadline. If we cannot meet these deadlines, Canadians' safety could be at risk. In addition, many companies and organizations will now have more time to hold their annual meetings, without having to ask the courts for an extension.

These are only a few examples. There are many others. If Parliament does not take action and find solutions, Canadians will soon feel the real-life consequences. It is important to point out that several provinces have recognized the need to extend legal and regulatory deadlines and have acted accordingly.

British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick have taken measures to suspend or extend time limits in proceedings under their emergency legislation. In some cases, these provinces have also extended deadlines not related to proceedings. Of course, no provincial measures can resolve the issue of time limits in federal legislation. Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba have also passed legislation giving them similar powers.

[*English*]

Our government also received feedback from various stakeholders and parliamentarians on this legislative proposal and considered their comments, as members will see from changes to the bill resulting from those considerations.

The purpose of the bill is clearly set out. It is to temporarily suspend certain time limits and to temporarily authorize the suspension and extension of certain other time limits in order to prevent any exceptional circumstances from making it difficult or impossible to meet those timelines and time limits. It also aims to temporarily authorize the extension of other periods, for instance the validity of licences, in order to prevent unfair or undesirable effects that may result from their expiry in the current circumstances.

It is clearly stated at the outset that the bill is to be interpreted and to provide certainty in legal proceedings and ensure respect for the rule of law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I want to emphasize that the bill would not apply in respect of the investigation of an offence or in respect of a proceeding respecting an offence, nor does it apply in respect of a time limit or other period that is established by or under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

The bill is divided into two substantive parts, one dealing with civil litigation and one dealing with a limited number of regulatory deadlines. For civil litigation, the new act would provide for the suspension of civil limitation periods established in federal legislation. These include time limits for commencing a civil proceeding before a court, for doing something in the course of proceedings, or for making an application for leave to commence a proceeding, or to do something in relation to a proceeding. These provisions would apply to any court referred to in federal legislation.

The suspension is for a maximum period of six months, which starts on March 13 of this year and ends on September 13 of this year, or an earlier day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council. Even though the suspension of limitation periods will be automatic, the legislation is flexible in nature. Courts will be empowered to vary the length of a suspension when they feel it is necessary, as long as the commencement date of the suspension remains the same and the duration of the suspension does not exceed six months. They will also have the power to make orders to remedy a failure to meet a time limit that is later suspended. In addition, to deal with the possibility of unintended consequences, the Governor in Council may lift a suspension in specified circumstances.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Once again, the duration of the suspensions or extensions cannot exceed a maximum of six months. It is important to point that out. This also includes renewals. The orders do not apply in respect of a time limit or other period that ends on December 31, 2020, nor can they be used to extend a time limit beyond December 31, 2020. What is more, the suspension provided for by an order cannot allow a time limit to continue after December 31, 2020.

However, ministerial orders can be retroactive to March 13, 2020, and can include provisions respecting the effects of a failure to meet the time limit or of the expiry of a period that was then suspended or extended. In order to provide some flexibility, orders may provide that a suspension or extension applies only with the consent of the decision-maker in question or that the decision-maker can refuse to apply the order or make changes regarding its application.

[*English*]

We recognize the unique nature of this legislation. As such, numerous safeguards have been built into the bill right from the beginning. First and foremost, the bill clearly indicates that the powers to make orders cannot be used after September 30, 2020. It also ensures that no order can remain in effect after December 31, 2020. The bill would also give the Governor in Council the power to make regulations restricting or imposing conditions on the power of ministers to make orders regarding time limits and other periods.

[*Translation*]

What is more, in order to ensure full transparency and ensure that Canadians are being kept informed of what is being done, the new law will require that a ministerial order or order in council regarding suspensions or extensions, together with the reason for making them, be published on a Government of Canada website no later than five days after the day on which it is made for a period of at least six months. It must also be published in the Canada Gazette within 14 days after the day on which it is made.

That is very important. It is a way of ensuring that all parties and all stakeholders are made aware of the extension or suspension of the provisions of this act.

• (1125)

[*English*]

As is clear from this overview, our proposed legislation is targeted, flexible and transparent. It provides the certainty that all Canadians deserve when dealing with the legal system, while promoting the rule of law and giving needed flexibility in key regulatory areas. At the same time, it ensures that needed protections are in place and it recognizes the key role that Parliament plays in holding government to account.

For these reasons, I hope we will find support, not only from this side of the House but from the other side of the House, to make sure that we provide the needed flexibility that Canadians deserve during the pandemic, and to also make sure that they get that information to understand why we would need to prolong or suspend the measures that are applicable in this law.

I look forward to questions from hon. members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. He showed us how important it is to extend deadlines during a crisis like this one.

That reminds me of the answer we got yesterday from his colleague, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who said the Liberal Party, as an organization, was struggling. The Prime Minister refused to confirm that when my party asked him about it.

I wonder if the Liberal Party will continue to struggle until November 21 or, as the Prime Minister said, until December 31. Does my colleague have a sense of just how badly the Liberal Party is struggling?

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question, although he is fully aware that that is not what this bill is about. This is a bill specifically about suspending legislative pro-

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visions that include a time limit. Rather than making a connection, I would prefer to stick to the framework of the bill. It is not that I do not want to say anything, but I fail to see any logical connection between the two things my colleague is trying to conflate in his question.

What I can tell him is that this bill is very important for reassuring Canadians that the law will continue to apply to them despite the usual time limits if they are doing what is required by law. That is why we added this flexibility, so we could make sure that certain provisions could be suspended and others could be extended for up to six months, as well as those that go to the end of this year, that is, December 31, 2020.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very detailed and precise speech.

I would like to ask a question about direct assistance for people with disabilities. The number or percentage of people with disabilities who are eligible for this additional \$600 has increased compared with the previous Bill C-17. However, the bill still falls short of covering all people with disabilities. I know there are differences between how the federal and provincial governments consider these data.

Could my colleague make a commitment, as a member of the Liberal Party, to do whatever is necessary to increase this assistance so that all people with disabilities can be helped, as called for by the NDP?

• (1130)

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

As I said to our Bloc Québécois colleague, I would prefer to limit the debate to the provisions and framework of this bill.

As I said, the bill addresses two categories of problematic time limits that need immediate attention. The first is time limits in civil litigation. The second is regulatory deadlines in federal acts and regulations. Again, I cannot connect this to any other situation. That particular situation does not fall within the context of civil litigation. This is specifically about regulations where Canadians might find themselves in a situation that violates the usual time limits set out in other legislation. The bill we just introduced allows certain aspects to be suspended for up to six months or extended in order to ensure that Canadians who are trying to do the right thing can comply with the law. We will ensure that by following the regulations, they are not breaking any laws.

[*English*]

How they would find themselves outside of the positions of respecting the timelines that are already contained in previous legislation.

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Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always learn something when the member for Hull—Aylmer addresses the House. It struck me that we are thinking of deadlines and time limits and legal technicalities that would be not normally the subject here in the House during this confinement because of the coronavirus, which is already a terrible and difficult time for people. Imagine if someone were also going through a divorce or a court hearing and the outcomes were in jeopardy.

I am glad to hear there is flexibility and discretion being given to the courts, but I want to understand more about the safeguards so that we do not see abuse either from this flexibility, but certainly that the aims of justice are served.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to answer questions from my hon. colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle, who is doing an outstanding job of representing her constituents here in the House of Commons, especially in a serious situation like this pandemic.

She is perfectly right, and this matter is extremely important to all Canadians, especially those going through a divorce, for instance. They have certain time limits they need to meet, but the pandemic is getting in the way. We are introducing a housekeeping bill to give Canadians some degree of flexibility so they can do what they have to do in certain situations, such as divorce proceedings, which are not easy. We will make sure they are able to meet the stated time limits thanks to the flexibility that this bill provides.

[*English*]

This is a great way to reassure Canadians that even though they are in this pandemic, which is stressful enough, and whatever situation they are in, such as in the case of a divorce, for example, which is extremely upsetting and difficult for those parties, that we have created the flexibility in the legislation to allow them to continue with two tough things, making sure they are not sacrificing their rights or the opportunity to seek out justice or reparations.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I raised the issue of how complex this bill is. Many questions are left unanswered. For instance, Bill C-20 expands access to include seasonal businesses, businesses that were not eligible for assistance before.

There are several questions in my mind. Will the assistance be retroactive? Will it also apply retroactively for those who have been receiving it for months or for new businesses? This could change a lot of things for a business, helping it survive. Being able to get retroactive financial support could be good for a business. I am wondering if that will be on offer.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The bill provides individuals and businesses with the certainty that if they take legal or regulatory steps, they will now have the flexibility to ensure that they can deal with matters during the pandemic.

If, because of the pandemic, they cannot meet certain time limits set out in the bill, this legislation gives them some flexibility. This will allow them to continue their activities and meet the time limits stipulated in the bill or any deadlines they may have to meet in their particular situation.

The bill introduces a certain flexibility. This gives Canadians, businesses and individuals, the certainty that they can continue their activities and meet all the established time limits.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour once again to rise in the House and enter into debate. It is good to be back in Parliament, regardless of the time of year. Even though summer is not normally a time Parliament sits, we have important business to do, so it is good to be back.

In my 10-minute speech, I hope to cover a whole range of subjects, but I want to bring up something that constituents talk to me on a regular basis about, and that is the deterioration in trust that has taken place between Canadians and their government.

On October 21, Canadians sent a minority Liberal government to Ottawa and a strong Conservative opposition and two other parties. Throughout the last number of months, we have not seen an attitude from the Liberal government that it has clearly had its hand slapped by Canadians for a series of ethical failings, among other things. Rather, we have seen a government that clearly seems to want to maintain an aura of not just majority rule, but one in which the current Prime Minister also feels he has a divine right to rule this country in whatever regard he feels according to the whim of the day.

That has caused a deterioration in trust. What I hear from constituents time and again every day, whether by email or phone or when stopped in a grocery store, is that there has been a deterioration in trust between Canadians and the institutions of government. That trust is a sacred thing. It builds the very foundation of what our democratic process is all about.

We have seen a number of ethical violations. In fact, the current Prime Minister is the only prime minister to have been found guilty of ethics violations not once, not twice, but now one that would seem to be well on his way to a third violation. Yet we have seen investigations stymied and documents not being released and cabinet confidences not being waived, although I note that the parliamentary secretary to the House leader made an impassioned defence of why the Prime Minister did not mislead the House earlier, saying instead that they took unprecedented action to release everything.

The facts simply speak for themselves. There is so much more to the story than what we are learning. We find ourselves in the midst of the WE scandal. We find once again that the Prime Minister does not know the line. He seems to wander back and forth between politics and government, and even seeing his family and friends benefit from the power entrusted to the government to govern the country. That is causing an erosion of the sacred trust that exists between the institution of government, including the House, and Canadians.

It is increasingly clear, and I certainly hear about it on a daily basis, that trust has been lost. In fact, in question period yesterday, I asked the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth if she knew about the Prime Minister's conflict of interest. It was not an hour after question period that an article came out revealing that she had met with WE only a few days prior to this announcement. That deterioration of trust is having a significant impact.

I have the honour of sitting on the ethics committee, where we saw something truly unprecedented. There was a quite simple motion to say that we should shine the light on this scandal and get the information we need, yet we saw government members of that committee filibuster and try to shut down the proceedings. Canadians expect better from their government. I wrote down a number of quotes and checked the minutes of the meeting afterward, and a lot of the things the government members said show a stunning level of hypocrisy.

I will be splitting my time with one of my hon. colleagues from Quebec, and I will not try to pronounce his riding's name out of respect for the French language. I appreciate the reminder to say that.

• (1140)

We have a government that is being rocked by another ethics scandal.

With respect to the bill we are debating today, I have heard a number of the members opposite say that it is all the fault of the Conservatives. In fact, it is probably Stephen Harper. That seems to be the thing they say most regularly. I see the parliamentary secretary to the House leader is probably preparing a question right now. When we were faced with a pandemic that changed the way all of us, all Canadians, and pretty much everybody around the world, lived our daily lives, instead of rising to the challenge regarding where we were as a parliament, we saw a shutting down of Parliament.

The members opposite have said very clearly that we have asked more questions now than we ever have, and it is probably Stephen Harper's fault again. What is very clear is that the government emphasizes style over substance. We admit there were a lot of questions, and we were happy to work within the context of ensuring there was democratic accountability. However, we saw a shutdown of all other aspects of Parliament, including committees. In fact, it was only a few days ago that we saw the opening up of a few other committees.

The ethics committee only met for the first time this past Friday, after a break of a number of months. When I tell my constituents that I am on the ethics committee, their first comment is that it must be really busy or they ask if the Prime Minister actually allows it to

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do anything. It is unfortunate. I will note that shortly after the ethics committee was struck in this new Parliament, we attempted to have the Ethics Commissioner come to committee to have an honest dialogue about what was found to be a second violation of the Prime Minister with respect to ethics rules and the Liberal members voted against it.

There are so many aspects of the ethical failings of the government. My constituents have continually referred to them as the "cottage chronicles". Quite often the Prime Minister would make an announcement, with few details and clarification on those details later in the day. A whole host of questions would remain on any of the programs that had been announced and in some cases there would be months of delay before seeing those programs implemented.

Regarding the bill at hand, specifically with respect to the disability portion of this, the Conservatives support ensuring that those who need support get it. The members opposite have said that these delays are the Conservatives fault. Let the record state very clearly that the Conservatives made it clear that we were happy to deal with the legislation and that Parliament should be the body to do so. However, the Liberals played politics with that and shut it down.

There are three main aspects to the bill. We have the wage subsidy, for which a lot of businesses are applying. Some are benefiting, but when I speak to small and medium-sized businesses specifically, they talk about how complicated some of these applications are. When I read through the portions of the bill that deal with the wage subsidy, we see further complications. For a large firm with a corporate office in a large city, that is okay, because it has accounting and legal departments. The accounting and legal departments of the small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in a rural constituency such as mine, is often one person, or a part-time role, or a hired accountant or they simply do the books themselves. Therefore, the unnecessarily complicated nature and aspects of the bill make it more difficult for people to apply.

I have a brief comment on the justice elements of the bill. Certainly, with the times we find ourselves in, it is necessary to have a look at these, but I would note that deterioration of trust, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. When I read the aspects of the justice portion of the bill, the thought in the back of my mind was whether the Liberals were trying to sneak something into this that would have that negative impact on Canadians.

• (1145)

I look forward to answering questions on this and trying to dive into many aspects of this important debate today.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about substance versus style, I am afraid you would not provide me the amount of time that would be required for me to address the member's statement, especially if we want to compare this government to the previous government. The substance has been plenty on this side since we have been in government, and I sat in opposition benches when it was all style. It was called the Harper bubble.

Having said that, the member makes reference to the legislation, trying to give the impression that when it comes to the issue of disabilities, maybe we could have done it earlier. The member needs to be a bit more forthright with members and those who are following the debate. The Conservative Party did have the opportunity to support the passage, as did other political parties in the chamber. We could have had support for people with disabilities weeks ago had it not been for the tactics of the Conservatives.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, the member is right in as far as it could have been passed. However, because the Liberals have shut down Parliament and refused to allow Parliament to do its job, it was not.

When it comes to playing politics, it is a shame really that the Liberals would play politics with an institution like this, that they would use this very House of Commons, which is the pinnacle of Canadian democracy, as a bargaining chip in political discourse in the country. It is the only body where we can be assured that it is not a small group of reporters where the state broadcaster gets a disproportionate number of the questions, but it is truly members who represent every corner of our great country.

The member suggests that somehow the Conservatives tried to shut it down or would not allow it. It is shameful that the Liberals are not allowing Parliament to do its function, not only with respect to its constitutional function but also with respect to the ability for Parliament to do the job that Canadians expected it to do: the essential service of ensuring for my constituents, like the constituents of every member within every corner of the country, that I am doing the job they sent me here to do. It is unfortunate that this continues to be the attitude represented from the other side.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for raising a fundamental aspect of democracy, namely trust.

My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean and I often say that we must never forget who we work for. We work for our constituents. My colleague aptly and rightly pointed that out.

My colleague talked about the erosion of our constituents' trust in us. I liked his comment that some people are saying that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics must be really busy. That speaks to the cynicism that we see in society.

Many ethics issues have been raised, and the Prime Minister's ethics violations have been brought up. Something just sprang to

mind. If we want to keep our constituents' trust and prevent that trust from deteriorating, maybe we should not personally benefit from the measures we are talking about. I am referring to the emergency wage subsidy.

Does my colleague agree that if a political party is benefiting from the emergency wage subsidy, it is contributing to the erosion of the public's trust in us and feeding public cynicism?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the decisions made within the party to which he has referred, it was a party decision in which MPs had no involvement. I will leave it to the party to answer those questions.

However, he does talk about trust. During the ethics committee last week, the hon. member who spoke before me, the member for Hull—Aylmer, made the comment that democracy was fragile.

