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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 23, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)
[*English*]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that the House sits on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe.

It is a great honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-5, an important bill that seeks to create a new federal statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation. It is important that we recognize and thank Georgina Jolibois for bringing this bill forward in the last Parliament, but more importantly for being a strong advocate for indigenous rights and a voice for indigenous peoples not only in her riding, but across all of Canada. I also want to thank and acknowledge the hon. member for Burnaby South for supporting this important piece of legislation.

I have had the honour to speak in the House on our country's path toward reconciliation, and I know that reconciliation does not belong to a single political party or single individual. It is a shared responsibility for each and every one of us.

[*Translation*]

This bill is an important step on the journey that we are taking together. I am proud to work with members of all political parties on this legislative measure.

Some members of the House may have had the privilege of hearing the testimony given before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage when it examined Georgina Jolibois' bill in the previous Parliament. The testimony we heard strengthened our conviction that it is important to pass this bill.

Much of that moving and powerful testimony focused on the potential benefits of a national day for truth and reconciliation. For

example, National Chief Robert Bertrand of the Congress for Aboriginal Peoples said:

A statutory holiday will be an important opportunity to reflect upon the diverse heritage and culture of our people, which remain so vitally important to the social fabric of this country. In doing so, each and every one of us will be working towards the reality of true reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

Similarly, Mrs. Theresa Brown, the chair of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's Survivors Circle, spoke powerfully about the importance of a national day of reflection for residential school survivors. She said:

A special, separate day when our grandchildren could go out and lay a wreath, lay tobacco, pray and remember is important to me and other survivors. It is also a time for this country to remember and say "never again". We want to know that when we are gone, our spirit of truth and reconciliation will live on in our future generations.

[*Translation*]

Natan Obed, president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, testified as follows:

...the creation of a statutory holiday provides a greater weight and allows for more education and a bigger platform for us. If you think about holidays, statutory holidays, and how they've been allocated over time, they have been colonial in nature and they have thought about the founding of this country, not necessarily about indigenous peoples within Canada. This would be a marked departure from that legacy.

He went on to say the following:

This holiday can go a long way to making sure that from a very early age, all Canadians have a positive association with first nations, Inuit and Métis.

[*English*]

Mr. Obed's first point speaks to the importance and status of national holidays in Canada, and I would like to remind this chamber that the act of creating a new statutory holiday is, in itself, quite significant. Right now there are nine federally legislated statutory holidays in Canada. A national day for truth and reconciliation would join in rank of importance with holidays like Labour Day and Remembrance Day, highlighting the significance and scope of this day.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

During the testimony we heard, many groups expressed points of view similar to those I just quoted about the meaning and impact of a day of commemoration.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The residential school system was indeed a national tragedy. Over the span of 130 years, more than 150,000 first nations, Inuit and Métis children were placed in residential schools. These children were forcibly separated from their parents, their homes, their culture, their language, their land, their relations and their communities.

[Translation]

This day is important. It is an opportunity to reflect on the harm inflicted on first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples throughout our history and to this day by the legacy of residential schools. We are working to repair that harm by responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.

Call to action number 80 calls upon our government to:

establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

Today, we want to answer that call to action.

[English]

After careful consultations and respectful consideration, September 30 was the date chosen deliberately for its significance. Currently, September 30 is the date of the grassroots movement called Orange Shirt Day, started by the formidable Phyllis Webstad. It was named after the orange shirt that Mrs. Webstad was given by her grandmother on her first day of residential school, only to have it forcibly taken away from her upon her arrival. Her orange shirt is symbolic of the vibrant cultures, languages, traditions, identities and childhoods that were repressed within the residential school system. It is also a symbol of survivors like Phyllis and the monumental efforts by first nations, Inuit and Métis in protecting and revitalizing their cultures and languages for future generations.

[Translation]

From testimony in committee we learned that September is a symbolically painful time for indigenous families and communities. Every year during the month of September children were separated from their loved ones and their community to go back to school. It is important to acknowledge this pain with a solemn day to remember the past, reflect on it and learn together to gain a better knowledge of the history and legacy of residential schools.

It has always been my belief that one of the pillars of reconciliation is education. Establishing a national day for truth and reconciliation is education in action. For all those living in Canada, this would be a day of commemoration, but also a day to learn about a dark chapter of our past. It would serve as a reminder to never forget and never veer from the path toward reconciliation.

Students still go back to school every year in September. The proposed date, September 30, for a national day of truth and reconciliation not only has symbolic importance, but it also provides an opportunity for learning within our schools about our journey toward reconciliation. Teachers across the country will be able to build on discussions about residential schools that are already under way in many schools. Families will have a reason to talk about rec-

onciliation at home. Canadians will have a day to reflect on our history and our values as a society.

