

Late Show Speaking Notes – COVID-19 Emergency Response

Adjournment Proceedings –Notices of Questions:

Original exchange for background: Hansard, October 2, 2020

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is needlessly using national security rules to hide which Canadian companies are being awarded contracts for PPE. Why can we not know how much we are paying for disposable masks? Why can we not know which Canadian companies are supplying them? This does not seem like a national security issue for the government. It seems more likely to be an ethical insecurity issue for the Liberals. Why will the Liberals not tell us who is getting what and for how much?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, transparency and accountability are critically important to our government, and we are committed to releasing a full account of all our procurement efforts. We will absolutely do that for Canadians. For supplies that are in critical shortage worldwide, where we are actually competing with other jurisdictions for critical procurements, I do not know if the hon. member is suggesting that Canada should make public that critical information. We will not be doing that. What we will be doing is strategically procuring the medical equipment and the PPE required for Canadians and our health professionals to keep us safe.

Late Show Response 4 minutes
(509 words)

Mr. Speaker, allow me to thank the member from Red Deer—Lacombe for raising this issue and I am pleased to rise in this House to respond to the member's questions.

From the beginning, our Government's singular focus has been to take care of Canadians—to make sure they have the support they need to get through this pandemic, and to keep them healthy and safe.

That includes procuring essential supplies needed to protect Canadians from COVID-19.

Since the outbreak started, officials from Public Services and Procurement Canada have been working day and night to do just that. This Government has managed to acquire billions of units of PPE, including masks, N95 respirators, face shields, hand sanitizer, protective gowns and gloves—with more on the way.

Mr. Speaker, we have established new supply chains with overseas manufacturers to purchase existing supplies and secure future shipments.

In addition, we have increased our capabilities to produce many of those vital supplies at home—helping to reduce the risk that comes with relying on international suppliers in a globally competitive market, while supporting good Canadian jobs.

Manufacturers from across the country have stepped up to support Canada's fight against COVID-19, and we should all take pride in their ingenuity and tenacity.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to transparency related to contracting information—specifically for supplies that are in critical shortage worldwide and where we are competing with other jurisdictions—we are simply unable to publish some sensitive details.

At the same time, transparency and accountability are critically important to our government, and we are fully committed to publicly disclosing information to the fullest extent possible.

I am pleased to inform this House that we have implemented several measures to do just that.

For example, Canadians are able to consult PSPC's website for updates on purchases and deliveries of our most vital supplies, as well as the names of suppliers and contract amounts regarding COVID-19 related procurements.

We are also updating Canadians regularly on agreements the Government of Canada has signed to secure access to the most promising vaccines being developed around the world.

In addition, we are letting Canadians know about new agreements to secure access to the most effective and efficient testing solutions possible as the technology quickly evolves.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the efforts our Government has made to keep Canadians informed on how we are procuring much-needed supplies.

With that said, this Government would never unnecessarily diminish Canada's ability to procure those supplies that are keeping Canadians safe—and I firmly believe that Canadians expect no less.

Our goal is to build a stronger and more resilient Canada for everyone, and it starts with getting our country through this pandemic. I can tell you we will always prioritize transparency to Canadians on what the Government is doing to make that happen.

The Government's top priority remains the health and safety of all Canadians, and we will continue to pursue the equipment and supplies that we need to fight COVID-19—in an open and transparent manner.

Thank you.

One minute rebuttal
(140 words)

Mr. Speaker, these are extraordinary times, and this Government is working to ensure Canadians are supported.

We are procuring the supplies that are so desperately needed for our frontline health care workers and essential businesses.

We are also putting in place new agreements to secure access to the most effective and efficient testing solutions.

At the same time, we are looking to the future and signing agreements for access to the most promising vaccine candidates being developed around the world—so that we can one day put COVID-19 behind us.

All of this work is being done in the most open and transparent way possible, while also protecting Canada's supply chains in a highly competitive marketplace.

This Government will continue to keep Canadians informed on how we are procuring much-needed supplies to keep us safe and see us through this pandemic.