I see one of the other committee members sitting across the way, whose constituency I fail to remember. She made a number of comments around the stereotype of politicians, and she is right. There is this negative stereotype around politicians. When we see a prime minister's family benefiting \$300,000 from an organization with close ties to the Liberal government, a \$900-million sole-sourced contract that would have resulted in \$42 million in fees and a whole host of questions surrounding that, the stereotype, unfortunately, of politicians and pork barrel politics is true. It causes a deterioration of that trust, that fundamental and sacred trust that exists between Parliament, its members and Canadians. It is a trust that is difficult to earn and unfortunately it is being eroded.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-20, which seeks to provide new support for Canadians in need, and to make my voice and that of my Conservative colleagues heard. We have repeatedly asked the government to make changes to the tax programs and support programs for the forgotten members of our society.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to extend my condolences to anyone who has tragically lost a loved one, or loved ones, to COVID-19. I would also like to thank all of the essential front-line workers and those who are still working to help anyone who is vulnerable and sick because of this terrible virus that has left us all powerless.

Summer is here, but unfortunately, the time for resiliency is not over. We are still facing a lot of uncertainty as a result of new pandemic-related setbacks. Canadians old and young have had their lives, their health and their well-being upended as they face an uncertain future. While I support the measures set out in the bill before us today, I am still outraged. I would be remiss if I failed to mention my indignation against the Liberal government, which was slow to close our borders even though we pushed for it to do so at the first sign of the virus.

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We also had to demand a mandatory quarantine for foreign nationals arriving in Canada. That was non-negotiable for our own protection. The Conservative members were the first to support increasing the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%. The Conservative members were also the first to say that the CERB should be opened up to include volunteer firefighters and other low-income earners who were slipping between the cracks. The Conservative members were also the first to say that the agricultural sector should be designated as essential infrastructure.

Members will remember that the previous economic crisis in 2008 happened under a Conservative government, which, I would point out, succeeded in balancing Canada's budget while stimulating economic growth and bouncing back from a crisis that hit Canada harder than any other G7 country.

Faced with the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, many of my constituents are so worried about what lies ahead for themselves, their children and future generations that they do not know where to turn. I certainly understand how they feel.

This minority Liberal government has been on a spending spree since 2015, although we were in good shape at the time. We have therefore had to work hard and work together to reach a consensus and expose any possible fraud or potential risks in the various programs being announced. We demanded that any infrastructure projects that were ready to go in Quebec get started right away to help with the economic recovery.

We pressured the government to support local media. We also advocated for high-speed Internet access throughout the regions, which the Liberals have been promising for five years now. We are keeping a close eye on the public purse, and always will, for we can no longer afford Liberal extravagances that are unjustified or reserved for their close friends and donors.

The Conservative members of the official opposition are paying close attention to both the reasonable measures that need to be implemented and the unthinkable ones. We are involved in policy development via video conference. We are taking part in many virtual advisory committees and sharing the concerns of Canada's small businesses, which are struggling to survive. As one might expect, a good many sectors have been overlooked.

We are all rising to the challenge of doing things differently and changing the way we live and protect ourselves. For many of us, not being able to go to work every day has shown us how proud we are, how independent we are, and how much our daily work plays into our sense of identity. Bolstered by our values, we are going back to work, in solidarity, to help create wealth and economic prosperity.

The Liberal government's economic and fiscal snapshot showed a massive \$343-billion deficit, and total federal debt this year will hit more than \$1 trillion. That will be a deep hole to climb out of.

Canada has never fallen so far. It has the highest unemployment rate in the G7. It is the only G7 country that has lost its AAA credit rating. Worse yet, it is the only G7 country without a recovery plan.

While we plan on supporting this assistance, we are well aware that we cannot trust this Prime Minister to lead Canada's recovery.

• (1155)

The government's excessive taxes, wasteful spending and massive deficits put Canada in an incredibly weak and precarious position even before the pandemic started.

Conservative members want to help Canadians who need assistance. We proposed the back-to-work bonus, a plan to make the Canada emergency response benefit more flexible and more generous, so that workers could earn more as businesses gradually reopened. We are on the road to economic recovery. The Conservative official opposition is responsible for the financial future of my grandchildren and all future generations of Canadians and it is focused on finding concrete, effective solutions for our industries that create jobs, our workers who pay taxes and the growth sectors that generate revenue for Canada. We all know that the Conservative Party is the only party that can replace the current government, but this is not the time for such decisions, because we are convinced that we can continue to work together to face the critical months of the second wave of the virus.

I have the privilege of sitting on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. The pandemic has obviously not affected the Prime Minister's overwhelming desire to flout the law and the rules of ethics and transparency.

I can tell you that on Friday, July 17, 2020, I would not have wanted to be a Liberal member of Parliament. My pride would have been seriously wounded, having to deal with the Prime Minister's third major instance of wrongdoing and the Liberal members' filibustering. The Liberals had a lot to say before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. They systematically obstructed the committee's work, preventing Canadians with serious questions about the close ties between the Prime Minister and WE from finding out what is really going on. It is Canadians' democratic right to know the full truth about this new Liberal scandal. Transparency is important in the deliberations of the Prime Minister's Office.

Although I seriously doubt it, will the Prime Minister waive cabinet confidence this time and finally tell us the truth? Media reports indicate that three members of the Prime Minister's family were paid \$300,000 to attend WE Charity events, some of which took place during the Prime Minister's first term. Since 2016, the Prime Minister's mother has spoken at approximately 28 events and received \$250,000. The Prime Minister's brother spoke at eight events and received about \$32,000. The media also reported that the current Finance Minister did not recuse himself from the Liberal cabinet review of the WE contract despite the involvement of two members of his immediate family in the charitable organization, one of them as a paid contract worker.

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We should also note that the Minister of Natural Resources and the Prime Minister's chief of staff apparently also helped raise \$400,000 for the charitable organization in 2010 and 2011, before the Liberals took office.

During a pandemic, we need to implement exceptional measures. We are certainly not going to let this Prime Minister, his family and friends receive or give preferential treatment to take advantage of the situation and profit from it. This Prime Minister, like a spoiled child who only apologizes when he gets caught red-handed, will be watched very closely and continually to make him accountable, and will have to continue to work with us to plan our country's economic recovery. He sometimes seems to forget that he has a minority government.

• (1200)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about ethics. There was the private island, SNC-Lavalin and now WE Charity. This is the third strike, as my colleague from La Prairie mentioned yesterday. He also said that the Prime Minister should perhaps get a direct line to the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. The Bloc Québécois proposed that the Prime Minister step aside until we shed light on this whole affair.

What does my colleague think of that?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Ideally, perhaps the Prime Minister would step down, but given how Parliament works, I would be really surprised if he did. Still, I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois for being willing to stand with us at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics over the next few days.

We think the committee will meet tomorrow, and we expect obstruction. We hope the Bloc Québécois will stay and vote with us so we can finally shed some light on this and get the full truth on the Prime Minister's ethics.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the opposition for his comments today.

A few weeks ago, the opposition had an opportunity to support legislation that would have helped people with disabilities who are struggling.

My question is very straightforward. Is the official opposition going to support the government on this provision, which is very clear and seeks to support people with disabilities and increase the emergency wage subsidy? Are the Conservatives going to support the government, yes or no?

• (1205)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I indicated in my speech that we were in favour of this provision, which is more in line with the help that is needed now that an adjustment has been made.

We always agreed with supporting persons with disabilities. The last time, it was presented with other provisions that we did not agree with. Today we will move forward.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech.

Often people say that this side of the House does not offer any proposals. However, the Conservatives proposed that a change be made to the CERB, that it be regressive in order to make it more accessible to people who would want to go back to work. The emergency wage subsidy is interesting, but it could also be paired with the Canada emergency response benefit to better coordinate both programs.

I would like to have a few more details on this proposal.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Beauce. He is very active in his riding and works for the people of Beauce. I want to congratulate him personally.

Whenever the government needs to act—in collaboration with the opposition parties, because this is a minority government after all—we need to ensure that the focus is on investing in the economy.

Canadian companies, small and medium-sized businesses and their millions of employees are the ones who will support the Canadian economy. We must ensure that those jobs are not lost this year, next year or in the years to come. This money should go to the businesses and those who are maintaining jobs, to help them overcome this massive, global challenge. Canada's main challenge will be to maintain jobs, and we need to work with Canadian companies on this. All federal assistance must go towards helping businesses keep people employed.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has, in fact, been investing in Canada's small businesses, whether it is through working with financial institutions for loans or through the wage subsidy program. The legislation that we are debating today would assist in making some of the changes to modify the program so that, again, even more businesses will benefit from it.

Would the member, as a general thought, agree that the government is in fact putting the right amount of resources into supporting Canada's small businesses and our communities through the CERB program?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, my colleague raised an important point.

In the beginning, the government's earliest initiatives were only for individuals. Members on this side of the House put a lot of pressure on the government to make sure businesses were not forgotten. We asked the government to make changes so that Canadian businesses could keep their employees in the short term and through the coming months. If businesses lose their employees, we will lose our businesses, which make up the economic fabric of this country. Businesses drive our economy, and the future depends on helping them.

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[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to be here this afternoon to talk about Bill C-20 and the government's response to COVID-19. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered here on the traditional lands of the Algonquin people.

Before I go on, I want to take a moment. Usually we never meet in July, and this is a very important week for me personally, and the entire Tamil community, so I want to just take a moment to acknowledge the horrific events of Black July, which started on the evening of July 22, 1983. Mobs armed with an electoral list of Tamil homes went door to door in Colombo, Sri Lanka, beat and killed over 3,000 Tamils, and looted their homes and businesses.

This period, known as Black July, sparked an armed conflict and the mass exodus of Tamils out of Sri Lanka. The anti-Tamil pogroms forced many, including my family, to seek refuge in Canada. The government of Pierre Trudeau at that time enacted a special measures program to assist over 1,800 Tamils to settle in Canada. Today, this community is over 300,000 strong, and I am so very proud to be part of this community from coast to coast.

With that, I want to take a moment to reflect on the most vulnerable in our society, particularly as a result of COVID-19. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the refugees who are in many camps around the world, struggling in cramped conditions in UNHCR tents or displaced altogether. There are over 80 million displaced people around the world and over 30 million refugees. I want to recognize them and all those who support refugees, both abroad and in Canada, and particularly those who are vulnerable in Canada, who have come in search of freedom but are unfortunately struggling with COVID-19, as are all of us across the globe.

This pandemic has had a very profound effect on all of us, but none more than our seniors. I want to talk about long-term care homes in my province of Ontario, and also locally at the Altamont Care Community in Scarborough—Rouge Park. We lost 52 residents and one staff member to COVID-19, so we have lost 53 people as a result of COVID-19. This is just in one home. There are four other homes: Orchard Villa in Pickering—Uxbridge, Holland Christian Grace Manor in Brampton South, Hawthorne Place Care Centre in Humber River—Black Creek, and Eatonville Care Centre in Etobicoke Centre. All five MPs who correspond to these homes have written to Premier Doug Ford, as well as the Prime Minister.

We are asking the premier to initiate a public inquiry, similar to that of Ipperwash, to make sure that we do not make the mistakes that we made in long-term care homes. Some 80% of deaths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are a result of people living in long-term care homes. These are our seniors, and it is a national shame. I would say that we have failed our seniors, those who are in long-term care homes, and I am saddened to stand here today to even talk about it. The report from the Canadian Armed Forces, who were deployed to these five care homes, really does shed light on what we need to do, and I want to emphasize and ask the Premier of Ontario to make sure that we do right and get to the bottom of this.

Equally, the five colleagues, including myself, wrote to the Prime Minister seeking national standards for long-term care homes. I realize that there are challenges, in terms of jurisdiction. As a federal government, we are not directly responsible for long-term care homes. Nevertheless, as a government that is responsible for Canadians and to Canadians, it would be incumbent upon us to take some leadership and make sure that we have national standards of care for all those who are in long-term care homes. As a government, we regulate everything from plastic bags to toothpaste and all kinds of consumer products, and, for the life of me, it is hard to imagine why we cannot have some form of minimum standards set for long-term care homes.

● (1210)

I think it is long overdue, and that conversation needs to take place. I look forward to working with the government, as well as our friends across the aisle, to ensure that this does not happen again.

I also want to note that the government recently announced \$19 billion toward a safe restart program. This is part of our government's response to COVID-19. This \$19 billion will go, in part, toward supporting long-term care homes, especially the deficiencies that are outlined in the report by the Canadian Armed Forces. We are hopeful that the immediate response, in case there is a second or third wave, will be mitigated by the additional financial support that our government is giving to the provinces and, in turn, that should filter in toward long-term care homes.

I also want to address another issue that has been quite troubling to me, and that is the issue of systemic racism. I have spoken about this many, many times in this House and with many of my colleagues, including colleagues from across the aisle. I want to acknowledge that a couple of weeks ago many of us got together and wrote a letter that was signed by many members, led by the member for Hull—Aylmer and of course supported by people like my friend from Hamilton Centre, where we highlighted the need for the government to address the issues of systemic racism.

One thing that COVID-19 has shown us is that it has an impact on racialized people. Whether it is people working on the front lines as workers at hospitals, working as cashiers or working in the restaurant industry, for example, there is a significant impact of COVID-19 on racialized people.

In places like the United States and England, we have specific numbers that speak to this racial divide, but in Canada we do not keep those kinds of statistics. I believe that one of the things we really need to do is gather that information and make sure that we connect the dots between race, poverty and health services. I hope that this is an opportunity for us to learn and, again, mitigate in terms of a second wave.

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With respect to overall systemic racism, it is very clear that racism affects many people and it affects them differently. Anti-black racism is profound in our history. It continues. The social results are very obvious. The numbers kind of speak for themselves. Whether it is with respect to the social determinants of health, issues of incarceration or issues of education streaming, there is a profound impact on Canada's black community, as well as indigenous peoples, who, since Confederation, have been rendered to be second-class citizens in all aspects.

This conversation was sparked by the tragic killing of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police, but of course in Canada we have seen our share of these tragedies, including the brutal attack on Chief Allan Adam at the hands of the RCMP, and the death of Chantel Moore.

We have seen calls for governments at all levels to reimagine what policing looks like, to reimagine how interaction between police and individuals is, especially those who may have mental health issues and those in racialized communities. I think the moment is now for us to seize and make sure we address the systemic issues that have led to these devastating results. I hope that we will be able to work collaboratively to advance these issues in the months to come.

• (1215)

Support for Canadians with disabilities is something our government has been trying to do from the beginning. There have been a number of measures we have put in to support all Canadians, and I will speak to that at the end. However, with respect to this legislation, it will directly assist people with disabilities with a non-reportable payment of \$600 to all eligible individuals who receive the disability tax credit.

We have worked hard since the start of this pandemic to provide support for vulnerable Canadians and to ensure that the response plan leaves no one behind. We need to make sure that Canadians with disabilities who are facing additional costs related to the pandemic get the support they need. This payment would also flow to those who are eligible for other disability benefits or supports, such as the Canada pension plan disability benefits, the Quebec pension plan disability benefits or one of the disability supports provided by Veterans Affairs Canada. This would benefit approximately 1.7 million Canadians with disabilities who are facing additional expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the 2017 Canadian survey on disability, 22% of Canadians aged 15 and over identify as having a disability. The rate goes up with age, with 38% of Canadians over 65 and 47% of Canadians over 75. We know that among working-age Canadians with disabilities, more than 1.5 million, or 41%, are unemployed or out of the labour market entirely. Among those with severe disabilities, the rate increases to over 60%.

These Canadians face challenges each and every day, and they do it with determination. They deserve the support of their government. Our government has worked closely with the disability community during this time of crisis, including the COVID-19 disability advisory group, which is advising the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. The group has shared details about the lived experiences of persons with disabili-

ties during the pandemic, along with disability-specific issues, systemic gaps and potential responses. Our government will continue to work hard to increase accessibility and remove barriers, and it remains committed to a disability-inclusive pandemic response and recovery.

I want to take a minute to acknowledge some of the incredible organizations in Scarborough that have been working to address and support people with disabilities during this pandemic. I want to start by thanking the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre, which does magnificent work with young people with autism who are on the spectrum. The Wellspring Centre, which I was able to visit last week, is a respite care facility that just reopened. I was able to meet with its team and some of its clients. It is a relatively new organization, but one that is very promising and that will really support a lot of people with disabilities.

Community Living is another one. Many of us in Parliament have very important Community Living locations in our ridings. There are several in my riding, and I am always awed by the work they do and the level of commitment their staff and volunteers have in supporting those with disabilities. TAIBU Community Health Centre is located in Scarborough North, adjacent to my riding. It is the only black-focused community health centre in North America. They do some great work, especially supporting those with sickle cell disease and other issues related to the black community, and I want to thank them for their work.