I like to think about the day when schools across the country will mark this holiday with ceremonies, as a day of learning. I hope they will invite elders or survivors, indigenous knowledge holders and educators to come into classrooms to talk with the children.

[English]

I think of the way that schools across the country use Remembrance Day as an educational tool for children of all ages to learn about the historic conflicts that Canada has been involved in, to understand the horrors of war and, above all, to honour the women and men who have sacrificed so much in serving this country. I believe that a new day for truth and reconciliation is an excellent learning opportunity for this equally important part of Canada's history.

● (1015)

[Translation]

Unfortunately, only half of Canadians know the history of the Indian residential school system and its long-term effects on indigenous peoples.

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states that too many Canadians know little or nothing about the deep historical roots of these conflicts. This lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and for Canada as a whole. Setting aside a special day each year to take the time to acknowledge this painful history will help everyone learn and understand more about the realities of the residential school era. This is a positive step on our path toward reconciliation. This type of commemoration is a collective, public act of recognition.

This will also be a day of listening and healing for the entire country. Together we can continue our conversation on social justice.

[English]

As Dr. Marie Wilson, former commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, noted in her testimony to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage:

It makes it everybody's call to attention, call to remembrance, and call to respect, and hopefully...there is ongoing education about it. We don't just talk about wars; we talk about peace in the context of talking about wars. In the context of residential schools, we can talk about mistakes of the past and what we are trying to do to address things going forward.

Mr. Tim Argetsinger, political advisor to the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, agreed. He said:

I think there's a way of achieving that balance where the focus of a day could be a focus on the past human rights abuses that indigenous peoples have experienced and have worked to overcome. At the same time, it could be the day to focus on the agency that we all have to take positive actions to address some of the challenges that flow from those past experiences.

[*Translation*]

I want to underscore that reconciliation and advancing indigenous rights remain a constant priority for our government. Some people will say that a single day will not resolve the horrors of the past and will do nothing to improve the unacceptable living conditions that still exist in some communities to this day. I believe, however, that remembering the past is an effective way to ensure that history is not repeated.

[*English*]

Systemic racism and overt racism exist in Canada. They are not and will never be acceptable. Recently, we were reminded of the horrific consequences they can have. The events that preceded the death of Joyce Echaquan shocked us all. They outraged us, but should not surprise us. They are not isolated events.

Addressing systemic racism in all our institutions requires active listening, strong public policy and making more equitable representation at all levels of society. Honouring the victims of institutional racism, whatever form it may have taken throughout history, is a first step. Making sure that these atrocities against indigenous peoples cease completely is our everyday priority.

This national day for truth and reconciliation will be an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on and question their own individual biases and assumptions. Working on them will require a continuous and collective endeavour beyond September 30.

[*Translation*]

I implore members of the House to listen carefully to the testimony of the survivors and indigenous leaders who are telling us how a national day of recognition would help heal the wounds of the past, honour survivors and move forward together towards reconciliation.

We must also continue to work tirelessly to quickly resolve the many problems faced by indigenous communities today. Access to drinking water, for example, is vital.

Our government is committed to eliminating all boil water advisories, in the long term, in first nations communities living on reserve. We recognize and affirm the right of communities to have access to safe drinking water. As a result of this commitment, 95 boil water advisories have been lifted since 2015.

In the preceding parliament, we passed an important law to reform child and family services with the goal of reducing the number of indigenous children in care. The law also allows first nations, the Inuit and the Métis to have full authority over child services so they can make the decisions that will ensure the well-being of their children, families and communities. There is a crisis in indigenous communities. Too many children are taken away from their homes and communities.

We are also committed to the reclamation, revitalization and strengthening of indigenous languages. A historic piece of legisla-

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tion, the Indigenous Languages Act, received royal assent on June 21, 2019. This legislation was developed in collaboration with indigenous peoples. It recognizes the language rights of indigenous peoples and sets out how we will support these languages.

• (1020)

[*English*]

Canadian Heritage is working collaboratively with indigenous partners to implement the Indigenous Languages Act. The department is consulting with indigenous governments, governing bodies and a variety of organizations on the appointment of a commissioner and three directors of indigenous languages, as well as the development of an indigenous languages funding model. These are important successes, yet we can all agree that there is so much more we need to do.

I look forward to continuing to work hard with indigenous peoples across the country to make further progress on these and other crucial issues.

[*Translation*]

Canada has embarked upon a path to reconciliation. With each step, Canadians are able to better understand the lives, challenges and points of view of indigenous peoples from the past and present.

In introducing this bill to create a national day for truth and reconciliation, the Government of Canada is hoping to encourage people across the country to learn about indigenous history, come together and get involved to support these efforts and help their communities move forward on the path to reconciliation.

