

Madam Chair:

- Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to speak about public health issues related to your study on parliamentary duties and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- I would like to begin with an update on COVID-19 in Canada.
- To date, more than 34,000 cases of COVID-19 and more than 1,500 deaths have been reported in Canada.
- In 4.5% of the cases, the virus proved to be fatal.
- More than 549,349 people have been tested for COVID-19 in Canada. Approximately 6.4% of the test results were positive.
- Of the COVID-19 cases reported in Canada to date, approximately half (55%) are female. Approximately one-third (37%) of cases are 60 years old and over.
- It was only 16 weeks ago that the first COVID-19 case cluster was detected in China.
- The first case in Canada was detected on January 15, and we detected community transmission of the virus as of March 5.
- In Canada, federal, provincial and territorial governments have taken extraordinary measures to respond to COVID-19, including the following:
- Border Measures: Since February 3, the Public Health Agency of Canada has made a number of Emergency Orders under the

*Quarantine Act* to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Canada—to reduce the risk from other countries, to repatriate Canadians, and to strengthen border measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Canada. Finally, we can no longer take it for granted that travel is easy. Now increasingly rare, travel, including from one province to another, is followed by 14 days of mandatory isolation.

- Physical distancing: The need for physical distancing has changed both the way we live and work and our relationships with others. The prohibition of mass gatherings has considerably changed how we gather, celebrate and grieve. Because we need to protect the most vulnerable people in our society, we have not been able to see either family or friends for many weeks.
- Schools: Schools closures have affected both students and parents.
- Workers: All but essential front-line workers have been asked to stay home. Certain non-essential workers may work from home, but the fact that many others cannot has also considerably affected individuals and families.
- Businesses: Many businesses have either closed or had to modify their activities. All of us have had to adapt to this new reality.
- It is hard to believe that our lives have changed so profoundly and so rapidly.
- Canadians have taken extraordinary measures and made incredible sacrifices to help us reach the point at which the

spread of COVID-19 appears to be slowing in certain areas of the country.

- While the rate of doubling of reported cases in Canada has slowed, data reported over the next few days and weeks will remain critical for determining the trajectory of the pandemic in Canada. From March 12 to 28, cases doubled approximately every three to four days, and from March 2 to April 10, they doubled approximately every five to eight days.
- Of course, any sign of a slowing of the pandemic makes us eagerly anticipate a return to “normal” life.
- Unfortunately, as we are still in a pandemic, we must remain vigilant. Our course of action will be decisive. To avoid a resurgence of the pandemic, we must reduce our public health measures as cautiously and gradually as we have increased them over time.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is collaborating with provincial and territorial governments to determine the safest way to resume many of our activities that we previously considered to be routine.
- For now, we are staying the course.
- Currently, the best advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada remains the following:
  - Stay home as much as possible, especially if you feel sick
  - Practise physical distancing
  - Practise good hand hygiene

- Maintain good respiratory etiquette, such as covering your mouth and nose with your arm or sleeve when coughing and sneezing, disposing of any used tissues as soon as possible
- Do all you can to protect others, particularly the most vulnerable from infection.

Thank you.