The next aspect of my discussion today is about broadening the Canada emergency wage subsidy. It is now one of the pillars of the government's COVID-19 economic response plan. The Canada emergency wage subsidy was introduced to prevent further job losses, encourage employers to quickly rehire workers previously laid off because of COVID-19, and help better position the Canadian economy as we transition into the post-pandemic recovery.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy can continue to protect jobs by helping businesses keep employees on the payroll and encouraging employers to rehire workers previously laid off. We are already seeing lower unemployment numbers because people are being rehired. It offers more flexibility to employers so that a large number of them can benefit from this subsidy. Employers of all sizes and in all sectors of the economy may be eligible.

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• (1220)

Since we launched this program this spring, about three million Canadian employees have had their jobs supported through the Canada emergency wage subsidy, and that number continues to grow. To help support these Canadians, our bill would redesign the Canada emergency wage subsidy and tailor it to the needs of more businesses. This bill would extend the program to the end of 2020, with the intent of providing further support until the end of the year.

The wage subsidy would be made more accessible by making the base subsidy available to all eligible employees who are experiencing any decline in revenues. This would allow businesses, small and large, that have been struggling throughout this pandemic to get access to the support for the first time and help more Canadian workers get support as a result. This would remove any barriers to growth for firms currently using the Canada emergency wage subsidy program. By removing the threshold for support, they will know that they have support as they work to grow, invest and rehire workers.

Our government is also proposing to introduce a top-up subsidy for eligible employers that have been most adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The redesigned wage subsidy would help position employers and workers for a strong rebound in the post-pandemic recovery.

I want to talk about this program in relation to my experience in the 2008 financial crisis. At that time, I had opened a law firm a couple of years earlier. I had about a dozen staff, and one of the toughest things I had to do at that time, because the economy was contracting, was to lay off staff. I lost a couple of really good people whom I was never able to get back.

From my experience, making sure that companies are supported in keeping their staffing levels is critical to the long-term viability of our economy. It is so important that Canadians be able to continue to work and receive a paycheque, because, ultimately, that is the best form of support any government could give. I am very pleased to say that this program has helped dozens of organizations in my riding and, I am sure, across many of my colleagues' ridings as well.

This is just part of our overall response to COVID-19. Here I want to say a thing or two about the restart program. I know that the city councillor in ward 25, Dr. Jennifer McKelvie, John Tory, the mayor of the City of Toronto, and others have been speaking to us over the last several weeks about their challenges with the city budget and that the \$19 billion the federal government is giving to the provinces will inevitably support them with their restart. I really want to thank them for their advocacy.

The other programs we have, as we know, are the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency student benefit, the GST rebate back in April, the OAS and GIS top-ups, as well as the Canada emergency business account. These are all supports that we have given individual Canadians to make sure they can sustain the financial challenges they have incurred over the past four months.

I want to conclude by thanking all of those who have been working on the front lines, who have been heroic in their efforts. They never set out to be heroes, but they are our Canadian heroes. I want

to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for the work they did in my riding, the front-line workers at the hospitals and in all of the different areas, including trucking, cashiers at grocery stores and, of course, Dr. Eileen de Villa, the medical officer of health for the City of Toronto, for her tremendous leadership.

• (1225)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned that the wage subsidy is very important for small businesses to survive. There is no doubt about that, but with the new bill, it seems there are a lot of complications. People probably need master's degrees in mathematics to understand it, plus a few accountants, if they can afford to hire them.

I will give an example to the parliamentary secretary. If a business experienced an average revenue drop of more than 50% over the last three months, it can get a top-up to its wage subsidy benefit to reach a final top-up number. If we add into the calculations the base wage subsidy, which is if it had lost under 49% of its revenue, it is up for another set of calculations.

So my question for the parliamentary secretary is this: If a business loses 60% of its revenue, what would be the wage subsidy percentage that it would receive in order to survive?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I know that my friend from Edmonton Manning and many others in the House are big advocates of small business.

The fact is that all of these supports are not meant to help each and every one who may be affected. They are supposed to help as many as possible, with the widest net possible in giving that support.

There was a lot of criticism of the existing wage subsidy program. I had a lot of employers who came up to me and said they did not meet the threshold. What this would do is open it up and allow more flexibility in the program, and hopefully will widen the net so that more employers can continue to keep Canadians employed.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, particularly since he talked about seniors, a matter that prompted me to come to the House on a regular basis during the pandemic so that I could take a stand to improve their situation.

I agree with him that we cannot continue to leave seniors out in the cold. However, we have different opinions on how to remedy that problem. I do not think that the solution is to set a standard for the health care systems of Quebec and the provinces.

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The government has been making cuts to our health care system and failing to increase health transfers for years. Does he not think that now is the time to remedy that? Quebec and the provinces are unanimously calling for such action.

What is more, right now, our seniors are receiving just a single cheque for \$300. Does my colleague not think that the government should commit to keeping its election promise and improve long-term support for seniors by increasing the old age security benefit and the guaranteed income supplement?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

I do agree that we all need to do more for seniors. The \$19 billion the federal government has agreed to give the provinces will ensure that seniors, particularly those in long-term care facilities, are supported during this pandemic, and it allows long-term care facilities as well as the provinces to restart.

I believe that to the extent there are ideological differences about how we fund health care, it is important that we have a national conversation and that the conversation include how provinces are currently supporting seniors and long-term care facilities, but also to have national standards that will ensure that all Canadians across the country who are living in long-term care facilities are able to have the same security.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park for providing a very comprehensive outlook on the response to COVID, even going beyond the bill that is here today. He raised very important points about the experiences of people around the world, quite frankly, including in refugee camps. He spoke about anti-racism. He spoke about people with disabilities and, of course, the economy.

One of the things that has been missing is the impacts of COVID on families who are trying to work their way through immigration. We know that currently there are people who have been waiting not 12 months, not 18 months, but close to two years. This situation happened well before COVID, but now during COVID, its impact on the families who have been separated throughout this crisis in this critical time is becoming much more apparent.

What are the hon. member and his government doing to help prioritize family reunification in this time of crisis?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very important question by my friend from Hamilton Centre.

I had a chance to speak to the Minister of Immigration just this afternoon on a number of issues relating to refugees in particular. I know the commitment is there to ensure there is a level of focus on family reunification. Just before the pandemic hit, family reunification in Canada took just about 12 months. I believe that time might have increased because of COVID-19, and I know the minister is committed to ensuring that those numbers are sustained.

One of the concerns I continue to have is the number of refugee cases being prolonged because of this. It is something that really does put people in limbo, and I am hopeful that the government and

the IRB, an independent body of the government, will move toward ensuring that cases are fast-tracked and decisions are rendered sooner than later.

This is an overall disruption to many elements of our justice system, and I think the bill before us does help us in advancing some of those issues within the criminal justice system.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations about struggling through the challenges of owning a law practice during the previous recession. As a former small business owner as well, as an accountant, I can appreciate that perspective.

With regard to the changes in the CEWS legislation, there are many companies that would now qualify with the removal of the restriction that they had to have lost 30% of their revenue. As a small business owner, I can empathize with those business owners who have been struggling with that decision for several months. However, in this proposed legislation, there is nothing that goes back to help these businesses that have been doing this for 120 days already, struggling to hang on to their employees.

Does the member believe there should be a retroactive component to the changes in the CEWS legislation to help those businesses that would now be eligible but were not prior?

• (1235)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question, and I think my friend has framed it very well.

The fact remains that a lot of the measures we have put into place, the economic supports that we have had from day one, are working.

In terms of the health numbers, they are relatively low in relation to other countries. In terms of supports for individuals as well as businesses, they have been tremendously well received, but, as I indicated earlier, yes, there are people who may not have qualified.

The purpose of the government intervention right now with the extension of the wage subsidy is to make sure there is a lifeline for businesses to continue to what we believe is a safe restart and full recovery of our economy, but we need to bridge those businesses up until that time, and this is one additional support that will do that. Is it going to help everyone? No, probably not.

It is not retroactive, because we are looking forward. We are looking to make sure that those businesses are given the support they need to get to the end of the pandemic.

We will reevaluate these programs continuously, and we will come back as and if required.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to come back to the question asked by my colleague from Shefford.

In his speech, my colleague said that we have failed our seniors. That should raise eyebrows among anyone who has been following federal politics for the past 20 years.

I would simply like to point out that in 1996-97 and in 1997-98, under Paul Martin, the federal government cut \$2 billion in health care transfers.

Health care funding has been at an unacceptable level ever since. Today it is a little over 20%. The provinces assume the lion's share of health care funding.

Hearing an MP say we have failed our seniors leads me to conclude that he needs to take a good hard look in the mirror. It is the federal government that has failed seniors.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary has five seconds to answer.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I would disagree with that comment by the member.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Just as a reminder, we are starting the 10-minute rounds, and so the questions after the hon. member's speech will be for five minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today with mixed emotions, because the last time I had the honour of providing a statement to the House, I believed that we could have done better by Canadians. During our debate, as we looked at how we were going to proceed over the summer, I tried to put forward what I thought was a compelling argument to ensure that no one would get left behind in this country.

I have mixed emotions because on one hand, I am proud as a New Democrat that we were able to ensure that the Liberal government removed the penalties in Bill C-20 related to CERB for people who are struggling to get by, and that we at least increased the amount for people with disabilities by adding the CPPD in the sections on disabilities.

I am proud that we have been given some kind of grace period to allow more people to apply for the disability tax credit because, at almost every step along the way, it seems that the response of the government has been an unnecessary obsession with means testing instead of universality, which continues to leave important people behind.

I am here today representing the constituents of Hamilton Centre. I have mentioned in the past that my riding has the third-lowest average household income. We also have a disproportionate number of people who are living with disabilities and are struggling to get by. In the evolution of the supports that we had during COVID-19, the first response of the Liberal government was to come up with a patchwork EI system that left so many people out. The panic in this crisis, and the prospect of facing the end of the month without the

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ability to pay the rent, was not just something felt by people living in poverty, but people who were facing poverty perhaps for the first time.

We remember that the Liberals tried to tie the disability tax credit to a program that would only account for 40% of the population living with disabilities. That leaves out the vast majority of the people in my riding. I suggested to the House that I had a moral obligation, and we all had a moral imperative, to ensure that the most vulnerable people in the country were not left behind, regardless of their citizenship, regardless of their ability to work, regardless of how long they had lived here or where they had lived.

However, here we are, back with Bill C-20. It has had an incremental improvement but still leaves far too many vulnerable people behind. The very definition of disability under the disability tax credit is far too restrictive. It is a non-refundable tax credit, and the lowest-income people living with disabilities do not make enough income to benefit from it.

What I found perverse in the discussion of people living with disabilities was the approach to seniors. The argument put forward by both Liberals and Conservatives was, "What have they lost, in terms of their income?" I say it was perverse because it is very apparent now that our most vulnerable people had absolutely the most to lose.

I shared yesterday that it is not just people infected by COVID-19 who are impacted. I think about my friend, Michael Hampson, who at 58 years old has lived the last part of his life struggling with disabilities and trying to get income support in Ontario. For a brief time, he had hope with the guaranteed basic income. For the first time in his life, he would have said that he could live with dignity because he was not living in the legislated poverty of the Ontario disability support program. Many of my constituents are sentenced to live in poverty under ODSP rates that have been set by both the Conservatives and the past Liberal governments in Ontario.

We come back here and ask what they have to lose, when they have literally lost lives. Seniors were sentenced to live in subpar, substandard long-term care facilities. We know the vast majority of people who died from COVID-19 were connected to these facilities.

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● (1240)

When we argue and debate this bill, it is not just about what is in the bill but also about what is not in it. Who do we continue to leave behind? Why are we still trying to do this piecemeal incremental approach, which we heard by the admission of the previous speaker is designed to get as many people as it can, but not everybody?

Why can we not have universal supports? Why can we not have a government, in a country as prosperous as Canada, that can take care of every person living here?

We look at the \$740 million to support one-time costs over the next six to eight months for measures to control and prevent infections in long-term care facilities that have a growing number of infections. We are not out of this crisis. We have only just begun. At \$740 million, the reluctance from the Liberal government to take national leadership on the state of health care for our seniors in long-term care is the tragedy of this crisis.

There have been scandals in this crisis. I would suggest that WE is a scandal, but it is not the true scandal. The true scandal remains the ineffective way in which the Liberal government delivered or managed the national emergency stockpile supply. We ought to have had millions of pieces of critical PPE that would have protected Canadians at the onset of this. We took direction from medical professionals in the beginning that masks were not required. In my gut, I wondered why that was put forward. At the same time, the Liberal government threw out millions of pieces of critical PPE. I raise that today because we are not going to sit again for quite some time, and we are not out of this thing.

As the provinces continue to open up for business, what the Liberals have done is open us up for a second wave. I talked about the moral imperative to plan for the future. The future is going to be the new normal. COVID is not going away. People will continue to get infected and will continue to die. The question remains: What are we willing to do about it? What can we do to ensure that, next time, someone like my friend Michael Hampson is not found dead in his apartment after four days? How do we make sure we have a health care system that provides enough support to make sure people can check in on our most vulnerable people?

We have the ability to do this. We have the wealth in this country to deliver for all Canadians. It does not have to be piecemeal. We need to recognize that this does, in fact, impact our most vulnerable, and that throwing a \$600 one-time payment to a very narrow section of people living with disabilities is quite frankly not good enough.

We are in a scenario over these next few weeks in which I support this legislation, because it is as good as the government is willing to do, but we deserve better. The people of Hamilton Centre deserve better. The people who are sentenced to live in legislated poverty deserve better. The question always becomes what would a New Democratic government have done differently?

What we would have done differently is that we would have done everything we said we were going to do in the beginning. We would have provided supports for people on EI. We would have provided housing for people and we would have had a just and fair

transition for people into this new economy. We would have had a just recovery.

We have not heard any of those things. While it takes the Liberal government four days to put \$750 billion out to Bay Street, we are stuck in the House still dealing with the government's scandals. Like many Canadians, I want to focus on the things that matter in here, which are the lives that have been lost. That is who I am here for. That is why I am here. When the Liberals make decisions on policy, I encourage the members who are on the opposite side and have all the power to not knowingly leave people behind. The \$600 that is going to come as a one-time benefit is going to leave 40% of the population, the most low-income and vulnerable population, behind.

I invite questions from the government and the opposition to figure out how we can, in the House, support everybody throughout this crisis and into the next phase.

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we continue to work with different levels of government. Whether it is the New Democratic government in B.C., Conservative or Liberal governments in Atlantic Canada or the governments in the Territories, we continue to work with stakeholders in municipalities: indigenous people and the many different stakeholders out there. We develop programs such as CERB and the wage loss program. We identify individuals in society such as our seniors, in particular, and those who are in poverty.

Today, we deal with individuals who have disabilities. It is not our first attempt. We cannot just click our heels and give everyone in society a million dollars. It does not work that way. We have to work within the reality of the situation. This government, with the support of other levels of government, has been very successful at meeting the needs of Canadian society so that we will be in a better position on the road to recovery.

To what degree, for example, would my New Democratic friend have gone further than a \$600 one-time payment for people with a disability, a \$500 one-time payment to our poorest seniors in Canada, \$2,000 for CERB recipients for their paycheques or the millions of dollars being spent in support of small businesses?

What more would he have done?

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• (1250)

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the Liberals can click their heels and provide \$750 billion to Bay Street. What we would have done is what we always said we would do: create a system like CERB that would be universal for people to get through this crisis.

The hon. member knows that \$2,000 a month is what the government identified for people to get by. Simultaneously, people on ODSP are struggling to get by on \$1,200 a month, which means that we are legislating people into poverty but we are bailing out the banks, the ultra-wealthy and the elite in this country.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member who just spoke so eloquently has any idea of what percentage the wage subsidy actually amounts to, for example, for a company that had a downturn or loss of 60%.

Does he have any rough idea?

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, no, I do not, actually. I have been paying attention to the people who are struggling to get by in my community.

I can share with my colleagues that every step of the way, much like the CERB application, the wage subsidy application was also a boondoggle, in terms of providing clear direction as to who does or does not qualify. Sole proprietors and unincorporated companies do not qualify.

Again, there is a lack of clarity. Not only do the public and businesses not know, but our own senior members do not know. We know that because they are online, coaching people on how to apply within parameters that may or may not meet the suitability of the programs that the government put forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his passionate speech.

I would like to hear what he has to say about the Liberal government's priorities and how fast it can make decisions and get things done depending on who it is helping. When it comes to awarding a sole-source contract to an organization that has close ties to the Prime Minister and pays money to his mother and his brother, it is done instantly, without even getting the public service involved. When it comes to helping the banks, it happens at super speed. When it comes to backtracking on whether or not to give money to companies that cheat and stash their money in tax havens, it takes the Liberal government 24 hours to backpedal, but when it comes to helping self-employed and freelance workers, we have to fight for weeks. When it comes to helping students, we have to fight for weeks. Today is July 21, and yet again, people with disabilities have received no direct aid from the Liberal government.