Although we all have different journeys and experiences, every Canadian has a unique and essential role to play as we walk together on this path toward reconciliation and a stronger, more resilient Canada.

[*English*]

I think it fitting to close with the words of Ms. Georgina Jolibois, who said, "People in Canada are capable of mourning the past while also celebrating the present and looking toward the future." I urge all members to support this legislation so that our country can honour survivors and mark the history of residential schools with a day for recognition, reflection, commemoration, education and engagement.

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[*Translation*]

We must recognize that others have come before us to chart this path. The commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave so much of themselves to ensure that the voices of others were heard. Those who testified, leaders and indigenous communities across Canada, as well as current and former parliamentarians, including Georgina Jolibois, called for a national day, as is set out in this bill. I thank them all.

Meegwetch, marsi.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone in this House could disagree that there is an essential need for a day of remembrance, but a lot of concerns have been raised to me by my indigenous constituents that creating a new federal holiday on which civil servants would not be working could hurt indigenous people.

Indigenous people have so many needs that have been listed and I want the minister to assure my indigenous constituents that there will be somebody to pick up the phone when they have a need on the national day of remembrance.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, the federal government and the federal system have been working and will continue to work to ensure that we can provide all the necessary services for indigenous peoples across this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I applaud the introduction of this bill. It is important to take time to reflect and remember, but I think that we need to go much further than that. This bill responds to call to action no. 80 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

I would like to draw members' attention to call to action no. 43, which calls upon the federal government to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that we should implement this declaration to truly achieve reconciliation. Will he ask his government to make that a priority?

• (1025)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

Obviously, we are committed to doing that. It is a priority for our government, and we will move forward with adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for recognizing Georgina Jolibois and her work. The way the minister did it was very classy and respectful for Georgina, who worked tirelessly on this and also was, in the spirit of what this day is trying to do, very collaborative. She was very dedicated to reaching out to not only the communities, but also this place.

The bill, as the minister knows, died in the Senate. It is very important that we move this bill forward in unity as a Parliament. I would ask the minister whether he is prepared to work to ensure this bill moves quickly through the House and the Senate.

I again thank him for recognizing Georgina. I saw how hard she worked on this, the effort she put into it and what it meant to her. It means a lot to everyone and it is important that we move forward, but only by recognizing the past and having the past included in our future.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, as we say in English, we should give credit where credit is due. It was absolutely natural for us to do this. I want to assure the member that we will work diligently with all members of this House and the Senate to ensure this bill is adopted as quickly as possible.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to see this put forward today and to be up for debate. I was part of the committee that studied the bill put forward by Georgina Jolibois in the last Parliament, and I know how important it is. Having heard from all the witnesses, I know they really are going to be so happy to see we are moving forward and making it a priority.

The minister touched upon this a bit in his speech, but why this chosen date? I know there has been discussion about it, but why is September 30 the most important date for us to use for the national day for truth and reconciliation?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, as part of the consultations done during the last Parliament on this bill and the testimonies we heard through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it became clear that September 30, Orange Shirt Day, a grassroots movement in Canada led by indigenous peoples across the country, was really the most significant day to create this national federal statutory holiday to remember what happened and what Canada has done to indigenous peoples across the country. We want to work to ensure that Canadians, but especially younger Canadians, understand this part of our past so that never again should this happen in the future.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges I have seen as a member of Parliament is that it has actually helped me learn more and understand my own ignorance as far as reconciliation and the need for reconciliation.

The minister quite rightly points out the need for education because so many Canadians are unaware of this dark chapter in our history. In the bill, there is really no plan to develop an educational strategy. He did compare how this would be similar to Remembrance Day. On Remembrance Day, the federal government and schools and everybody really put an effort forward to allow young people and all Canadians to learn about these tragic parts of our history.

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I was wondering if the minister could comment on whether there are any plans for education. One of the concerns with this bill is there does not appear to be a plan for an educational part of this whole process. When we debated Remembrance Day, I remember people worrying and not wanting it to just become a holiday but a learning experience.

• (1030)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, it is a very important issue, and in fact, Canadian Heritage does have programs for educational activities as part of this. This is something we want to continue going into the future and maybe even amplify. It is a very good point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech.

I would like to know whether he recognizes that the federal Indian Act is a racist and outdated piece of legislation that needs a complete overhaul.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think there are so many things we need to do on our journey towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Also, I am not saying that the bill I am introducing today will solve every problem.

However, this was one of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and it is something we heard from coast to coast to coast during the consultations held by that commission and by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

It is one step towards reconciliation, but there is a lot more work to do.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for continuing the work started by my former colleague, Georgina Jolibois, and I thank him for the kind words he said about her today.

In this spirit of reconciliation, dialogue and moving forward, I would like to know if he is willing to commit his government to dropping the court challenge of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling on indigenous child welfare.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

I said this just now in answer to the member for Joliette, and I will say it again. This bill is one step towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples. There are many other things we have to do.

