

# WHY PARLIAMENT NEEDS TO REOPEN

TRUE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY BE DELIVERED WHEN PARLIAMENT IS SITTING, WRITES MICHAEL CHONG



**MICHAEL CHONG**  
Column

Since March 13, Parliament has been suspended. In its place, a special committee has met far fewer times than the House of Commons normally would.

When the committee has met, only a few MPs are present. The committee has limited powers. Members can only ask questions, make statements or present petitions. Introducing motions or legislation is not permitted, nor are votes, and confidence cannot be tested.

I supported the decision to suspend Parliament March 13.

The decision to suspend was prudent and appropriate. The pandemic had just been declared, and we didn't know what we were dealing with.

However, after three months, we now know a lot more about COVID-19. It's time for Parliament, with all its powers and physical distancing, to resume. Hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent without Parliamentary approval.

Laws are being changed by ministerial order rather than by Parliament.

The government is making decisions that will affect Canadians for decades to come without Parli-

mentary approval or oversight.

Right now, more than ever, Parliament needs to resume to hold the government accountable — in order to save lives and livelihoods.

History demonstrates that governments make better decisions through the cut and thrust of democratic debate. Accountability is not only the one-time event of an election every four years, but the continuous, ongoing check and balance on the government's power.

That ongoing accountability can only be delivered if Parliament is sitting.

By limiting the powers of MPs, the Liberal minority government is effectively governing like it holds a majority — which it does not. Daily media briefings are no substitute for parliamentary accountability.

Parliament is not scheduled to resume until September 21.

For context, this shutdown totals four times the length that former prime minister Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament, in his nearly 10 years of governing, combined.

Parliament sat through two world wars, the October crisis and previous pandemics. The people's representatives need to sit. Canadians need their representation.

The House of Commons, with its full powers and physical distancing, needs to reopen immediately.

*Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills, and the shadow minister of democratic institutions for the official Opposition. He can be reached at Michael.chong.a3@parl.gc.ca.*

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## SNAPSHOT



Tony Fortunato photo

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## SCAMS AND FRAUD ARE A REAL THREAT

CANADIANS NEED TO RETHINK HOW WE COMBAT SCAMS AND OTHER ATTEMPTS OF THEFT, WRITES PETER WATSON



**PETER WATSON**  
Column

Scams and frauds are part of everyday life. Policing is difficult because most cases are not reported. The Canadian Anti-Fraud website is a useful source of information. Protect yourself by anticipating fraud attempts will occur against you.

As an example: two cellphone messages saying the owner's credit card had been compromised earlier that morning and a large amount of money was taken. The instruction was to

call back immediately, and a number was provided.

The cellphone owner elected to call the phone number on the credit card. Both the credit card and bank name are among the largest in our country.

The bank employee was familiar with this type of attempted fraud and assured the caller not to worry.

That assurance was comforting, but from a crime prevention perspective, the rest of the telephone conversation was puzzling.

The bank employee was offered the phone number that the criminals had requested the cellphone owner call.

The surprise response was no. The bank did not want the phone number.

I contacted the Halton Regional Police and spoke with Kevin Harvey in the fraud unit. He said a good way to combat fraud attempts is public awareness.

When specific types of

fraud are continuously attempted, there is an effort by police to educate the public which has had success in the past. Criminal activity in that area might decline, but sometimes resurface years later.

Detective Harvey said one of the biggest obstacles at policing fraudulent activity is the lack of reporting. Most fraud attempts are not reported.

The suggestion was for citizens interested in learning more about fraud to visit the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre website.

Scams and fraud attempts unfortunately are part of everyday life. Understand that you will likely be a target in the future.

Be on guard and try to protect yourself.

*Peter Watson, of Watson Investments MBA, CFP®, R.F.P., CIM®, FCSI offers a weekly financial planning column, 'Dollars & Sense'. He can be contacted through [www.watsoninvestments.com](http://www.watsoninvestments.com).*

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