What would my colleague say about how fast the Liberals can make decisions and take action depending on who they are helping?

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, it is very apparent that the Liberals cannot help themselves from helping themselves in this regard. They can click their heels, and do it quite often.

This is apparent because when we originally passed the motion to support seniors and people with disabilities it was supposed to be without delay, but to this day they are still waiting. There are still going to be people at the end of this bill, 40% of the population, who are going to continue to wait through this crisis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about Bill C-20, an act respecting further COVID-19 measures.

Ever since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and through Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan, our government has done its best to support Canadians and their businesses.

The measures and programs introduced since March have given Canadians a sense of security and have provided them with financial security during a time of total uncertainty.

Many of my constituents have contacted me to say how satisfied they are with our government's pandemic response. They have asked me to thank the Prime Minister for his daily updates and for all the financial support we have provided during the crisis.

Canadians may have been quarantined and isolated, but they have not felt alone during the pandemic because we have been with them from the start.

• (1255)

[*English*]

The Canada emergency response benefit, more commonly referred to as the CERB, allowed those who lost their jobs because of COVID-19 to continue receiving an income in order to pay for life's necessities. This taxable amount of \$2,000 per month was offered to Canadians because in these extraordinary times, they should not have to worry about being able to feed their families, about possibly losing their homes and about paying their bills. Millions of dollars went toward food banks, homeless shelters and women's shelters across the country to help the most vulnerable during these times, as not everybody was eligible for the CERB.

[*Translation*]

In order to encourage businesses to keep their employees on the payroll and to avoid more job losses, our government introduced the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the CEWS. So far this subsidy has allowed three million Canadian workers to stay on their employer's payroll.

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Although this program has already helped millions of Canadians, part 1 of Bill C-20 proposes changes to the Income Tax Act to make the CEWS accessible to even more Canadian businesses, in order to help employers that have been hardest hit by this virus. Part 1 also extends the wage subsidy program until November 2020 and gives the government the possibility of extending it again until the very end of 2020.

[*English*]

Some may argue that as the economy is beginning to reopen and businesses are starting to rehire workers, this program may no longer be necessary. However, it is important to note that our businesses and workers are still facing significant challenges and uncertainty.

The changes that our government is proposing to the CEWS would provide better-targeted support to those who need it most. These changes would extend the subsidy until December 2020, ensure that all eligible employers facing a loss in revenue can qualify, introduce a top-up subsidy to those who have been the hardest hit by the pandemic and ensure that those who are currently using the program can continue to do so and receive support even as they recover.

The redesigned CEWS, the wage subsidy, would help employers rehire workers quickly as the economy improves and better position themselves for the future. Many of the business owners in my riding have relied heavily on the Canada emergency wage subsidy, and they need it to continue for the next while, until they have a better idea of what the second wave of the virus will look like. Businesses thrive when there is stability, and the CEWS provides some level of stability to our economy.

I want to take some time to talk about another part of the bill, part 2, which is very important to me. Part 2 of the bill would amend the Pension Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, the Veterans Well-being Act and the Children's Special Allowances Act to authorize the disclosure of information in order to administer a program that would get more help to people with disabilities, in the form of a one-time, tax-free payment of \$600.

[*Translation*]

This is part of a series of measures to help Canadians with disabilities to pay additional expenses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

When this additional support for persons with disabilities was first announced, only people eligible for the disability tax credit would have been entitled to these payments.

Bill C-20 seeks to extend the scope of those who can receive this payment, allowing 1.7 million Canadians to have access to this benefit.

Recipients of the disability tax credit, CPP disability or QPP disability benefits, or disability support provided by Veterans Affairs Canada will be eligible for this payment.

[*English*]

The Department of Employment and Social Development has the authority to issue a one-time payment to these groups, but strict

confidentiality rules prohibit the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and others from sharing any information with other government departments. That is why amendments to these acts are required. If the proposed legislation is enacted, eligible Canadians would receive the payments automatically.

Canadians with disabilities are some of the most vulnerable and are often the first to be let go in times of economic hardship. The government will invest in projects and programs that help make the workplace more accessible in the coming months.

Other parties feel just as strongly as I do about people with disabilities and want to help as many people who need it as possible. That is why the bill reflects some of the concerns raised in previous legislation and strives to include everyone who needs the supports.

[*Translation*]

The third and final part of Bill C-20 enacts legislation on time limits and other periods in relation to COVID-19. This provides the flexibility needed with respect to certain time limits and other periods that cannot be met because of the exceptional circumstances caused by COVID-19. Specifically, passing Bill C-20 will suspend certain time limits regarding court proceedings for a maximum of six months. In addition, the bill will temporarily allow ministers to suspend or extend time limits regarding specific laws or regulations for a maximum of six months. This is extremely important, since failure to comply with those time limits could have a significant impact on individuals, businesses and the government.

• (1300)

[*English*]

Flexibility is necessary to ensure that Canadians are not penalized for things that are out of their control during these extraordinary times. In these exceptional circumstances, Canadians and businesses may be unable to meet the numerous time limits currently set out in federal legislation, including those for civil court cases and some key regulatory matters. Of course, giving such powers to the government does not happen in usual times, which is why these powers would have a limit. They are to be used only in the context of COVID-19, would no longer apply after September 30, 2020, and would no longer have any effect after December 31, 2020.

At the end of the day, Bill C-20 would help the government better help Canadians, and Canadians have never needed help more than they have during this pandemic, at least not in my lifetime. We must continue to support Canadians as they try their best to make it through these tough times, and we must help our businesses survive so that people have jobs to go back to once this pandemic is over.

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I hope the bill gets the support it deserves from members across all party lines so that we can continue to be better and be there for those who need us during these unprecedented times.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member across the way.

With regard to the disability benefit, which is better because it is more comprehensive and includes our veterans, I wonder if she would make a comment on a statement that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion made when she was speaking to the disability tax credit that includes veterans. The member sat on the veterans committee for a while, and I am sure she is aware that the backlog has not diminished. It has actually grown to almost 50,000 cases, so this funding is important to our veterans. They desperately wait for months, if not years, to get the supports they need. However, the minister said, in regard to getting the disability tax credit, that it is incredibly complicated at the back end and that it will take up to 60 days for the bill to be implemented after being passed today. I am sure the member realizes why this makes veterans shudder.

If there were ways to make this process simpler, would they not be better for getting the money out the door as quickly in this case as we did with the CERB?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I did sit on the veterans affairs committee for a year in the past and saw the hardships veterans were going through. Obviously the backlog was very big, and still is.

I believe the changes we are proposing in the bill may help, in a bigger context, make things a lot easier for veterans at the back end. A lot of the red tape was there because of the confidentiality clauses, which were preventing information from being passed from one department to another. Maybe this can shed some light to help us find new ways to share this information so that things can get passed along quicker when people go from the armed forces to Veterans Affairs. We are hoping the bill can help in that way.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Bill C-17 included the CERB, but the government decided not to include it in Bill C-20. The wage subsidy has been extended, which is good for new businesses. However, many businesses in my riding are having difficulty getting back on track. They are upset that employees want to stay home because they are comfortable with the CERB. This would have been an opportunity to change the CERB by including work incentives in the bill.

I would like to know why the CERB was not included in this bill and what is going to happen with this benefit.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

The aim of this bill is to quickly provide assistance to those most in need. At present, there are issues. Perhaps people feel comfortable with the CERB and we should find other ways to incentivize

people to go back to work, but we are not done. This bill aims specifically to provide assistance to those most in need. We will definitely be taking another look at the CERB later.

● (1305)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague on her speech.

I will continue. People in my riding are talking about veterans and application processing times. Mr. Vézina, a veteran who had a long career in the armed forces, is waiting and trying to get the benefits to which he is entitled, because he was wounded during his military career. We tried repeatedly to help get his case processed. We eventually heard back that Mr. Vézina had been in contact with an official from the department. He last heard from the department at the end of June, thanks to our efforts, but he had not previously heard anything since 2018. We were told that that was the normal time frame.

I would like to ask my colleague whether it is normal for a veteran who served his country and who is entitled to compensation to spend more than two years chasing down his benefits and to be told that this is a normal time frame. I would like to know what would be a normal time frame if the government decided to improve this procedure for our veterans.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank the member for his question.

Of course, every veteran has put his or her life on the line and fought for our country. It is important that he receive the support he needs. I am sure the minister responsible is working hard to improve things in this department.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, the official opposition has been offering solutions to ensure that gaps are filled in programs imperative to restarting our economy. For example, on March 9, Conservatives called for a mandatory quarantine for travellers, and on March 25, it was announced. On March 21, we called for an increase to the CEWS program, and on March 27, it was announced. On April 6, we called for an increase in eligibility to CEBA, and finally, on May 19, it was announced.

There is a pattern here. When the government actually listens to Conservatives, Canadians get results. When it does not, such as when it ignored our practical plan to make CERB more flexible with a back-to-work bonus, Canadians lose.

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Since April, my party has been offering solutions to simplify the Canada emergency wage subsidy, yet here we are in the middle of July looking at making changes to this program through new legislation. This will require businesses of all sizes to hire accountants, lawyers and consultants to figure out if they might even qualify. I am digressing, but as a former public practice accountant who was, up until a year ago, practising and serving many small clients, I can assure the members that this would have made for a very busy summer for me.

I want to take a few minutes to consider some examples from my riding in northern Saskatchewan, where there are still some concerns with this legislation. Cameco, a uranium mining company, announced on March 23 that its Cigar Lake operation was being placed in a safe care and maintenance mode for four weeks. This was to protect the health and safety of Cameco employees, their family members and Cameco's partner communities in northern Saskatchewan.

On April 13, as the effects of the pandemic persisted, Cameco announced that it was extending the temporary production suspension indefinitely until a safe and sustainable restart was possible. The precautions and restrictions put in place by governments and local public health agencies, the increasing and significant concern among leaders in the remote, isolated communities of northern Saskatchewan, and the challenges of maintaining the recommended physical distancing at fly-in, fly-out sites with a full workforce were critical factors that Cameco considered in reaching this decision.

Cameco's president and CEO, Tim Gitzel, said:

The global challenges posed by this pandemic are not abating — in fact, they are deepening. We therefore need to stay vigilant and do everything we can to keep people and families safe. We are especially sensitive to the situation in the remote, isolated communities of northern Saskatchewan that are home to a sizeable portion of the workforce at Cigar Lake.

Cameco firmly believes that the proactive decisions made to protect its employees and to slow down the spread of COVID-19 were necessary decisions, and they are consistent with the company's values. During this period, Cameco, for the benefit of its employees and the northern communities where they live, continues to pay 75% of the salaries of its employees. It has also advocated for infrastructure investments in northern Saskatchewan to support the indigenous and northern businesses that make up the uranium mining supply chain while uranium production is suspended.

Clearly, Cameco recognizes that corporate social responsibility, partnerships and community matter. Early in the pandemic, Cameco created a COVID-19 relief fund and put out a call for organizations in need to apply. Cameco supported 67 community projects in Saskatoon and northern Saskatchewan through this \$1-million fund.

This company is vital to employment and the economy of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, where it employs hundreds of northerners. It has voluntarily chosen not to apply for the Canada emergency wage subsidy until it has clarity regarding its eligibility for the program. I spoke with Cameco yesterday, and its finance team is analyzing the legislation and the backgrounder provided by Finance Canada to determine if the changes offered provide the clarity it seeks.

It has been 120 days since Cameco first suspended operations to keep its employees and the northern Saskatchewan communities safe, and it is just one example of the many companies that have waited too long for the answers they need. To compound this, in the backgrounder provided on the Department of Finance Canada website, there is no provision for retroactive application of these new rules.

● (1310)

I offer a second example. I received an email yesterday from a gentleman who owns and operates a lodge in Saskatchewan's far north. I am going to read his email, because I think he says it better than I could. He wrote:

I do have concerns that while the government is modifying the financial assistance programs to help small and medium businesses, no consideration is being given to seasonal businesses that generate all of their annual income in 2, 3 or 4 months.

While it is welcome news that the Liberal government is extending the wage subsidy, this is providing virtually no assistance to seasonal lodges and outfitters due to the eligibility criteria being tied to the loss of monthly income. For lodges such as ours, where all of our income is generated in one, two, three or four months, we are ineligible for the extended assistance since our lodges aren't operating and therefore have no income - even though we still have employees and are incurring expenses for the...8, 9, 10 or 11 months [for the rest] of the year.

For seasonal businesses, such as in the Canadian lodge and outfitting industry, where many of the operators have had a 100% loss of income in 2020, we are only eligible for assistance for the months in which we generated income in 2019. [My business] has incurred a 100% loss of income in 2020. Our operation normally generates [hundreds of thousands of dollars] of revenue each year during [a short] 45 day operating season. We contribute [hundreds of thousands of dollars] annually to our Saskatchewan suppliers and employees as well as paying federal and provincial income taxes, GST, payroll taxes and retail sales taxes.

Under the current government financial aid programs, such as the wage subsidy, because we are a seasonal business, only generating income during June and July each year, we are being penalized. We can only claim the wage subsidy for two months while we are incurring wage and other costs [I might add] the other ten months of the year.

It appears that the...government has not considered the situation of most Canadian lodges and outfitters, and the needs of seasonal businesses such as ours when formulating and "tweaking" the financial aid packages for small and medium businesses. I don't know if this huge hole in financing assistance affecting the lodge and outfitting industry, which contributes billions of dollars to the Canadian economy, has even been considered in the debate regarding the financial aid packages.

He concludes his email by stating:

Without financial aid for the lodge and outfitting industry, which is at least equitable to that being given to other segments of the economy - many, many lodges and outfitters will fail and close permanently.

These are only two of the many stories I could tell that describe what is happening on the ground in my constituency in northern Saskatchewan. There is a stark contrast between the headlines versus the reality in Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

This government, during the early days of the pandemic, when its attention should have been focused on helping Canadians or maybe, at the very least, avoiding conflicts of interest, issued an order in council on firearms. This provided the media with days of headlines that targeted law-abiding gun owners rather than actual criminals.

Government Orders

On January 24 of this year, Onion Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan declared a state of emergency as a result of a significant increase in drug- and gang-related activity. The leadership of Onion Lake and the surrounding first nation communities signed a western chiefs declaration with the support of the City of Lloydminster to tackle this very serious gang and rural crime problem. Unfortunately, the Liberal order in council does nothing to help these communities. It is headlines versus reality.

In 2015, the Prime Minister publicly claimed many times that the most important relationship for him was the one between his government and indigenous people. He even put it into all the mandate letters of his ministers at the time. Let us review what this relationship looks like for indigenous businesses during a pandemic.

First nation businesses that operate under a very common and limited partnership structure were initially left out of CEWS. On becoming more aware of this issue, I immediately contacted the finance minister's office, and I am still waiting for a reply. After much pressure from many organizations, this error was eventually corrected, and we appreciate that. There remained a gap in the forestry, mining, manufacturing, construction and consumer sales industries for indigenous people. It is headlines versus reality.

Indigenous small and medium-sized businesses heard an announcement on April 18 from the Prime Minister that would offer them short-term, interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions through aboriginal financial institutions, but they did not see any of that money flow until the middle of June, a full two months after the announcement. It is headlines versus reality.

Every time an announcement was made about support for businesses through programs like CEWS or CEBA, it required significant lobbying and exhaustive efforts before the government found a way to include indigenous businesses. It is headlines versus reality.

• (1315)

Being treated like an afterthought during a global pandemic does not strike me as being considered of high importance in a relationship. Again, headlines—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that the wage subsidy program has assisted in wage subsidies for close to three million Canadians. That has literally saved hundreds of thousands of jobs and has provided the opportunity for many employers to keep the employees they had, as opposed to having to let them go. That would have potentially put their businesses in jeopardy.

By working with financial institutions, the government has also provided the opportunity to have more access to capital dollars, which is also important for small businesses. I am sure the member would recognize that Canada's business community is as diversified, if not more diversified, as most economies in the G7. As a direct result of that, even though our target is to hit 100% in terms of

supporting small businesses, there are going to be situations that are truly unique and there are going to be situations in which it will be more challenging for the government to provide assistance.

Would the member not agree that, through our small businesses, we have great diversity, which has allowed our economy to grow during these difficult times and which will help in the recovery ahead?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, the question opens up an opportunity for me to talk about the limited partnership situation in my riding. This is something I advocated for in March. In my riding there are a number of very successful indigenous-owned businesses that operate under this limited partnership model. It is a very common business structure for indigenous businesses across this country.