For example, in my speech, I talked about implementing the Indigenous Languages Act, which is an absolutely crucial element. We are currently holding nationwide consultations about the implementation of that act. I heard one participant say that language is culture and culture is language, and I certainly agree with that.

There is still so much more we need to do. Our government is walking the path of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and it is a process that will take a lot more time.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here. Imagine living beside a home for years and knowing the families who went through there, only to find out, after growing up and moving away, that unspeakable horrors took place in that house. Members should put themselves in that position right now, because for me, that is what we are talking about today.

Orange Shirt Day originated in my hometown of Williams Lake. St. Joseph's Mission was just down the road from where I grew up. I played ball hockey there. I swam there. Later in life, I rode motorbikes, played in the fields and rode horses through there. I played with many of the kids. I know many of the kids who came through there. Orange Shirt Day for me, every year, strikes home the fact that we never know exactly what is going on right beside us.

Over the years I have gotten to know a number of survivors of the residential school program. They tell horrific stories. My wife and my children are from the Esdilagh First Nation. One of my dear friends and mentors, even though he is younger, is Chief Willie Sellars of the Williams Lake Indian Band. St. Joseph's Mission and the remnants of the mission still reside in their community. As people drive by it, every day, it is a constant reminder of the atrocities that took place right there. That is what Orange Shirt Day means to me.

In the House we were talking about Remembrance Day and the significance of remembering, every day, those who serve our country and our community. It is not enough for us to use one day to remember their service. We have to remember it every day. Orange Shirt Day, for me and for many, is similar: Every day we must remember these atrocities.

We have to understand our past. We currently live in an era of a cancel culture. We want to erase all this: Tear down statues and erase the past. What we need is to remember our past. Without our past, we do not know where we have been. Without our past, we have no idea who we are today. Without our past, we do not know where we are going.

I had the honour of speaking during debate on the Indigenous Languages Act. I spoke of an elder in my riding, Lheidli T'enneh elder Mary Gouchie, who was one of the last speakers of the Dakelh language in my riding. I had the honour of being with her and sitting with her, and she would share stories with me. She instilled in me that our past is so important. Culture is so important, and knowing one's culture. As I said, my children, my son and my daughter, are first nations, yet they have very little knowledge of their past or their history. I think that is shameful.

I mentioned my friend, Chief Willie Sellars. He is a mentor who is leading his community to overcome its challenges and to learn from the mistakes of the past. He is leading them to greater opportunities moving forward.

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● (1035)

He is an accomplished author, and wrote *Dipnetting with Dad* and *Hockey with Dad*. I urge my colleagues in the House and those who are listening to please source those books. They are easy reads, but they are impactful.

Orange Shirt Day is the story of Phyllis Jack. Her grandmother took her to a store and bought her a nice orange shirt for her first day of school. She went on the bus to St. Joseph's Mission, and immediately upon arriving on the mission grounds, she had that orange shirt ripped off of her. The residential school program was designed to eradicate the race: the first nation, or the native, in those children. Over 150,000 first nations, Inuit and Métis children went through that program, and so many did not make it out.

September 30 is a day to honour the survivors: those who came through the program. It is also to remember those who did not make it through. My colleague had a great question for the minister about the teaching of this subject. My worry with the program is that it becomes just another excuse for a holiday. I will go back to my earlier comments: Imagine living beside a house of horrors. We should never forget. We need to learn from that past and ensure that it never happens again. The orange shirt slogan is that every child matters. We need to ensure that we are bringing equity up so that every child truly does matter.

I think we use reconciliation like a buzzword at times. We have seen it with certain programs and policies that have taken place. We have seen that we still have boil water advisories in first nations. I will be the first to admit those boil water advisories have been longstanding and that no one case is the same as another. It is not one-size-fits-all. It is very complex, but we have to work to be better.

We have suicide epidemics, where children as young as four years old are choosing death to get out of their lot in life. One of the first emergency debates that I took part in, in the House, was regarding the Attawapiskat First Nation suicide epidemic. Sadly, today we still have those same concerns and those same challenges are taking place. Reconciliation is about walking a path together, not pitting one first nation against another first nation, picking winners or losers, or pitting first nations against non-first nations. If we are truly devoted and committed to reconciliation, it is about working together and learning from one another.

● (1040)

I spoke to a couple of first nations leaders about my speech today. They have heard me talk before. They have heard my comments about reconciliation being more than a buzzword: more than something for a politician to stand with hand on heart and perhaps a tissue in hand to dab away a fake tear and say, "This is my most important relationship," while we still have communities that have boil water advisories and that suffer atrocious living conditions.

