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STEPHANIE KUSIE, M.P.
CALGARY MIDNAPORE

Update to Constituents of Calgary Midnapore

April 17, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Update

Dear Constituents of Calgary Midnapore,

It's been over one month since the COVID-19 pandemic turned our lives upside-down. I think I can confidently say it's felt more like a lifetime.

This outbreak has affected us all in different ways. We've all had to take extraordinary measures to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. We can all attest to the fact that staying at home is not as easy as it may sound – and that this directive has resulted in financial uncertainty and hardship for millions of Canadians of all ages and stages in life.

Waiting for information to arrive, for supports to be announced, and for assurances to come has been profoundly difficult for so many. And, hearing the number of confirmed cases and deaths in our communities has been jarring. Some of the stories I've heard from families, small businesses and facilities in Calgary Midnapore have been heart-breaking. But it has also strengthened my resolve to hold the government to account.

My Conservative colleagues and I take these real life stories to Ottawa on your behalf to make sure the Prime Minister not only keeps the promises he's made, but also to advocate for the best possible solutions. That is part of my job as a Member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

I am writing to update you today on the work that I, my colleagues, and our Party have been doing over the past two weeks to help see us through this pandemic. I am also including a FAQ sheet with some commonly-asked questions in hopes it will help you. More information will continue to come, and I will stay in touch with you.

If you need help, please contact my office and we will do everything we can to assist you. We're all in this together.

Take good care of yourself.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Kusie
Member of Parliament, Calgary Midnapore

The Expansion of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

On April 15th, the government announced plans to expand the eligibility rules which will:

- allow Canadians to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB;
- extend the CERB to seasonal workers who have exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to undertake their regular seasonal work because of COVID-19;
- extend the CERB to workers who have recently exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to find a job because of COVID-19.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has urged the Prime Minister to provide details immediately so Canadians can start to make informed decisions. However, while the Liberal government has yet to provide specifics about how these measures will work, and when they will start, it is clear that any changes will have to be approved by Parliament. This underscores why Parliament must continue to have in-person sittings so that Opposition parties can debate, discuss and improve government legislation. Regular accountability sessions lead to better results for all Canadians.

Standing up for seniors

I have been hearing from seniors concerned about how they are being affected by COVID-19, including how the hit to stock markets is shrinking their retirement savings. I was in touch with my colleague, Hon. Alice Wong, the Shadow Minister for Seniors, about this and other concerns. The Official Opposition has suggested some additional measures, including reducing the mandatory minimum RRIF withdrawal by 100% and offering a one-time tax exemption for RRSP withdrawals. We have formally asked the Minister for Seniors, Deb Schulte, for details about whether the government plans to address these issues and I will continue to keep my constituents updated about any additional measures geared towards seniors.

Looking out for students

Parents and students in Calgary Midnapore are understandably concerned about how COVID-19 will affect them in the short, and the long-term. My colleagues are well aware that there are gaps in the benefit packages the Liberal Government has offered to date, and most post-secondary students find themselves currently unable to obtain employment while also being ineligible for any financial assistance. We have asked Ministers Qualtrough and Chagger what the government plans to do to address them. The text of that letter is available [here](#).

Though we have not yet received an official response from the Liberal government, the Prime Minister announced that all student loan borrowers will automatically have their loan repayments and interest suspended until September 30, 2020. Students do not need to apply for the repayment pause. More information on the moratorium is available [here](#).

Update on the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)

Last week, the Prime Minister announced additional changes to the wage subsidy. Previously the government said that businesses would have to show a 30 per cent drop in revenues compared to this time last year, which some start-ups and new businesses would not be able to do. Companies will now be able to compare their lost revenue to what they made in January and February of 2020, and will only need to show a 15 per cent decline in March.

While I am pleased that the government expanded the criteria for employers, businesses owners can't even *apply* for this subsidy yet. The Official Opposition continues to advocate on behalf of business owners, including pushing for a faster delivery of the program. It's been over

a month and with the application process yet to start, businesses may be waiting weeks longer for any initial funds to start flowing.

Maintaining accountability of Service Canada

My colleague, Conservative MP Marty Morantz, and I issued a [joint statement](#), holding the government to account on their promised delivery times of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.

Yesterday, I wrote a [letter](#) to Minister Ahmed Hussen regarding the closure of Service Canada Centres, and the new challenges the closures have posed to seniors and rural Canadians.

Impact on families

In a [letter](#), I also have asked the Liberal government to consider that additional supports might be required by families and children whose needs extend beyond what the CERB currently provides.

Travellers abroad

Many constituents from Calgary Midnapore were traveling when the pandemic peaked, including several snowbirds. My office has assisted those stuck in the USA, Peru, India, Uganda, Laos, Mexico, Australia, and Singapore. My team has been communicating with Global Affairs in order to help family members of those abroad get the information needed in order to bring them back to Canada. We have been successful in most cases; however there are some individuals from our riding who are still stranded. We will continue to work with their families to help get them home safely.

Canada Summer Jobs update

The government recently announced some temporary changes to the Canada Summer Jobs program to allow employers to:

- receive an increased wage subsidy, so that private and public sector employers can also receive up to 100 per cent of the provincial or territorial minimum hourly wage for each employee;
- extend the end date for employment to February 28, 2021;
- adapt their projects and job activities; and
- hire staff on a part-time basis.

I am working with the Minister of HRSDC to ensure Calgary Midnapore youth have the opportunity to earn some much-needed income over the coming months, and our local businesses get access to what may be critical additions to their labour force. More detailed information is available [here](#).

HUMA Committee

As Shadow Minister for Families, Children, and Social Development, I am now the Vice-Chair of the HUMA Parliamentary Committee. "HUMA" encompasses Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. As the Committee's focus is issues related to employment, labour, income security, skills development and disability issues, as well as programs administered by Employment and Social Development Canada, I am looking forward to the resumption of meetings. My Conservative colleagues and I will be asking for witnesses to provide specifics about the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis. I believe

it will be an important opportunity for us to continue to address key concerns of our constituents, such as eligibility for the various benefits currently available.

Meetings will start on April 24th, and are available to watch and listen to [here](#).

Help for businesses

After weeks of advising both the provincial and federal government that businesses cannot sustain unadjusted rent payments when they have little to no income, I am relieved to hear that the Prime Minister may be listening. [Earlier this week he indicated that there are plans to offer a program](#) which will seek to provide loans, **including forgivable loans**, to commercial property owners who in turn will lower or forgo the rent of small businesses for the months of April (retroactively), May, and June. Implementation of the program will require a partnership between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments, which are responsible for property owner-tenant relationships. The government says it is working with the provinces and territories to increase rent support for businesses that are most impacted by the pandemic and we will have more details to share soon. Having heard first-hand reports of landlords refusing to work with tenants to reduce or defer rent payments, as well as refusing to pass along tax savings initiated by the Alberta government, I will be watching this very closely to ensure there are guarantees in place to have this financial relief actually provided to business owners.