I have a very clear example of being left out with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, which operates an investment arm called Meadow Lake Tribal Council Industrial Investments. It has a sawmill and some other very significant businesses. The dividends from those businesses flow back to the nine first nations that make up the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

One of those first nations is the same for which, on the week I was elected, I was in touch with the Minister of Indigenous Services' office because the first nation had declared a state of emergency over a suicide crisis. The flow of dividends from indigenous businesses to these communities is essential for them to provide health care, education and social support in their community. For them to be considered an afterthought in the provision of the wage subsidy is, frankly, appalling.

In fact, we had to stand and shout and scream as members of Parliament and as aboriginal business organizations across the country in order for that change to be made. I appreciate that the change was made. Let us give credit where credit is due. However, weeks or months is too long for them to operate on that uncertainty when dealing with what they are dealing with. Today, that same first nation is dealing with a five-year-old child on the bottom of the lake who they cannot find. That is the reality in Desnethé—Missinipi—Churchill River and of the communities affected by these decisions. That is the reality of being the member of Parliament for Northern Saskatchewan and I advocate for those communities.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I really appreciated what he said about his riding. I add my voice to his. In my riding too, many employers called me to tell me about how they are having difficulty recruiting workers. Even employers for community-based organizations told me that they were having trouble getting their employees to come back to work.

Points of Order

I would therefore like to ask my colleague whether he agrees with the proposal made by my party to include employment incentives in the Canada emergency response benefit. I want to ask him whether he believes it would have been worthwhile for Bill C-20 to include employment incentives related to the CERB.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River has 20 seconds to reply.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, I am going to reflect on a comment my colleague from Carleton made yesterday. Maybe there is a collective memory challenge of who presented the idea of back-to-work incentives first. It is an issue that we agree on with the Bloc, but on whether the chicken or the egg came first, maybe we will leave that for another day. Absolutely, we agree that there should be incentives because businesses in my riding are—

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the fifth and seventh reports of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I respectfully submit that the reports each exceeded the committee's mandates and therefore should be found out of order.

Let me begin with the fifth report.

In its order of reference on Saturday, April 11, the House instructed the committee, “to study ways in which members can fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stands adjourned on account of public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary modification of certain procedures...”, and yet the committee in its fifth report has gone well outside the scope of that mandate.

In the interest of time, I will simply work from the recommendations the committee put forward in its report.

On page 27, the committee recommended, “That the House create a Pandemic and Disaster Plan...and that it is rehearsed and updated on a regular basis.” That sounds like something meant to last well beyond the current pandemic.

Next, on page 29, the committee recommended, “That the House of Commons establish an alternative set of Standing Orders which enables the implementation of a virtual Parliament so that the House can continue with its business in the event of a crisis or exceptional circumstances such as those arising from the current pandemic....” The current pandemic is cited as merely an example, not the limit, for that recommendation.

Meanwhile, on page 31, the committee made a couple of other procedurally questionable recommendations, “That the House of Commons undertake the necessary steps to expand its capacity and operations to achieve a fully virtual Parliament...in the event of exceptional circumstances” and “That the House of Commons continue to take an incremental approach, during exceptional circumstances, to the adoption of added parliamentary activities by virtual

means....” Again, the committee looked beyond the current pandemic.

Then, over to page 40, we read that the committee recommended, “That the Clerk of the House of Commons ensure that all committees and party caucus meetings have access to a private, secure platform for in-camera meetings during the current and future emergency situations....”

The theme continues in recommending, on page 42, “during exceptional circumstances, virtual presence of members meets the requirements for quorum....”

Moving along to page 48, the committee recommended, “That the House of Commons set up a secure electronic voting system for conducting votes in virtual sittings as soon as possible...in the event of a pandemic or any other exceptional circumstances....” That one does refer to a pandemic, but simply a generic one, not specifically the current one we are confronting, before then extending into, “other exceptional circumstances.”

Finally, on page 50, the committee recommended, “That the Committee continue its study...in order to be ready to respond quickly to a new crisis.”

All these recommendations contemplate actions well beyond a response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that members can fulfill their duties as parliamentarians during it.

Again for reference, on April 11, the House instructed the committee, “to study ways in which members can fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stands adjourned on account of public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary modification of certain procedures....”

If I put the House's order into plain language, it would be saying to deal with one crisis at a time.

Perhaps this was, dare I say, the Speaker's thinking too when he told the committee on April 21, at page 11 of the evidence:

Once this is over and they have reported, they should continue looking at different options that would keep Parliament running if something like this or something worse should happen again, and look at all of the worst-case scenarios.

There are good policy reasons for a step-by-step approach too. If we can avoid it, we should not be using our management of one crisis, mid-course, as a guide to solving the next one. We would not book, for example, CPR lessons while treading water to stay afloat. However, I am now straying into arguments beyond the scope of this point of order, so let me get back to that.

Points of Order

I will now switch to the seventh report and speak to my concerns there, before getting into procedural concerns which are common to both reports.

Before covering the new content of the seventh report, let me draw the Chair's attention to the final two recommendations on pages 71 and 72:

- (1325)

That the House consider all the work the Committee carried out for the pandemic- and procedure-related studies it conducted. The Committee wishes to ensure all its recommendations are taken into account in the development of any virtual Parliament and in the implementation and use of any electronic systems it might use if adopted. Note that this report supplements the preceding report, entitled Parliamentary Duties and the COVID-19 Pandemic (presented to the House on 15 May 2020), and that all the recommendations are important to preserving the parliamentary rights and privileges of the House and its members.

That, except in cases of clear incompatibility, the recommendations of the previous report, entitled Parliamentary Duties and the COVID-19 Pandemic, be deemed, *mutatis mutandis*, part of this report.

Therefore, it follows that if the fifth report is to be ruled null and void, so too would the seventh report since it too sampled the tainted fruit, so to speak. Nonetheless, there are several new recommendations in the seventh report that also fall wide of the mandate of the committee that was given by the House.

On May 26, after the imposition of closure, a majority voted for the following instruction of the procedure and House affairs committee, found at paragraph (f) of Government Business No. 7, “to review and make recommendations on how to modify the Standing Orders for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of an incremental approach beginning with hybrid sittings of the House as outlined by the report provided to the committee by the Speaker on Monday, May 11, 2020, including how to enact remote voting....”

Turning to the recommendations themselves, let us turn to page 55, with this one that speaks to events beyond the current pandemic, “That the House of Commons adopt a gradual and progressive approach to setting up a virtual or hybrid parliament so that the House may continue its parliamentary proceedings in the event of a pandemic or exceptional circumstances.”

However, the biggest and most substantive recommendation on pages 68 to 71 flagrantly defies the House's instructions. Here, a proposed new and permanent Standing Order 1.2 is recommended by the committee. There is no sunset clause. There is no deadline for it to expire. There is no provisional nature to it. It is a change that will sit on the books permanently. While the Liberals may argue that Standing Order 1.2 itself contemplates being applied on a one-time limited basis, this is still not limited to the current pandemic.

According to section (1), it would apply “In the event of a crisis or exceptional circumstances.” This does not refer to COVID-19; it does not even speak to a pandemic. It bears remembering that the House's May 26 instruction called for the committee to “make recommendations on how to modify the standing orders for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic....”

The seventh report contains a litany of other recommendations referring to situations when the House may have virtual or hybrid sittings. In the interest of time I will not read them all out, but suffice to say that when read in combination with Standing Order 1.2

in its current form, these other recommendations are similarly tainted, as speaking to House proceedings beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic. This is not simply a concern we have, and I would refer the Chair, for example, to the New Democratic Party's supplementary opinions on page 95 of the seventh report, where it said:

...the NDP believes that the scope of this report wavered beyond its boundaries. The committee was tasked with finding solutions for remote participation of members specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some recommendations were outside of those lines, and while the NDP doesn't disagree with the idea of exploring other options and preparing for the future, it does not consider those to be part of the work the committee was asked to do by the House of Commons.

That is especially noteworthy, because it was the NDP that was the Liberal government's dance partner in negotiating passing Government Business No. 7. It would be difficult to find someone in a better position to speak to the intention underpinning the House's instruction to the committee.

Turning to the procedural framework, which undermines each of the procedure and house affairs committee's reports, the committee could normally have considered and made recommendations like these under its mandate pursuant to Standing Order 108(2)(a). However, as the Liberals have liked to point out, these are not normal times. Many things around here are quite different, to say the least, but one of the things that has quietly flown under the radar is that our committee system has not simply migrated over to Zoom to keep their work going.

- (1330)

In order for any committee to hold virtual meetings, it has to have special permission from the House to do so. However, the House has not granted blanket permission to all committees. Instead, under the Liberal motions to date, only specifically named committees have been empowered to use Zoom, and only to do the things spelled out in the Liberals' motions.

That approach extended to the procedural and House affairs committee when subparagraph (m) (i) of the House's order on April 11 stated:

During the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, the provisions applying to committees enumerated in paragraph (l) shall also apply to the committee, however, the committee may consider motions related to the adoption of a draft report in relation to this study.

That topic is the April 11 mandate I have quoted twice already. Under paragraph (l), which was cross-referenced there, the committee was explicitly given a limit to “hold meetings for the sole purpose of receiving evidence related to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

These provisions were, of course, renewed by subparagraph (f) (iii) of the House's order on April 20 which was, in effect, when the committee adopted its fifth report.

Points of Order

To simplify the procedural point here, committees meeting virtually are not allowed to do as they please within their usual range of activities. Similarly, for the seventh report, the committee only held virtual meetings because it was authorized by the House on May 26 to do so, as part of the House's instruction to study procedural changes "for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic." While the government might respond to my point of order by saying that committees are masters of their own proceedings, it just is not as simple as that.

Page 1058 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states:

First, it is useful to bear in mind that committees are creatures of the House. This means that they have no independent existence and are not permitted to take action unless they have been authorized or empowered to do so by the House.

The freedom committees have is, in fact, a freedom limited on two levels. First, committees are free to organize their proceedings as they see fit, provided that their studies and the motions and reports they adopt comply with the orders of reference and instructions issued by the House.

Bourinot's *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, puts it more bluntly at page 469. It states that "a committee is bound by, and is not at liberty to depart from, the order of reference."

Meanwhile, citation 760(2) of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, states that, "Committees receive their authority from the House itself and the authority of the House overrides that of any committee."

Bosc and Gagnon write at page 978 that, "The House delegates certain powers to the committees it creates in order for them to carry out their duties and fulfill their mandates. Committees have no powers other than those delegated to them in this way, and cannot assume other powers on their own initiative."

The next page adds, "In the absence of specific instructions from the House, it is up to each committee to define the exact nature and scope of the studies it will undertake."

As Mr. Speaker Milliken said on March 14, 2008, at page 4182 of Hansard, "Inherent in the power the House grants to its committees is the basic principle that each committee will respect its mandate."

In the present case, the committee could, under the House's instruction, only address the issues within its precisely defined mandate while it was holding meetings by video conference. Therefore, because the committee included a recommendation in its reports that could have only been decided under Standing Order 108(2) at a physical meeting, rather than under the special orders of April 11 and May 26 at a virtual meeting, I want to turn to how this distinction has practical meaningful consequences.

I would pause to note that even if the Chair finds that the May 26 order offered more latitude than the April 11 order, the committee nonetheless reached back to incorporate the fifth report's procedurally flawed recommendation into its seventh report. Nothing the House decided on May 26 cured the defects of the report made under the April 11 order.

• (1335)

Also, I would note that the committee itself, on page V of the seventh report, refers to the report being adopted under the April 11 and May 26 orders of reference, and not Standing Order 108(2).

As to the consequences of the committee's choices, page 991 of Bosc and Gagnon states:

...the Speaker of the House has ruled a report or a specific part of a report to be out of order when a committee has gone beyond its order of reference or addressed issues not included in the order.

Those authors, at page 1001, speak directly to my concerns regarding the recommendations I cited from the fifth and seventh reports, and state:

Committees are bound by their orders of reference or instructions and may not undertake studies or present recommendations to the House that exceed the limits established by the House.

In support of these propositions, I would refer the Chair to the following rulings: Mr. Speaker Lemieux on June 9, 1928, at page 571 of the Journals; Madam Speaker Sauvé on June 29, 1983, at page 26943 of the Debates; Mr. Speaker Francis on June 13, 1984, at page 4624 of the Debates; Mr. Speaker Bosley on December 14, 1984, at page 1242 of the Debates and on February 28, 1985, at page 2603 of the Debates; and again, Mr. Speaker Milliken on April 2, 2009, at page 2301 of the Debates.

Had the procedure and House affairs committee wanted to report on contingency planning for future crises, and there is a legitimate reason to be interested in that, once we have resumed normal operations the committee could have taken up the subject at physical meetings here in Ottawa once it was safe for the whole membership to assemble, or it could have availed itself of the advice of Beauchesne's citation 831(4), which states:

Sometimes a committee may have to obtain leave from the House to make a special report when its order of reference is limited in scope.

To sum up my arguments in conclusion, first, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs exceeds the scope of the mandate given to the committee by the House on April 11, 2020.

Second, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs incorporates from the fifth report the same procedurally flawed recommendations, and also includes new recommendations that also exceed the scope of the mandate given to it by the House on May 26, 2020.

Third, it cannot be argued the reports are justified under Standing Order 108(2)(a), because all of the committee's meetings were held by video conferencing, thereby requiring the committee to observe all of the special conditions imposed upon it by the House and, therefore, both the fifth and seventh reports are out of order and must be withdrawn.

• (1340)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil. I will take due note of the point of order and the Chair will come back with an answer as soon as possible.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Fredericton.

FURTHER COVID-19 MEASURES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be in the House with my colleagues. Once again, it was quite a journey to get here, especially on short notice, but I know there is important work to be done.

I have been supportive of the government as we navigate COVID-19. I also want to thank fellow opposition members for their hard work and for getting things done. I am honoured to be a member of the 43rd Parliament and am proud to be Canadian.

I do have one regret: partisan politics. Quite simply, it has made a mockery of our institution. It has allowed us to perpetuate systemic issues within the House and has pitted us against each other. It inflames hatred and fear, the type that one can read about in the manifestos of domestic terrorists.

I want to offer my sincere concern for our Prime Minister and his family, as well as the Governor General. I think we should all reflect very deeply on what has occurred at Rideau Hall and commit to doing a better job of teaching love in our communities.

Our system sees its members fighting for credit and recognition, and tearing each other down at every available opportunity. It is the people of this country who are suffering. I think of all the Canadians who are eagerly awaiting the one-time payment for persons with disabilities that was proposed in June. It was poor planning and political posturing that has left these Canadians an extra month without aid.

I too have been made to draw lines in the sand where I did not want to. There is no definitive wrong or right side. If we are truly here in the best interests of Canadians, the taxpayers who elected us, then I must ask us all, what are we doing? Why pour our energy and resources into one-upping each other?

This is in no way to say that we are not to disagree, seek clarification, challenge evidence or hold the government to account. On the contrary, what I am calling for is increased participation and collaboration. I am calling for respect. Call it decorum or call it human decency.

On that note, I would like to speak about some of the specifics of Bill C-20. The most important thing we can be doing right now and in the coming months is to ensure that Canadians have the resources they need to meet their needs. I applaud the move by the government to support wages for Canadians. I question the complexity of the system it has devised and I am particularly concerned that the ongoing lack of clarity about the details of this program will make business owners vulnerable to audits and investigations to come.

It is essential that one year from now, or seven years from now, we remember that these programs were evolving in real time and that Canadians who accessed the wage subsidy, the emergency response benefit, the emergency student benefit, etc., did so in good faith based on the information they had available to them at the

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time. Heavy-handed, retroactive penalties will be the wrong approach.

I am pleased to finally see the one-time payment for persons with disabilities being passed, hopefully. My own province has the highest rates of disability in Canada, and many of those with disabilities live in rural communities. The nature of New Brunswick as Canada's only bilingual province means that many francophones living with disabilities are also trying to find adequate resources in their mother tongue. This funding is a step forward, but it should never have taken this long.

I would like to read an excerpt from a letter to the minister responsible for disability inclusion from a newly formed group, the New Brunswick Coalition for People with Disabilities:

...day after day during his daily briefings, the Hon. [Prime Minister] hardly ever even mentioned people with disabilities. Then, when a promised payment of \$600.00 failed to get approved at the House of Commons, we told ourselves maybe we should "let the adults hash it out". But then, we said no. No, we will not sit quietly anymore. This is what has been expected of people with disabilities for too long.... Let's be honest here. [The Prime Minister] said that Covid19 had exposed some "uncomfortable truths" about how we look after our seniors. The truth of the matter is, should we not also be embarrassed of the way we have been treating people with disabilities in this country? Here we have a group of people who live below the poverty line month after month, year after year. With no chance of EVER going back to work... And we sit in the sidelines, watching as the Prime Minister of our beloved country decides that \$2000 per month is the amount needed to get by in this country. And yet... We are asking people with disabilities to get by on so much less. And then, in a time of crisis, we tell them—by not saying anything at all—that we will deal with them last. And when we do decide to help them with a one-time payment of \$600.00, well...it doesn't go through. The only financial aid during this whole Covid nightmare that does not go through.