If we are truly going to walk the path, we have to educate. We cannot develop indigenous policy without indigenous people at the table. We cannot chart a path forward unless we have honest conversation, and honest conversation means we are not always going to agree. In my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, an area that I grew up running through, and fishing, hunting and hiking in, be-

longs to the Tsilhqot'in Nation, where the Supreme Court decision in the William case took place.

We have challenges with first nations and non-first-nations people who have lived side by side for generations. It is a delicate balance for me always, because I have friends and relations on both sides. We always have to remember that the path forward is through honest conversation and education.

Phyllis Jack, in writing and telling her story, hoped that it would spur a movement and that it would help to educate people. The conversation that we are having today on this, and that we have had over the last number of years, is so important. Our shared history, our connection to our past, is often immediate. The way we understand our heritage is passed down, for the most part, through books, memories and communication among communities. However, our shared history is also influenced by our own race, colour and creed. Although these are shared between people, they are also shared very differently. It is so important, as we walk together, that we understand that we all have different stories. I am sure some of my colleagues are hearing this story for the first time today. Phyllis's story is important, and is but one. I urge my colleagues to listen.

I sat in some of the talking circles when the truth and reconciliation study was going on, and we heard heartbreaking stories. Last September 30 on Orange Shirt Day, I did a healing circle in my hometown, and some survivors were there. The generational effects of residential school still impact those families. Although the last school closed in 1981 or 1984, that generational negative impact is still going on to this day. It is seen in lateral violence. It is seen in substance abuse. It is seen in the abject poverty these communities live in.

● (1045)

I hope my colleagues listening in or who are in the House today are taking pause. We should be looking at some things in the legislation and hopefully making amendments to strengthen it and make it better.

When talk about education, school district 27 in my riding was chosen by the first nations education steering committee to pilot curriculum changes for all grade five and 10 students, reflecting on the residential school experience. The events were designed to commemorate the residential school experience, to witness and honour the healing journey of survivors and their families and to commit to the ongoing process of reconciliation.

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Phyllis (Jack) Webstad told her story about the first day at the residential school when the shiny new shirt her grandmother bought her was taken from her. She was six years old.

The minister mentioned September 30 and why it was chosen. For kids right across our country and for parents too, for the most part, that back to school day is a sense of excitement. It is excitement for the parents because they are able to send their kids to school and are free for a few hours every day. They are excited to see their children go off on a journey of learning. However, that time of celebration for many is still one of reflection for others. It is very traumatic, and I have witnessed it first-hand.

While we say every child matters, we need to remember that all children matter even if they are now adults. We have so many people who are still locked in that time when they were in that program.

A first nations leader called me last night. I had reached out to let him know I was speaking on this. He asked much of what my colleague from Sturgeon River asked. Will this do anything to solve the boil water advisories, the systemic racism or the suicide epidemics? No, it will not, but it is a step in the right direction to further educate about this. Education is such a critical component and it needs to be included in the bill.

We cannot just make a holiday for the sake of giving people another long weekend to load up their campers and go away. At the very end, we will be doing a disservice to the original intent of the bill. It is important we build that into the bill to ensure we never forget.

Whether it is September 30, as proposed, or some other day, we must remember the over 150,000 residential school children, the first nations, Inuit and Métis who went through that. We must honour the survivors and never forget the children who never made it home.

• (1050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the comments of the minister, I mean the member opposite no doubt come from the heart, and I genuinely appreciate that.

Throughout this debate, it is important for us to recognize that a commission recommended 94 calls to action. The vast majority, 70-plus, indicated that the federal government needed to be more directly involved, and this is one of those.

The general feeling is that the legislation is a positive step forward. It is more than symbolism. The best way to deal with truth and reconciliation is through education. In many ways it is the key in dealing with truth and reconciliation. I think we underestimate the potential of that cross-cultural awareness and education. These things can be profoundly positive and make a difference.

By recognizing a day to allow civil society to take advantage of that through educational programs, we will all be better as a society. Could the member comment on that?

• (1055)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the promotion he gave me by calling me “minister”; hopefully someday.

I agree that education is critically important. I spent a lifetime overseas working with other countries. I always used to say that we spent millions upon millions of dollars, billions likely, to figure out other cultures and how to do work and do business with them, but we have failed to do that at home. We have not sat down and learned our lessons. As I said in my comments, that educational component is vital and it is lacking in the current act. We need to ensure that education is critically important.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like him to comment further on something he touched on earlier, which is the fact that this statutory holiday must not be just another day off. It is meant to be an opportunity to fulfill our duty to commemorate and educate.

I would like to know what he expects from parliamentarians in particular.

For example, what would he like us all to do in our ridings to honour this day?

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I fear that it becomes just another excuse for people, for families, to load up their trailers, go camping and be together.

