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HOUSE OF COMMONS
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Honourable Anthony Rota
Speaker of the House
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

November 19, 2020

Mr. Speaker,

RE: Request for emergency debate

I intend to rise following Routine Proceedings tomorrow to ask for an Emergency Debate on the current situation regarding government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier today, the leaders of the political parties with seats in parliament received a briefing from Dr. Teresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer.

I put to you that there is no doubt that the situation constitutes a national emergency requiring urgent consideration. It may be said that we have been in this emergency since at least March 13, 2020, when this House first adjourned due to the pandemic. It could be said that many other opportunities for a debate have been continually available, through Question Period and through the former COVID Committee.

However, our case for an emergency debate is the following.

This parliament is increasingly, and appropriately, dealing with multiple pieces of legislation pertaining to many different issues of public policy – from conversion therapy and medical assistance in dying, to climate action and broadcasting. Canadians watch and observe and conclude Parliament is increasingly irrelevant to their urgent concerns about COVID.

Canadians need to know that their Parliament, and each of us as their representatives, can set partisanship aside and meet in emergency debate to propose the most effective urgent responses to the current emergency.



Our current emergency is that we are in a second wave. Dr. Tam has told Canadians that we may see as many as 10,000 cases a day within the month. The new president of the Canadian Medical Association, Ann Collins, recently told CBC's *The Current* "there has been a lack of collaboration and co-ordination" at all government levels. We have to agree.

We need to admit, without partisanship or blame, that Canada needs to revisit our approach and learn from other jurisdictions. Our response has been hampered by jurisdictional turf wars. We should debate what Australia, Germany and Switzerland have done to move to a level of coordination between and among jurisdictions.

The other opportunities for debate in parliament tend toward partisan finger-pointing. Canadians do not want to watch political parties attempt to make points against each other, as we see far too frequently in Question Period.

It is our hope within the Green Party that we can, fully informed of the dire situation in which we find ourselves as Canadian families attempt to make sense of conflicting advice, use the opportunity of an emergency debate to provide better and fuller responses. As we approach the holidays, we must give Canadians confidence in our institutions. What we are doing in parliament is not assisting in that effort. We need an emergency debate allowing ministers to share their most recent information and approach and allow individual members of parliament to offer insights and advice from their own communities.

We are in a national emergency. It is urgent that parliament recognize the emergency and hold an emergency COVID debate.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada



Jenica Atwin
Member of Parliament
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Paul Manly
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