It is the responsibility of those with power to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are receiving the support they need. Many Canadians were already struggling to make ends meet, particularly because they could not access employment before COVID. For those relying on provincial social assistance programs, CPP or the disability benefit, their regular activities have been terribly interrupted by COVID.

● (1345)

The precariousness of housing, loss of community kitchens, closure of public spaces and limitations on public transit have all had financial consequences for people who are already living on the edge. These citizens should have been among the first to receive aid. Instead, most of them have still received nothing and those living with disabilities have waited five months for a one-time benefit. It is not good enough. There are two weeks before the House is scheduled to sit again and I encourage my colleagues in cabinet to come back to us in two weeks' time with a meaningful pitch to support all Canadians who are the most financially vulnerable.

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I am also encouraged to see that the Canada-China relations committee will be able to continue its work. My hope is that we will be brave enough to be outspoken about China's occupation of Tibet and its treatment of religious minorities, including the Uighur concentration camps, and about the recent security law in Hong Kong.

I am also pleased to see the commencement of virtual meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We have incredibly important work to do as parliamentarians, and the more we enable this activity virtually, the better served each of our constituents will be.

I look forward to seeing how we address the question of virtual voting, especially as we expect a second wave of the pandemic to occur this fall. It would be irresponsible of us to become vectors of transmission in our communities. However, there is no question that we must get on with the regular business of the House to debate and pass important legislation.

This brings me back to my opening comments about partisan bickering hurting Canada. I encourage all members of the House across party lines to consider how we can work together to ensure that the needs of our constituents are best met, rather than the various partisan interests we represent. We have all been experiencing the pandemic as parliamentarians and as individuals. I wish my colleagues well. I hope they are all doing okay.

I know how this experience has affected my family and friends, my staff and their families. There is a collective struggle occurring across Canada and the globe. In this time of crisis, we need to tear down the barriers inherent to our ideologies and find ways that we can align. We need each other. We cannot get through the next phase of this virus without supporting each another as Canadians. We are stronger united. We must be able to have discussions, to challenge norms and stigmatization, but let our example of human decency in the House set the tone for the respect, kindness and compassion we want to see in communities across this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague from Fredericton for her fine speech, which was full of wisdom and empathy. It is immensely appreciated.

I would have appreciated my colleague's speech even more without the background noise, which is getting extremely loud these days. The House is sitting, and it would be nice if the people in the rooms around this one would realize it and be a little quieter.

That being said, to get back to my colleague's speech, I heard her mention seniors. First, I want to thank her for her concern about our families and loved ones. The crisis has affected us, but we are doing well. I think we are resilient and united.

We were talking about seniors and people with disabilities. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion about the idea that, rather than responding to the repeated demands of people with disabilities and the incessant demands of our seniors, we should improve their living conditions permanently. These are demands that have been put forward by the Bloc Québécois, but also by other opposition parties.

Why is the government stubbornly insisting on making one-time payments? A payment of \$300 for seniors and \$600 for people with disabilities seems pretty paltry.

What is my Green Party colleague's opinion on the matter?

● (1350)

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I just think it shows so much about our society today, about how we prioritize, how we have completely lost the idea of eldership and how important seniors are in our communities. We are all going to be there, and we should definitely be trying to improve our quality of life at all stages, but particularly as we face our senior years.

To me, we need to do far more to protect those in our communities who are most vulnerable and who have years and years of experience being Canadian, who have gone through so many things, other difficult times and experiences similar to this. There is so much to learn from them. To support them with a one-time \$300 payment is symbolic of how much we value them, and we should do so much more.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the importance of proper debate. Would she like to comment on the fact that we have not been allowed to debate the way the House should be allowed to do? Our rights and privileges, as the opposition, in holding the government to account have been shut down by the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus, with the support of the NDP, which means that we are not able to do our job in the way the member is suggesting it should be done.

Also, given that she is here today, as we all are, have been and will be for three days in a row, could she comment on why we cannot reconvene the House to do the job it was meant to do, namely, to sit in this place safely and do our job as the official opposition and hold the government to account and improve bills, as we have done today in giving the disability benefit to more people, including veterans?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, to be honest, I have to disagree with the first part of my hon. colleague's question. I feel, especially as a Green Party member, that I have actually been given more opportunities to participate in debate. I particularly enjoy the virtual participation when we have the five-minute question slots, with the back-and-forth that occurs. We are getting our questions to Canadians. We are getting messages from the ministers responsible.

We are having adequate conversations and discussion, but I would love to see virtual voting, because that is the missing piece here. We can do the work we need to do in the House. We need to adapt to the changes that have been thrown our way during this pandemic, and the way to do that is through virtual voting.

I cannot see this room—

An hon. member: If you do not want to come to work, resign.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: I am at work right now, thanks very much. I am still speaking, so if you could respect the decorum—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order, please. Can we allow members to express their opinions civilly?

The member may conclude.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, we cannot fill this room with 338 MPs. It is already quite filled at the moment. Each of us has our own lives, families and communities to return to, and it would be very irresponsible of us to have everyone return. Without virtual voting, without giving members the equal opportunity to represent their constituencies, this is the way it has to be, and I am very supportive of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was very touching. It was a nice call for collaboration.

I, too, believe that we could modernize our way of doing things. We did it once with this hybrid Parliament and we could move toward virtual voting. I think that could help us do our jobs in our respective ridings. It would also help young mothers who want to go into politics while still being able to spend time at home with their children.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that since I know that she has young children.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, we do not have time to hear the answer to that question. I need to give what little time we have remaining before statements by members to the hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East.

[*English*]

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe in helping Canadians, and I also believe this should not be a controversial statement. After all, all of us gathered here today have come together as elected members of Parliament to represent the larger body of Canadians and act in their best interests.

How did the government best help Canadians in this unprecedented time? Let us review.

At first the government believed that this goal would be best accomplished through a massive power grab. The Liberals shamefully tried to use a public health crisis to give themselves the power to raise taxes, debt and spending, without parliamentary approval, un-

Government Orders

til January 1, 2022. When this failed, they reverted to the more tried and true strategy of reckless spending and handouts, telling bureaucrats to bypass necessary checks and balances. Many of the programs developed for aid were ill-conceived and poorly implemented. Parliament needed to be recalled multiple times to correct programs, as outlined by my esteemed colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. All the while, they were racking up a deficit of \$343 billion, which will push our national debt over \$1 trillion. We are the only G7 country that will receive a credit rating drop.

Of course, this has also culminated in scandals. As we are all aware, the Ethics Commissioner is investigating the \$912-million contract to WE Charity, an organization with close ties to the Prime Minister's family. The Prime Minister is the only Canadian prime minister formally found to have broken ethics laws, and the only one who has achieved it multiple times. It has resulted in the steady erosion of the trust Canadians place in their governing body and in their politicians. It makes Canadians question the integrity of government leadership. They do not believe the programs in bills like Bill C-20 will help them in times of need, as they are just another way to line the pockets of certain friends.

The Prime Minister promised sunny ways. He said sunlight was the best disinfectant. Now we are in the middle of summer and there is plenty of sunlight to disinfect any dirty laundry. All he has to do now is agree to subject himself to such exposure by appearing before committees and co-operating honestly with the Ethics Commissioner to the fullest, or else he has failed to live up to his word, once again becoming another example of why Canadians doubt measures in Bill C-20.

I remind my esteemed Liberal colleagues of their duty to hold higher standards. If they stand behind such incompetence and corruption, are they not complicit in the degradation of Canadian governments and the betrayal of public trust? Surely they too must feel some tinge of betrayal from the actions of their leader. The trust they have placed in him to make Canada a better place for their constituencies is eroded, and they are no longer able to hold their heads high and take pride in what they represent, because many find what they represent to be mere sponsorship-scandal-type underhanded politics, a lust for power and a greed to line the pockets of friends.

What I would like to see is a change of mindset in our government and the restoration of the honour of the governing party. We must work together toward economic recovery. As the Prime Minister has stated, "Conservatives are not our enemies; they're our neighbours." The government ought to do the neighbourly thing and listen when the Conservatives give voice in Parliament to the outcry of citizens impacted by the economic downturn resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statements by Members

While we encourage non-partisan efforts to help Canadians and wait for the government to accept them, the Conservatives will continue to press the government to implement the back-to-work bonus and plan to make the Canada emergency response benefit more flexible and generous so that workers can earn higher wages as businesses gradually open. This will truly improve the situations of Canadians in need and help place our economy on the path of recovery.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for his efforts to respect the time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SIKH COMMUNITY IN MONTREAL

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Montreal Sikh community, inspired by the tenets of the religious tradition established by Guru Nanak, places the highest priority on the values of sharing and helping others. These values are lived out every Sunday in gurdwaras through langar community kitchens. They have also been clearly evident during the pandemic.

The Sikh community of Montreal has provided over 63,000 individually packaged snacks to health care workers at the Montreal General Hospital, the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal and the Jewish General Hospital and to staff in seniors homes. It has also provided 450 hot meals to staff in the Jewish General's ICU and emergency department.

The community has donated over \$13,000 to both l'Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur-de-Montréal and the Lakeshore General Hospital for essential equipment.

We thank members of Montreal's Sikh community for their generosity and inspiring example.

* * *

• (1400)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, two weeks ago I was honoured to speak to a group of recreational fishermen and women at the Public Fishery Alliance rally in Vancouver. I give special thanks to organizers Peter Krahn, Dave Brown, Fred Helmer, Chris Bos and many others.

According to Phil Morlock of the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association, more than eight million of us fish recreationally every year and spend \$10 billion annually, yet we have a federal government bent on shutting us down.

The Prime Minister and the fisheries and oceans minister must stop punishing British Columbians for their failures. The government's June 19, 2020, decision to further restrict fishing opportunity is another blow to British Columbians and their communities. Its 2020 Fraser chinook plan ignored viable, balanced proposals and

ignored input from experts with years of experience that would have upheld conservation values while providing public fishing opportunity.

Instead of acting on measures that can make a real difference to restore fish stocks, the Liberals are scapegoating B.C. anglers who are just trying to put food on their tables. The Prime Minister and the minister need to remember that we fish, we hunt and we vote.

* * *

[Translation]

AZERBAIJAN

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to vigorously condemn the unsanctioned aggression of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia, which degenerated into serious tensions last week along the border between the two countries. The horror of these tensions is felt even here, in my riding and in Canada's Armenian community.

[English]

Azerbaijan ignored UN calls for a ceasefire during the pandemic, backed by Turkey; threatened to bomb a nuclear power plant in Armenia; destroyed a PPE factory that was producing essential equipment for the Armenian fight against the COVID-19 pandemic; and intentionally targeted innocent civilians.

I join the foreign affairs minister in his call for an immediate ceasefire.

[Translation]

We must always remain vigilant and condemn all forms of aggression towards the international community, especially in these difficult times.

* * *

AIR CANADA

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, people in the regions of Quebec are once again being held hostage by Air Canada and a government measure.

On June 30, we learned that Air Canada, which is heavily subsidized by the federal government using taxpayer money, was suspending 30 regional routes indefinitely and closing a number of service counters in eastern Quebec for good, including those in Gaspé, Mont-Joli, and Baie-Comeau, in my riding.

Since the announcement, the government has shown zero leadership to support Quebec, which is itself looking for solutions. Even the Minister of National Revenue, the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whose constituents have been hit hard by Air Canada's pressure tactics, has said nothing about this. Her silence speaks volumes and is typical of the government's absolute failure to take action on this issue.

The consensus among people who live in the regions, mayors, reeves and the Government of Quebec is clear, and the Bloc Québécois has supported that consensus since the announcement. It is time for the federal government to support sustainable solutions so that the regions are never again cut off from major centres as they are now. The economic vitality of Quebec's regions is at stake.

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CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES DESJARDINS TOURISM AWARDS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chaudière-Appalaches Desjardins Tourism Awards recently announced their winners.

I want to congratulate the winners from my riding, the Marland blueberry farm in Sainte-Marie, which took the categories “Innovation in tourism development” and “Food services — Farm to table”, and the Saint-Paul-de-Cumberland Church/Harbottle Garden in Saint-Simon-les-Mines, which won in the category “Tourist attractions — History, arts and culture”.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite my colleagues to travel the Beauce Route along the magnificent Chaudière River this summer. They will quickly be captivated by the region's boundless beauty. There is a reason the word “Beauce” contains the word “beau”.

I also want to tip my hat to the team at Destination Beauce for all their efforts to showcase what we are all about and making Beauce the most beautiful region in Canada—no offence to my colleagues. I am not biased, of course.

I look forward to seeing you there. Welcome to our home.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to reflect on a vulnerable segment of our population that has seen its situation getting worse during the pandemic: victims of violence.

Extreme isolation has caused an increase in domestic violence and child abuse. In the past months, we have seen news of the worst outbreaks of atrocities against children across Canada.

[*Translation*]

During the lockdown, women who are victims of domestic violence had to go into isolation with their abusers because they could not go to shelters. I want them to know that they are not alone. Resources have been made available to them, and a lot of that information is posted on government websites.

We must not forget the collateral victims of COVID-19 and we have to continue our efforts to prevent other family tragedies. As members of Canadian society, we must continue to be proactive and make sure that no one falls through the cracks.

Statements by Members

SIXTH LINK BETWEEN GATINEAU AND OTTAWA

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National Capital Commission has released the long-awaited update to the studies exploring locations for a sixth interprovincial link between Gatineau and Ottawa.

This update confirms what we already found. We are therefore one step closer to project construction, and we are sure that the project will meet current needs and address future challenges. Some of those challenges include the significant population growth in our region combined with the end of the Alexandra Bridge's useful life and the traffic in our capital's downtown core. As the member for Gatineau, I know that a sixth crossing also provides important potential for our development, including sustainable mobility for active transportation such as bike lanes, and for bringing together the communities along the Ottawa River.

The people of Gatineau have been waiting for the first interprovincial link east of the Gatineau River for decades. It is more important than ever to take action.

* * *

[*English*]

HONG KONG

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are blessed to live in a country that is governed by democracy. Although we often disagree, Canadians can trust that the will of the people continues to drive decision-making in our country. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the people of Hong Kong, including the approximate 300,000 Canadians who are currently living there.

As new so-called national security laws sound the death knell for freedom and democracy there, police forces are raiding the offices of pro-democracy groups and censoring anyone who dissents.

We cannot stand idly by as the Chinese Communist Party wages war against freedom and democracy. Canada must stand beside those brave women and men who are fighting back against dictatorship in Hong Kong.

* * *

2020 GRADUATES

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all agree how amazing our graduates did this year. Today I want to highlight two of the 2020 graduates in Orléans who have earned awards for their outstanding dedication in academic excellence.

Please join me in congratulating Kinsley Jura from St. Peter Catholic High School, who won the Loran Scholars Foundation award worth about \$100,000.

[*Translation*]

Angéline Lafleur, a recent graduate of École secondaire catholique Garneau received two scholarships worth a total of \$105,000.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Also, as we are now well into our warmest time of year, one of my favourite summer traditions is to visit our local farms and markets to pick up my own fruits or to bring baskets of local goods home.

[Translation]

I am privileged to have five local markets in my riding.

I want to thank the Proulx Farm, the Orléans Fruit Farm, the Navan Little Market, Just Food and the Orléans Market for their incredible work.

* * *

*[English]***COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's fiscal snapshot revealed the Liberals are running a deficit of \$343 billion this year, and for the first time the net debt will reach more than \$1 trillion.

I have spoken to constituents across my riding and they are wondering where all that money has gone. Many people fell through the cracks, and could not qualify for benefits that might have saved their livelihood and businesses. Many of these gaps could have been addressed without substantial cost if the government had bothered to listen to the Conservatives instead of shutting down Parliament.

Spending enormous amounts of money and keeping our economy on life support is not a recovery plan. It will not fix record unemployment. I have spoken with business owners across my riding. They are ready to create jobs and have prosperity again. They tell me they need to give Canadians incentives to work, not punish and disincentivize productivity.

Get our energy sector firing. Support our agriculture producers and supply chain. Lower taxes. That is a recovery plan, not spiralling debt and deficits.

* * *

● (1410)

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a member of this place once said, "It's hard not to feel disappointment in one's government when every day there is a new scandal." These are the words of the current Prime Minister, a sentiment that is shared now by many across the country.

We are standing at a precipice, a day of choosing. Will the Prime Minister choose to recommit to his 2014 goal of restoring trust in Canada's democracy, or will he continue to evade accountability, keep Parliament shut down and only answer questions if and when he deems them important?

Will the Prime Minister appear before the committee? Will he answer opposition questions, or will he choose to take personal days when it is inconvenient to face the music?