We, as the 338 members of Parliament who were elected to be here, have to act as examples. We try to do our very best in my riding to participate in events. Sometimes we are here and we acknowledge that day in the House of Commons.

There are many things we could do. I urge my colleagues to reach out to their local first nations communities, to truly find the elders within those communities and see if they are willing to openly talk about the impacts they may have experienced with residential schools programs.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments were heartfelt and they did move me today.

I am a teacher by training, so listening to the member talk about the value of education is very important to me. I am also a mother, so thinking about what happened to children and their parents with residential schools is very important to me. I shudder at what they have gone through.

This week in Alberta, there were some leaked curriculum documents in which the education on residential schools was pulled from the curriculum. At a time when we all need to be doing more to ensure Canadians know about what happened with residential schools, it is being taken out of our curriculum in Alberta.

Statements by Members

Remembering history is important, acknowledging harm done is important and recognizing what was done to indigenous peoples is important.

I wonder if the member could let us know if he will support the expedited passage of the bill to the Senate.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot in that question. This is the second time we have discussed this bill. I have expressed some of my concerns on it. Obviously, I think my colleagues can see where I and my party stand on this.

We want to ensure that due diligence is done, and not just with this bill. We want to ensure that what has taken place in Alberta does not take place elsewhere. We want to ensure we work with our provincial colleagues and with those in the House and in the other place to ensure the bill receives royal assent and becomes possible, so we have a national day of recognition. However, we have to ensure that the significance of this day is never lost, that we remember that every child matters and that we strive to do better.

I will be working hard with our shadow minister on this issue and with those across the way.

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: We will need to leave that for the moment. The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George will have three minutes remaining for questions and comments when the House gets back to debate on this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is World Polio Day and I would like to thank all rotary clubs in Canada, including local rotary clubs at our binational Rotary District 6400, for their efforts to help end polio around the world. I congratulate Jennifer Jones, a fellow Windsorite, on her historic appointment as the first woman president in Rotary International's 115-year history.

The global polio eradication initiative has helped vaccinate 2.5 billion children since 1988, but we know that the job is not yet done. In May, our government announced \$190 million in funding over four years for GPEI and I am proud of Canada's strong leadership on the global health stage.

Around the world, efforts to eradicate polio have already prevented 18 million cases of paralysis. This is one of the great global health success stories of the last 30 years and our government will remain a partner every step of the way as we move closer to eradication.

* * *

SASKATOON TRIBAL COUNCIL ELECTION

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Mark Arcand for being re-elected tribal chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council on October 15.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council represents 11,000 people in seven distinct first nations, including the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, where Chief Arcand hails from. Chief Arcand is committed to helping youth excel and build their dreams through developing the gifts of each child. As the leader of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, he is a tireless advocate for improved facilities and programming, especially for vulnerable people in Saskatoon.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council operates family health and wellness programs, a legal advocate centre, a job training centre, and affordable housing, as well as the White Buffalo Youth Lodge, a facility that takes youth off the street and offers them alternatives to homelessness and addiction. The Saskatoon Tribal Council seeks to develop economic capacity within indigenous communities. It helps create business and industry partnerships in promoting sustainable wealth creations for first nation communities.

Once again, I congratulate the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Chief Mark Arcand.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the heartbeat of my community. They are lively social hubs, which bring my community together. They are the economic drivers and employers for my community, and they have been hard hit by this pandemic. I have spoken with so many local business owners and BIAs. I want to thank them for reaching out and sharing with me their insights, which have helped to shape our government's policies. I am committed to continuing to work with them.

I want to thank my community for stepping up and showing support for local businesses in this difficult time because together we will get through this. We will be stronger, and we will have lively, strong main streets in our community.

B.C. WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, the wine industry is an important part of the economy, and it has been directly affected by COVID. Most of the smaller wineries here rely on sales to restaurants, direct-to-consumer online sales and sales to visitors. When restaurants closed and tourists stopped coming, these wineries were significantly impacted. While online sales increased, the B.C. wine industry still faces interprovincial trade barriers that ban that practice. That must change.

In the middle of the pandemic, the federal government removed one of the most critical supports for the industry by cancelling the excise tax exemption for Canadian wines. It must quickly replace that with trade legal support, such as that proposed by Wine Growers Canada.

I want to close by mentioning the untimely passing of David Wilson, the former chair of the Canadian Vintners Association. Mr. Wilson always brought intelligent conversation and fine Okanagan wines to our meetings in Ottawa. He left us too soon, and he will be missed.

* * *

• (1105)

FANIA "FANNY" GOOSE

Mr. Peter Fragikatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the remarkable life of Fania “Fanny” Goose, a constituent and long-time business leader in London who passed away in her 99th year this April.

