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Subject: COVID-19

I would like to thank you for sending an email recently regarding the Government's emergency legislation and the expanded powers being sought. The following is an email communication I sent to constituents yesterday evening on this matter which I hope will help to answer your questions and alleviate your concerns. If you would like to receive these email updates, please feel free to sign up at www.ronliepertmp.ca.

I want to provide you with an update on the latest action Parliament is undertaking in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. While this email deals with the circumstances surrounding the government response bill, I want to emphasize that this is not a political matter. This is about doing everything we can to support Canadians and to keep them safe during this unprecedented situation while at the same time ensuring Parliament has the final say on major expenditures.

The House of Commons was reconvened Tuesday (with a much-reduced number of MPs physically present) to discuss Bill C-13, *The COVID-19 Emergency Response Act*. While I was not physically present in the chamber, I remained in touch with our Members who were present and passed along a tabulation of the many questions and suggestions that constituents have sent me.

Leading up to Tuesday, the Conservative Opposition had been in frequent negotiations with representatives from the government and felt there was an understanding amongst all parties regarding the contents of the legislation. When our members received an advance copy of the draft bill Monday, it was evident the government proposed to go far beyond what had been agreed to. As a result, Conservative members refused the unanimous agreement required to pass the legislation.

Conservatives had no objection to any of the economic relief measures proposed by the government, most of which had been previously announced by the Prime Minister. In fact, we are of the view that many of the measures need to be expanded and that many groups have been overlooked.

There were a number of additional measures that the bill proposed which we were not expecting, and had concerns about. These included:

- A measure allowing for the government to change taxation policy without parliamentary approval – which we felt took away necessary parliamentary oversight.
- A measure allowing the government nearly unlimited spending power until the end of 2021 – which we felt was excessive.
- We also requested that reporting requirements be added to keep parliamentarians updated on the government's response, and that this legislation contain sunset clauses.
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Negotiations carried on into Wednesday morning when a revised bill was tabled that addressed most, if not all, of our concerns and the bill has now passed both the House of Commons and Senate, and has received Royal Assent.

Measures Now In Place

The measures that are now in place for individuals include:

- Increase to the Canada Child Benefit.
- A special payment to those that qualify for the Goods and Services Tax Credit.
- Extra time to file 2019 personal income tax returns.

- A \$2,000 monthly taxable benefit for up to 4 months for workers who are laid off, are sick and quarantined without pay, working parents who must stay home without pay to care for sick children, and other groups not typically eligible for Employment Insurance.
- For those that do qualify for EI, the waiting period has been waived. **If you believe you qualify, you should apply right away, even if you do not yet have your Record of Employment (ROE) from your employer.**
- Reduction of RRIF minimum withdrawals.
- Moratorium on repayments of Canada Student Loans.

Please visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-individuals.html> for more details.

A number of measures for business are now in place including providing wage subsidies for small business, extending the work sharing program, and providing enhanced access to credit. Please visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-businesses.html> for more details.

I also want to remind you that the Government of Alberta has also introduced a number of measures to support individuals or businesses. These measures are not part of the federal legislation however, I am including links to them below for your information.

For individuals: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-supports-for-albertans.aspx>

For businesses: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-support-for-employers.aspx>

If you have questions about Government of Alberta measures, please contact your MLA.

A Few Concluding Comments

Crises such as this one test the principles of our parliamentary democracy. It would have been easy, and more agreeable to some people, for us to have agreed to this legislation as originally proposed. We believe strongly that, even in this circumstance, we have a duty to carefully examine what the government proposes and make critiques for improvement where necessary. Our democratic institutions must remain intact during this crisis. It is very possible the House of Commons may need to sit again in order to pass additional measures or to review the government's actions. Rest assured that we will continue to approach our roles upon the principle of doing what is best for Canadians physical safety and economic stability.

As always, I appreciate hearing from you with your concerns and thoughts. **We are doing our best to manage a significant correspondence increase**, and so thank you in advance for your patience as I work with my team to respond to everyone.

Thank you,
Ron Liepert