The Prime Minister can bury his head in the sand. He can ignore the public demand for transparency, or he can lead the way in openness and accountability by following his own advice to let the sun shine in. After all, we have been told that sunlight is in fact the best disinfectant.

What will he choose?

* * *

*[Translation]***ARTS AND CULTURE**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in June, millions of workers were on edge with the projected end of the CERB. Thanks to pressure from the NDP, that direct assistance was extended for the summer, but the month of August is fast approaching and many sectors of our economy are not ready to reopen.

That is especially true in the arts and culture sector, where the creators are deeply concerned. They might not be able to work again. A few days ago, 75,000 people from the cultural sector signed a letter calling for a guaranteed minimum income for artists, artisans and technicians. We are calling on the Liberals to listen and quickly come up with solutions. Their inaction could cause irreparable damage.

We want the men and women of the theatre, the living arts, the performing arts, publishing, entertainment, and the audiovisual sector to be able to continue their career and live from their art. In addition to the jobs this represents, their works also define who we are and help make the world a better place.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many seniors are living in precarious financial situations, which is why the Bloc Québécois has been calling for an increase in the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement for quite some time. The pandemic has compounded this economic insecurity, since seniors have been hit hard by the effects of the lockdown and higher prices on so many things, including medication, rent, groceries and transportation.

Just last week, seniors finally received some support for the pandemic. Seniors who receive just the old age pension got \$300, while those who get the guaranteed income supplement will receive an additional \$200. The only problem is that it is a one-time payment. That support should absolutely be made permanent. The government should take this as an opportunity to keep its own election promise and increase both the old age pension and the GIS.

The Bloc Québécois will stand by the government if it decides to go ahead with this. It is time the government understood that our seniors should not have to choose between groceries and medication.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

The outlook wasn't brilliant for Canadians that day;
The debt stood at a trillion, too, and we lost our AAA;
And when democracy died at first and ethics did the same;
A sickly silence fell upon the voters of the game.
The PM took a holiday with a carefree wink and smile;
And treated family, friends and donors to billionaire isle;
And when the dust had settled and we saw the very worst;
The Ethics Commissioner said "Strike one, you may not go to first."
With a smile of great charity, the PM's eyes did gleam;
He pressured the AG, he bade her to intervene;
And when she wouldn't do it, he said "That simply will not do";
Lavalin means many votes and the commissioner said "Strike two."
A few straggling Libs got up to go in deep despair;
The rest clung to hope in the Prime Minister's great hair;
Then the PM saw \$900 mill, a way to help connected friends;
And we all knew the PM would not let opportunity pass by again.
Oh somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright;
The taxes are much lower and the government does what's right;
And somewhere there are pipelines and jobs are all about;
But for you and me and the greater we, our Prime Minister just struck out.

* * *

● (1415)

JOHN LEWIS

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my voice to the numerous tributes to the extraordinary life of American congressional representative John Lewis. Mr. Lewis died last Friday at the age of 80.

He first entered the public scene in the early 1960s as the founder and leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at the tender age of 21. A lifelong practitioner of the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence, John Lewis and his colleagues put the brutality of racism in high relief by placing themselves at risk through non-violent actions.

Mr. Lewis was one of the original Freedom Riders in 1961. He took part in activities which he knew beforehand would lead to his being clubbed, beaten, gassed, arrested and run a much higher risk of being killed.

Mr. Lewis was one of the speakers at the March on Washington in 1963. He was on the front lines of Bloody Sunday, the 1965 march in Selma, Alabama.

Author, activist, politician, conscience of the U.S. Congress, John Lewis inspired generations of people around the world, including me. I thank Mr. Lewis for living the life worth living. May he rest in peace.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Davenport will be home to one of the new modular housing initiatives being built across Toronto through a partnership between the City of Toronto and the federal government, with the goal of providing stable, affordable, high-quality housing and support services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

Oral Questions

The modular housing initiative will quickly create 100 modular homes by September 2020 and an additional 150 by spring 2021. At a total cost of almost \$50 million, 40% will be supported by CMHC's affordable housing innovation fund. This project is a truly rapid, innovative and cost-effective way of tackling housing issues in our cities. Not only is it a dignified response to supporting people experiencing homelessness, but the cost of modular housing with social service supports is half the cost of providing a simple shelter bed.

Restarting the economy after COVID will take innovation and creative ideas, and modular housing should be a key addition to our infrastructure proposals as a model that could be multiplied across the city and country to house more of our vulnerable populations and supply affordable housing.

The Speaker: Before moving on, I want to remind everyone that the S.O. 31s are for 60 seconds, not 65 seconds or 70 seconds. I want to point that out because their length seem to be crawling up and I would not want to cut members off when they have something so important to them that they want to bring it forward. Therefore, if members would keep that in mind and time them so that when we come back next time, they will be ready.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the third time the Prime Minister has been embroiled in a scandal. Once again, he thought the rules did not apply to him and rewarded an organization that paid members of his family \$300,000 and gave him a huge political platform.

Canadians have had enough. They want to know the truth.

My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister appear before the Standing Committee on Finance, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have received the invitation and are considering it. However, I am very happy to be here in the House today to answer questions, as I will tomorrow, when opposition members can ask me all the questions they want.

As I noted, the public service completely independently recommended the WE Charity to provide opportunities to students. I should have recused myself from the decision. I did not, and I am sorry about that.

Oral Questions

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not about just a simple recusal. Here we have an organization that has paid cash to the Prime Minister's family and given him and other senior Liberals a massive political platform. That organization got in trouble after gobbling up millions of dollars' worth of prime Toronto real estate and breaking its bank covenant. It then lobbied the government for a tailor-made program that it would be able to take an administration fee for managing. The government did it even one better and came up with an even bigger program and gave it a sole-source contract, and the Prime Minister would have us all believe this is a massive coincidence.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and show up to testify at committee?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this unprecedented pandemic we put out billions of dollars to support Canadians young and old, workers, employers and entrepreneurs to make it through this particular challenge that is hitting us all extremely hard. We put forward a \$9-billion package for students that included deferral of student loans, direct support through jobs, the Canada summer jobs program and jobs in COVID-affected sectors. We have continued to look for ways to encourage volunteerism. We will continue to stay focused on the things that matter to students and to all Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is so gross and disgusting that the Prime Minister keeps using the pandemic as an excuse for his corruption. The very first act the Prime Minister did when the pandemic hit was try to give himself unprecedented power and eliminate the role of the opposition in Parliament. Now we know why, because when the Liberals are pushing \$300 billion worth of deficit out the door, they will stop and take the time to reward their friends. That is the essence of the Liberal Party under the current Liberal Prime Minister. I do not even have a question. It is just disgusting.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one would think that, when the House of Commons is about to pass legislation worth over \$50 billion to help businesses with an extension of the wage subsidy, there might be a question from the opposition on that or on anything it wants to bring forward.

The fact of the matter is we remain focused on giving Canadians the support they need to get through this challenging pandemic. We will look creatively and carefully at different ways of supporting students and elders, and we will keep doing that for all Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is right, there is nothing to see here. Just move on. Do not ask any of the tough questions about the relationship with an organization that paid members of his family cash, that took administration fees for running sole-source contracts after breaking its bank covenants and having members of its board resign.

Now the Prime Minister is trying to hide behind the public service on this one, but I would like to ask him a very simple question. On what basis would the public service have made its recommendation that WE was the only organization that could deliver this program?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we came forward with the idea of supporting young people who would want to be involved and serve their communities across the country, we as a government came forward and looked to see young people serving their country. The public service took a look at the ways it could deliver that program and determined that the WE organization was the only one that could deliver that program, as ambitious as it was, for this summer. That was the recommendation made by the non-partisan public service.

Of course, as I apologized for, I should have recused myself because of the connection with my family, but that does not take away from the fact that the public service recommended that organization.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what the watchdog Charity Intelligence said about that claim: "I'm not sure how you would assess the charity's track record or capability to do this if it had not previously done such work in the past". The Prime Minister's explanation just does not hold up.

There are two camps developing in the Liberal Party. On the one hand we have the foreign affairs minister, who wisely took a barge pole and separated himself from the scandal, saying that it was a mistake and he did not know anything about it. Then we have the deputy prime minister, who had no problem showing Liberal faithful that she was willing to defend her leader.

I would ask the deputy prime minister what it would take for her to lose confidence in the scandal-plagued Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way our government has been looking to support Canadians through this unprecedented pandemic. Yes, we have put tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of billions of dollars into the pockets of Canadians, workers, families, entrepreneurs and people working all across the country who are challenged with this pandemic.

We looked for ways to support students as well through summer jobs, through creating new jobs in various industries, but also through encouraging volunteerism and service to this country. We will continue to look for ways to support Canadians right across the country through this difficult time.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some time ago, there was a fairly entertaining exchange with the Prime Minister about the Liberal Party's difficulties and its need for the wage subsidy.

Oral Questions

Yesterday, in committee, a Liberal member indicated that the Liberal Party is indeed in trouble. I believe it. Finances are likely not the reason, but I think this is true because the Prime Minister is too busy dealing with matters that have nothing to do with managing the Canadian government.

Could we start by not giving the wage subsidy to the Liberal Party?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that our government remains 100% focused on Canadians.

Our government will remain focused on the work we need to do for Canadians every day, and that includes the \$19-billion safe restart agreement that we signed with the provinces and territories last week and the \$50 billion we are approving today in the House for the wage subsidy.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they cannot buy their way out of a crisis, and just because they are spending a lot does not mean they are spending wisely.

The Prime Minister is obviously busy, very busy, probably much too busy with many other things to manage the COVID-19 crisis.

Without making assumptions about the result of the investigations, exchanges, discussions and committees, should he not temporarily, because his mind is on other things, let the Deputy Prime Minister stand in for him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, last week we signed a historic agreement with the provinces for assistance to safely restart the economy as we deal with COVID-19.

This very day, we are providing more assistance to entrepreneurs and businesses with \$50 billion in wage subsidies.

At every step, despite the opposition's preoccupation with one particular issue, we have been working on matters of concern to Canadians and we will continue to provide assistance to Canadians every day.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has close ties to the WE Charity; that is quite obvious.

Why did the Prime Minister not recuse himself when the decision was made to give the WE Charity nearly \$1 billion?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are there to support young Canadians. We are there to support seniors, workers and families during this crisis.

We wanted to help students by giving them opportunities to serve. The public service recommended choosing the WE Charity to provide youth across Canada with tens of thousands of opportunities. We accepted that recommendation, but yes, I should have recused myself from that decision because of the ties with my family, and I apologize for not doing so.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, apologizing means nothing if the Prime Minister keeps on breaking the rules to help his wealthy friends.

Here are the facts. The Prime Minister's family has earned over \$300,000 in speaking fees from this organization. WE officials have said that they do not normally pay speakers a fee. On top of that, giving a billion dollars to create a brand new program makes no sense when there are so many existing ways to help students that are faster and that are proven. Will the Prime Minister admit that this was never about helping students, and that it was always about helping his wealthy friends?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame to see such cynicism from the NDP in regard to supporting students. We had put forward a \$9-billion package for students. It included the deferral of student loans, the creation of new jobs in sectors affected by COVID, the enhancement of the summer jobs program, and many other things to support students and student organizations.

On top of that, we saw an opportunity to encourage service and volunteerism and to create opportunities for the tens of thousands of young people who want to step up during this pandemic. This is something we believe in deeply and something that this government will continue to work on.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is disgusting about the WE scandal is that the Prime Minister's wife, mother and brother were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by WE, and, knowing this, the Prime Minister did not recuse himself from the decision to give WE \$912 million.

I am sure the Prime Minister is grateful that the Deputy Prime Minister proclaimed she still has confidence in him, while another minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is doing everything he can to distance himself from the PM's latest ethical scandal. Will the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell us which cabinet camp is she in?

• (1430)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that our government is focused on delivering for Canadians. We know that this is an unprecedented and challenging time. We know that Canadians are struggling. We know that COVID-19 has impacted all Canadians. Certain communities have been impacted disproportionately, and students are no exception.

When it comes to the investigation from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, we will be working with his office.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already know which camp the minister of diversion, sorry, the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth is in, but the Prime Minister's family was on the WE payroll when the decision was made by cabinet to award a sole-source contract of \$912 million.

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My question is for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. Which camp is he in? Is he in the camp of the Deputy Prime Minister, who has confidence in the Prime Minister, or is he in the camp of the global affairs minister, who is distancing himself from the Prime Minister's latest ethical scandal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's focus is clear. It is on Canadians and delivering for Canadians. That is what we do on this side of the House. The Conservatives can choose to play their politics of division. That will not be our focus. We are in the midst of a pandemic. We are not out of the woods yet. We need to deliver for Canadians, and that is exactly what we will do.

The \$9-billion suite of programs we put forward for students was the right thing to do, and I think it is really great that we are talking about legislation today and debating legislation that is going to help small businesses, communities and people with disabilities. No matter the delays the Conservatives cause, we will remain focused on Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the close ties between the Prime Minister and WE Charity stink of hypocrisy.

The Prime Minister is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner for the third time. Many of his ministers, whom he misled in cabinet, are starting to lose patience.

Does the Minister of Economic Development still have confidence in the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to act for Canadians and we will ensure that they have the programs and resources they need.

With regard to the investigation, we will work with the commissioner's office.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems to be muzzling members of his own cabinet. I would have really liked to hear the Minister of Rural Economic Development give her answer. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs seems to always have confidence in the Prime Minister, but the Minister of Foreign Affairs seems to be becoming increasingly uncomfortable with this new scandal.

Does the Minister of Transport still have confidence in the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said many times, we will continue to respond to the needs of Canadians and ensure that they have the programs and resources they need during this pandemic. We are certain that, if we all work together, we can assure Canadians that they will have all the resources they need.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, the Prime Minister is being investigated now for a third time, this time

for his \$43-million bailout for his buddies at the WE organization. He has spent the last five years dividing Canadians, but now we are seeing the divide in his own caucus and cabinet.

Some cabinet ministers have had enough of the Prime Minister, and I want to find out from the infrastructure minister which side she is on.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that on this side of the House our focus is on Canadians and ensuring that they have the programs and resources they need. We know that Canadians are struggling and that all Canadians have been impacted by COVID-19, and certain communities have been impacted even more. That is why our focus is on ensuring that Canadians have the supports they need, and why one of the first things we did was come out with the Canada emergency response benefit. It has helped millions of Canadians in their time of need. Our government will continue to focus on them to ensure that they have the programs and resources to get through this challenging time.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know where the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth sits on this issue. She was at committee last week and gave a misleading and incomplete answer in response to questions as part of the cover-up of this latest scandal, so as part of the Prime Minister's muzzling of his cabinet, she is back on her feet today. We know that the Deputy Prime Minister has come out in favour of the Prime Minister, but the foreign affairs minister not so much.

So, let us find out from the Liberals. Let us see how they have decided which team they are on.

To the immigration minister, is he with the Prime Minister's cover-up?

• (1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in an unprecedented time and Canadians are facing challenges. Our government is here to respond to them, and we will remain focused on them.

As the Minister of Youth, I speak with numerous organizations. When I was asked to appear at committee, at the first opportunity I was there to ensure that questions were being answered.

As I have stated, it was an unsolicited proposal and it was not the CSSG. The opposition member can continue to mislead Canadians, unfortunately. We should demand better, and our government will focus on Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: There is no point of order allowed during question period, and we cannot use foul language. If members are going to call someone else a name, then the Speaker may call those members out. I just want to point that out.

There has been some banter going back and forth. That is something that is acceptable within what goes on, but calling someone a name is not allowed, as we have learned in the past.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the more we learn about the WE organization, the worse it looks. At first, we were told it would get \$19 million to administer a program and distribute money to volunteers. Then we found out that it was actually \$43 million. After that, we were told the organization had experts who were the only ones capable of administering this program. We are now learning that WE Charity is actually in a precarious financial position. According to Volunteer Canada, WE Charity employees have no experience managing volunteers. According to Charity Intelligence Canada, the people at WE Charity are bad managers.

Is it possible that the only thing the WE organization had going for it was giving Trudeau family members contracts worth over \$250,000?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, our goal is always to help Canadians. We know we are fighting a pandemic that is challenging on many fronts.

As I told the Standing Committee on Finance, and as I have said a number of times, the public service gave me its recommendations, and I accepted them. At their request, I shared the details of the contribution agreement with committee members. As we have said, the public service negotiated the contribution with the WE organization.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's apologies are wearing a little thin. He is responsible and accountable for his government's decisions. He was the one to trumpet the creation of that program. He was fully aware at the time of his family's ties to the WE Charity. He just hoped that no one else would catch on. Any way you look at it, it is quite simply indefensible from an ethics standpoint. The Prime Minister must assume his responsibilities and do the right thing.

Will he step aside and let the Deputy Prime Minister take over until the investigation is complete?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this pandemic, we have said that we would be there for Canadians.