Fanny, or the first lady of downtown, as she was also known, was a remarkable woman who experienced the best and worst our world can offer. A Holocaust survivor who came to Canada in 1949, Fanny and her husband realized the Canadian dream by founding a retail business that became a pillar of London's downtown for over 50 years.

Fanny was sought out for her direct and savvy advice. Always politically engaged, she had her finger on the pulse of the community. Fanny was kind, confident and thoughtful, and always had a positive outlook. Predeceased by her husband Jerry, she was mother to Steve Goose Garrison and Martin Goose, and loving bubbie to three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

May Fanny rest in eternal peace. Her legacy will live on for generations to come.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute and give congratulations to one of the most important individuals in my life, my father. My dad, Gary Bragdon, after more than 50 years of dedicated hard work, will be retiring from the Nackawic pulp mill this weekend. He worked tirelessly to provide for his wife and his four children.

His metal lunch bucket became an important symbol for me during my campaign to be a member of this House. It serves as a constant reminder of those I represent. They are the ones who carry the

Statements by Members

buckets, work in our mills and our factories, wait on our tables, truck our food, harvest our natural resources, run small businesses, fish our waters, grow our food, and literally keep our land. They are the people who in large part make Canada what it is, and the people who will drive Canada's economy into recovery and back into prosperity.

I keep my father's bucket in my office in Ottawa as a constant reminder of who sent me here as their representative.

I congratulate my dad on his retirement, and I assure him that on this side of the House we will remember those who carry the buckets.

* * *

NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the development of small modular reactor technology is key to building Atlantic Canada's economy back better. SMRs are safe, reliable, transportable and emissions-free, and the science is clear that we simply cannot achieve net-zero by 2050 without them.

Atlantic Canada's strategic geographic position, skills base and transportation infrastructure position it to become a world leader in SMR development and manufacturing. Our region's SMR sector, which is based in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, has the potential to create thousands of highly skilled, well-paying and sustainable green jobs across our region.

That is why I am proud to be part of a federal government that is committed to making the investments necessary to fully leverage the economic potential of our SMR sector. It is also why I am working closely with my federal colleagues across Atlantic Canada, as well as my provincial counterparts in New Brunswick, to deliver the federal and provincial investments necessary to seize this historic opportunity for our region.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Small Business Week, which ends tomorrow. This week is an opportunity to show our support for small businesses across Canada, especially those in my riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

Statements by Members

Things have been particularly tough for small businesses lately, but owners have responded with resilience, determination and innovation. Our government is here to support them. We introduced various measures, such as the Canada emergency rent subsidy, we extended the Canada emergency wage subsidy, and we expanded the Canada emergency business account.

I want to acknowledge the business owners in my riding, including Félix Marcoux, the owner of La boulangerie du P'tit chef; Alain Boyer, the owner of Fromagerie Montebello; Charles-Alain Carrière, the owner of Orientech; and Carole and Martin Lajeunesse, the owners of Lala Bistrot.

I encourage everyone to support the local businesses that help our communities thrive.

* * *

• (1110)

[English]

COMMANDER OF 2 CANADIAN FORCES FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a trailblazer, a role model and an inspiring leader who has achieved heights never reached before. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Lieutenant-Colonel Riel Erickson from my riding of Foothills for being named the commander of the Canadian Forces Flying Training School in Moose Jaw.

A farm girl raised in Millarville, Erickson is the first woman to take command of 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School, the centre of pilot training in the country. Erickson was inspired to join the military by her uncle, who was a fighter pilot in the Gulf War.

A graduate of Oilfields High School, Riel earned her wings in 2005 and became just the fifth woman in the history of the Royal Canadian Air Force to become a CF-18 pilot. In her impressive career, she has faced many obstacles, including Russian bombers, but in doing so, she earned the nickname “Guns”.

From her humble roots in southern Alberta, she has turned into a strong leader and a fierce pilot. She has proven the sky is the limit. Her parents, her husband, her sons and her community are extremely proud. She has said, “I can't wait until we run out of firsts”. Through her leadership, she is proving that to be true.

* * *

GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is World Polio Day, a day to celebrate the world's progress against polio and our resolve to end this horrible disease once and for all. Recently, Africa was certified as free of the wild polio virus, which is a big milestone, but COVID-19 has caused 50 million children to miss their polio vaccinations, so sustained action is critical to protect global health. If we stop now, 200,000 children a year could be paralyzed.

In May, Canada committed \$190 million to the global polio eradication initiative, building on past contributions. It is something all Canadians can be proud of.

Please join me in marking World Polio Day by thanking all who contribute to polio eradication, including rotary clubs across Canada and the Whitehorse Rotary Club, which sponsored polio survivor Ramesh Ferris' epic fundraising hand-cycling tour of 7,140 kilometres across Canada.

It is because of all these actions that 18 million people, who could otherwise have been paralyzed, are now walking. Let us keep it up.