We have announced a number of measures to support students. We announced \$9 billion in support, including the creation of the Canada emergency student benefit. We doubled Canada's student grants for full- and part-time students. We instituted a six-month moratorium on Canada student loans. With respect to the Ethics Commissioner, we will work with his office and ensure that he has the answers he needs.

Oral Questions

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can find \$40 million for his friends at the WE organization who are struggling financially, but cannot do anything to help Alberta's oil and gas sector.

The finance minister promised help within hours. However, when his friends at WE needed help, he had no problem cutting them a cheque. It is always the same story with the Liberals: help them get votes and get the money. The government is corrupt. Where is the help for Alberta's oil and gas sector?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said on a number of different occasions, we have intervened in the economy to help a number of different sectors. We have been unwavering in our support for all sectors across Canada, including the oil and gas sector, where we have put an unprecedented amount of money into cleaning up old and abandoned wells. This will create more jobs and more infrastructure development in that sector and help us move forward.

* * *

● (1440)

ETHICS

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals refused to tell the House whether the Prime Minister's mother was paid to appear at a WE event on Parliament Hill in 2017. Over a million dollars of taxpayer money was used for this event and the Liberals owe Canadians the truth.

Enough of this corruption. Yes or no, was Margaret Trudeau paid to appear at the WE event on Parliament Hill, July 2, 2017?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, WE Charity was one of several organizations that submitted a Canada 150 proposal to the Department of Canadian Heritage that was subsequently selected. The two Canada 150 contribution agreements between WE Charity and the Department of Canadian Heritage were approved by the minister responsible at the time, at the recommendation of department officials. Cabinet was not involved in the process of approval of these contribution agreements.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, beyond the \$300,000 that the Prime Minister's family received in speaking fees, how much did the WE Charity pay the Prime Minister's family for their personal expenses? How much?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government will continue to ensure that Canadians have the programs and resources they need during this pandemic.

We know that the Ethics Commissioner is investigating. We will work with his office. Members of the Standing Committee on Finance asked me to come testify. I did so and answered many questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was how much the Prime Minister's family had received in personal expenses paid by the WE organization. We already know they received over \$300,000 in so-called speaking fees, but we do not know what additional personal expenses the organization paid the family on top of that.

So, one more time: How much did the WE organization or its affiliates pay in expenses for the Prime Minister and his family?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we are in the House of Commons, we discuss and debate government business, and it is important that we remind Canadians, reassure Canadians, that we will be here for them during this unprecedented and challenging time.

It sounds like the member opposite has questions for the WE organization. Those are great questions that he should ask the WE organization. We on this side will stay focused on Canadians, and if there are any questions in regard to government business, I look forward to responding to them.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I would love nothing more than to provide our full attention to the COVID crisis at hand, but while people are worried about having enough money to make it to the end of the month, they see the Prime Minister and his Liberal cabinet focusing on helping themselves and their friends instead of people.

There is alleged irregular lobbying, contracting and pecuniary conflicts of interest related to the Prime Minister and the Liberal cabinet. Taking responsibility means holding accountability. This is the third time the Prime Minister has been under an investigation for breaking the rules.

What exactly has he learned?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our focus remains on ensuring that Canadians have the programs and resources that they need.

I will remind the member that there are offices of Parliament. They are independent agents that do important work. We have the utmost respect for offices of Parliament to do that important work.

We have been clear that we will work with this office to ensure that he has the answers he needs. He also knows that committee members, members of all parties, asked me to appear at the finance committee. I was there providing answers. They asked for officials to appear, and officials were also appearing.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no economic recovery without child care. Women and parents cannot return to work if it means leaving their kids home alone. The Liberals missed the mark on their agreement with provinces and are treating child care as a nice-to-have instead of a must-have.

Experts, businesses, economists and parents are clear: To go back to work, families need safe, reliable and affordable child care. Will the Liberals invest the \$2.5 billion required this year to finally build a universal and affordable child care program?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the important question.

We are continuing with our investments in the amount of \$7.5 billion over the next few years to continue to create safe, affordable, quality accessible child care. We have created over 40,000 affordable child care spaces for the most needy families in the country. We are going ahead with our bilateral agreements in the amount of \$400 million to provinces and territories, and as part of the safe restart agreement, we are transferring \$625 million to provinces and territories for a safe restart of the child care sector.

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, women play an extremely important role in the Canadian workforce. However, many women are struggling to go back to work while they continue to assume the responsibility for child care. We understand that if women do not return to work there will be no recovery after the pandemic.

What is this government doing to support the availability of safe and affordable child care services that would allow Canadian women to return to work?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands the immense pressure that COVID-19 is putting on Canadian families, and especially on women and parents. That is why we are investing more than \$1 billion in child care this year. Over the next ten years, we will invest more than \$7.5 billion in early childhood education and child care.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the national PPE stockpile has existed since at least 1952. It holds ventilators, blankets, towels, PPE, antibiotics and other essentials. Now, for security reasons, the Liberal government says that we are forbidden from knowing how much PPE it had between 2016 and 2020 before the viral pandemic. I did not realize it was a national security risk to ask the government how many towels it had in 2018.

To the health minister, what is the security reason for not disclosing the past PPE stockpiles?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's record on PPE has been unequivocally clear and strong. The health and safety of our front-line health care workers is our top priority.

We have been working with the provinces and territories, industries and suppliers and with other partners to ensure we have enough PPE in Canada to protect health care professionals. The PHAC has issued guidance, informed by front-line health care workers, on when a health provider may need an N95 mask.

While it is up to each province and territory to provide instruction on the use of specific PPE, our guidance empowers workers to ask for the PPE they need to stay safe at work.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs depends on our legions to help with the transition of veterans. Legions also coordinate school visits, teaching our children about the cost of our freedom. For many, legions are a safe place to find community.

There are 157 legions facing a risk of permanent closure due to restrictions on their fundraising efforts and there has been no flexibility to include them in the COVID-19 economic response plan.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs says that he hopes to have more on this shortly. When did the minister begin to think about the impact of the pandemic on Canada's legions?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully understand the vital role legions play in supporting our veterans and small communities across the country. Some of them have qualified for the emergency community support fund, but we know that not all of them do.

As the Prime Minister indicated quite clearly, we are working on a solution to this and I hope we will have something to share very soon.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine works in an essential service every Sunday, unless there is a fifth Sunday in the month. If she works that day,

Oral Questions

then she has to sacrifice her whole CERB payment because she will be paid a whopping \$2 more than the earning limits allow. That is just a dumb system.

The Conservatives believe that people should always be better off when they work, so we have proposed a plan that would truly support Canadians as they get back to work. Why will the government not implement our common sense plan to support Canadians?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take issue with characterizing the CERB as a “dumb system” when it has helped over eight million Canadians make sure they have money to pay their rent and buy food.

We have worked extremely hard to evolve the CERB with the evolving state of this pandemic. We are continuing to do so. We are absolutely committed to making sure all Canadians have the support they need during this crisis.

● (1450)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, business owners and employees in my riding are spending time and money every day juggling hours and changing schedules to accommodate CERB. Employees are forced to choose between working full time, taking a pay cut or continuing part time to keep their CERB. Business owners cannot find enough staff to reopen or even stay open.

Why will the government not stop disincentivizing productivity and make the CERB more flexible by implementing the Conservative back-to-work plan?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the CERB came into effect, we were asking Canadians to stay home. We are now encouraging Canadians to go back to work. That is why when we added weeks onto the CERB, we created new language in the attestation where Canadians are committing to seek out work opportunities and take jobs when it is reasonable to do so.

I have a lot more confidence in Canadians wanting to work than clearly the other side does.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ETHICS

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a health crisis, a global pandemic that needs to be addressed, and a potential second wave is looming on the horizon. We are all facing a global economic crisis and a public finance crisis. The last thing we need is a leadership crisis in this government.

For the benefit of all, will the Prime Minister allow the Deputy Prime Minister to take over during the investigation?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has the full confidence of the government and our entire caucus.

Together, we must work to make things better for all Canadians and to support people who have lost their jobs, people who are too sick, people who are caring for someone who is sick, seniors and people with disabilities. That is why we are here today, with the support of everyone. We are here to take real action on behalf of all Quebecers and Canadians. That is what we should focus on.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the height of the summer. Quebec is on its construction holiday. The House is having a rare summer sitting because the COVID-19 crisis requires us to adopt measures quickly.

However, we are faced with yet another Liberal scandal involving the Prime Minister who, out of a lack of judgment and ethics, is proving that he cannot be trusted.

Can the Prime Minister step aside until the Ethics Commissioner completes his investigation and thereby allow the House to refocus on the real issues related to the COVID-19 crisis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Here are the real issues, Mr. Speaker. We were there with the Canadian army when the long-term care facilities needed it. We were there to take care of people who lost their job. We were there for our small businesses and providing the wage subsidy when they were unable to make ends meet. We are here today for people with disabilities. We were there for seniors.

Those are the real issues that the Prime Minister and the entire government are addressing.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 6, I sent a letter to the Minister of Immigration about the problems being caused by delays and red tape for foreign workers. I never got an answer. In committee on May 22, the minister told me that he would call me. I am still waiting for that call.

The pandemic has only made the situation worse. Fifteen businesses in my riding that are having problems with immigration wrote to the minister directly but did not receive an answer.

On July 7, I once again wrote the minister personally to request a meeting. I sent my request again on July 13. I was told that a meeting would be set up soon.

Can the minister tell me how I am supposed to interpret this lack of response?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with the Government of Quebec to find a way to recognize the important work on the issue of families. We have a very compassionate and principled approach. I am prepared to work with my colleague.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I left Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce at four in the morning to get to Ottawa so I could work on moving an important bill for Canadian entrepreneurs forward for a vote.

To my great surprise, when I arrived, I found out that the Prime Minister, the person who convened the House, was taking a personal day. It is time for the Prime Minister to come back down to earth.

Can he tell us why he convened the House the same day he took a personal day?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we convened the House to help people living with disabilities. We convened the House to help businesses via the wage subsidy. We convened the House to give the opposition a chance to ask questions about timely subjects such as what we are doing for seniors, children, families and people with disabilities. That is why we are here.

We were here yesterday, and we are here today. We will keep answering questions because we on this side are doing our job.

* * *

● (1455)

[English]

ETHICS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, federal government contracts of \$25,000 or more have to be tendered. Last year, before the election, the Prime Minister's own Privy Council Office gave two sole-source contracts to WE Charity. One was in the amount of \$24,996 and the other one was for just over \$17,000.

What were those contracts for? Why did the Prime Minister not want Canadians to know about them? Did some of the money go to the Prime Minister's family or the finance minister's family?

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we are here responding to a global pandemic, which is impacting Canadians from coast to coast to coast, we will remain focused on Canadians.

When it comes to the member's question, I will make sure we get her that information.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the weeks following the tragic death of George Floyd, the words “Black Lives Matter” have galvanized millions of people seeking justice around the world and here in Canada. Our Prime Minister recently brought cabinet together to discuss this important issue.

Since this issue is vital to Canadians, can the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth please update the House on what Canada is doing to combat racism?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her vision of a more inclusive Canada, a vision that is shared by this government.

Here are a few examples. In 2018, Canada recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent, and we have since been working to meet these objectives. We have launched a program to enhance community supports for black Canadian youth. In addition, through Canada's anti-racism strategy, we now have an Anti-Racism Secretariat, which includes anti-black racism.

Much remains to be done, and our government will continue to take action.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today there are many long-term drinking water advisories still in place in Northern Saskatchewan and many indigenous communities across the country. Men, women, children and elders are living without safe water during the pandemic.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House how many long-term drinking water advisories could have been lifted if the \$43.5 million he had committed to WE had been used for improving drinking water infrastructure rather than it being earmarked for the Liberal-friendly organization that has paid his family?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians should have access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water. As of March 31, 2020, more than \$1.6 billion of targeted funding has been invested to support 619 water and waste water projects, including 331 that are now completed. These projects will serve more than 462,000 people in 581 first nations communities. Much work remains to be done, but the results are encouraging with 88 long-term drinking water advisories lifted to date.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has raised serious questions about the integrity of Canada's immigration system and the maintenance of public safety. She has itemized a backlog of 50,000 individuals ordered removed from Canada. They are illegal residents, unworthy asylum claimants and criminals, and almost 35,000 of them have just disappeared. Neither immigration nor border service officers have any idea where they are.

I know removals in the time of COVID-19 are very difficult, but should these two departments not get their act together and at least locate the 35,000 who are missing?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work of this government with regard to our asylum system. We have made consistent investments to ensure that our borders have integrity, and we are protecting the health and safety of Canadians during this pandemic. We will continue to make those investments. These are investments which were cut under the last Conservative government when my hon. colleague was there to make those decisions. On this side we will continue to protect the health and safety of Canadians by investing in our asylum system.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media has reported on the dictator-admiring PM, and now reports that the government has hired the Chinese state-owned company Nuctech to equip our embassies abroad with security equipment. In addition to raising grave security issues, this decision ignores the complicity of Nuctech in the Chinese state's genocide of Uighur Muslims. Nuctech, along with companies such as Dahua and Hikvision, have provided technological support for the Chinese state's mass atrocities.

Why do we continually see commercial co-operation between the government and companies that are complicit in genocide?

● (1500)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians have had the chance to hear today, it would be good if the members on the other side would stop misleading Canadians. I was clear to Canadians yesterday that no purchase has been made under that agreement.

Oral Questions

I have asked officials to give me all the facts and details. I have asked that we review our purchasing practices, and I have asked that we continue to improve the security and safety of our embassies around the world. No purchase has been made under that contract.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher in two of Montreal's English school boards, I will always be there to support our official language minority communities. Since 2017, the official languages committee of which I am a proud member has worked with Statistics Canada and the government to ensure that quality information on minority language rights holders is collected to help inform evidence-based decision-making.

[Translation]

I was pleased to see that our study and our recommendations from the last parliamentary session helped clarify the process.

[English]

Could the minister please update the House on new questions in the 2021 census regarding linguistic minorities?

[Translation]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Laurent for her question and her hard work at the Standing Committee on Official Languages and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

[English]

Unlike the Harper Conservatives, who gutted the census, we worked with Statistics Canada to determine the best ways to collect better-quality information on language rights holders, veterans, indigenous people and many other groups. These new questions and other important changes will ensure that the information collected reflects Canada's changing society, addresses information gaps and supports evidence-based decision-making.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we obtained the CERB extension. That allowed millions of people to spend the summer with an income, but in a few weeks that program will end. In the arts and culture sector, this could be catastrophic. If the technicians, artists and artisans end up being forced to change their career, the entire cultural industry could collapse. This is about more than just jobs. It is about our collective identity.

What is the Liberals' plan to help people in the performing arts and the living arts? We must act quickly before it is too late.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question and his advocacy on this issue.

I would like to remind him that, since the start of the pandemic, our government has invested almost \$3 billion in the arts, culture and heritage sector across the country. We were asked to extend the Canada emergency response benefit, and we did. We were asked to ensure that someone who receives royalties could still receive the CERB, and we did.

We have been there from the beginning for our artists and artisans, and we will continue to be there for them.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic is forcing us to rethink the world we live in, from food security to our workspaces to the impacts of systemic racism. As we continue to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis, we must not forget that the climate crisis is also a health crisis, an economic crisis and a social crisis. They are intricately connected, and a response requires that we build resilient communities that will be ready to adapt.

Could the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain how exactly the undeniable impact of the climate crisis will be taken into account in the upcoming budget and within the long-term post-pandemic recovery plan?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her abiding interest in protecting the environment and fighting climate change.

On this side of the House, we are all united with other members and Canadian citizens to fight climate change. It will be taken into account as we move forward. We realize that this is one of the fundamental existential issues of our time, and in dealing with Canada, as we build better moving forward, we will in fact continue to fight climate change.

• (1505)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

On behalf of workers suffering from a serious illness, I would sincerely appreciate it if I could have unanimous consent for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the motion?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND ASSAULT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That the House recognize that:

- (a) victims of sexual misconduct and assault rightly fear that they will not be believed, that their actions will be trivialized, that their own responsibility will be questioned, that they will be judged negatively, that they will be intimidated, persecuted or let down;
- (b) victims are courageous whether or not they report, immediately or later and with the means they are comfortable using;
- (c) it is unacceptable that still today one in three Canadian women will be a victim of sexual assault in her lifetime; and
- (d) the system is failing to protect and support the survivors properly; and call on the government to set up a committee of experts, similar to the one set up by the Government of Quebec with the participation of the elected members of the three other parties represented in the National Assembly, to review and develop measures to benefit victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, and to restore their confidence in the judicial and extrajudicial system.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT RESPECTING FURTHER COVID-19 MEASURES

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting further COVID-19 measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:06 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, July 20, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, deemed read a third time and passed)

The Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 26, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at noon.

(The House adjourned at 3:09 p.m.)

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