* * *

RECOVERY OF WORLD WAR II BOMBER

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day and the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain approach, it is important that we recognize, remember and honour the contributions of all who have served and continue to serve this nation as members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

This November 11, we will remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We will not, nor shall we ever, forget the contributions of those heroes who never made it home.

As such, I would like to bring attention to the important recovery work of a World War II bomber, a British Short Stirling, which is now happening in the Netherlands. That bomber was lost in 1943 returning from a raid over Germany. On board was a crew of seven, including two Canadians: Sergeant John Francis James McCaw, 20, the youngest crew member, from Belleville, Ontario; and Flying Officer Harry Gregory Farrington, 24, from Niagara Falls, Ontario.

We must and we will continue to remember them. They sacrificed their tomorrows so that we could enjoy the peace and freedoms of today.

* * *

FUNDRAISING FOR VETERANS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Small Business Month, and I want to give a shout-out to a business in my riding: Bear Country Bakery in Mission, British Columbia.

I am highlighting Bear Country Bakery because the owners, the Potma family, heard that our Royal Canadian Legions were hurting this year and wanted to do something about it. The Potma family stepped up and held a doughnut fundraiser on October 17, which saw over \$1,100 in doughnut sales plus individual donations going to Legion Branch #57.

They continue to raise funds, and their next outdoor fundraiser for veterans is on Saturday, November 7. I encourage everyone in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon to buy a box of doughnuts and support Bear Country Bakery and our Royal Canadian Legion. It is community-minded businesses like these whose contributions make a real difference and keep our towns and cities strong.

I thank the people at Bear Country Bakery. I thank our veterans and committed members of our legions across Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

* * *

NOBEL PRIZE WINNER

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a proud Albertan and an alumnus of the University of Alberta, it is my great honour to rise in recognition of University of Alberta virologist Dr. Michael Houghton. Earlier this month, Dr. Houghton was awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of the hepatitis C virus.

Hepatitis C is a global pandemic, but now, thanks to Dr. Houghton and his subsequent work developing blood tests and therapeutics for the disease, millions of people have a new lease on life and our blood supply is safer. It is an incredible achievement and a wonderful story, and it does not end there. Dr. Houghton has created a vaccine against hepatitis C, which is now being tested, and he is leading efforts to create a COVID-19 vaccine.

I congratulate Dr. Houghton. He has made us all proud. We are very thankful for his work.

* * *

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

CULTURE

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the myriad professions in the cultural industry have been honoured during the 24th edition of Journées de la culture au Québec, which runs from September 25 to October 25. This month-long celebration is devoted to showcasing the big, beautiful arts community, which provides our people with inspiration, identity, prestige and meaning and earns us global recognition and renown.

All too long ago, a large part of the cultural world was abruptly shut down. The entire creative industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience. I commend all those sustaining Quebec's magnificent culture and keeping it alive. I thank the artists and creators from all fields who continue to create stories, dreams and beauty for us. I know they are very worried. I want them to know that, now more than ever, they are an essential source of social and economic strength for Quebec.

Statements by Members

On behalf of myself and all my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I send this message to this great group of wonderful human beings who are making life beautiful: Our happiness depends on you, the cultural industry.

* * *

[*English*]

CLOSING OF BANK BRANCH

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister was slow to act back in January, the virus was allowed to infiltrate and spread across Canada for several months unchecked. While the government focused on cases and deaths, it completely ignored other types of casualties.

TD Bank, while declared an essential service, used the pandemic as an excuse to close its branch in Petawawa. Petawawa is home to Canada's largest community of veterans and their widows. Seniors, careful to avoid being defrauded by electronic banking, prefer to deal with human tellers. The tellers are predominately women, so those who worked at the Petawawa branch have lost their postings at that location.

Whether groping a reporter, elbowing a female MP in the chest, firing female cabinet members and now this failure in dealing with the pandemic, costly symbolic gestures aside, this self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister has failed Canadian women at every turn.

* * *

LOCAL JOURNALISM

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight that just before Thanksgiving, a new local newspaper joined Kitchener—Conestoga. The Wilmot Post was started and is run by a group of active members in our community who volunteer their time to deliver local news, family milestones, local sports and more, sharing stories with our community and amplifying our voices. I want to extend a warm welcome to The Wilmot Post, and I look forward to seeing the paper grow in the coming months.

I would like to share that Radio Television Digital News Association has offered Kitchener's 570 News with the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for outstanding newscast in small market radio. I congratulate them. I look forward to supporting local journalism, whether reading, watching, listening at home or standing in the House of Commons and advocating its merits for our community in Kitchener—Conestoga and communities throughout Canada.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***HEALTH**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a COVID-19 testing centre recently had to close due to staff burnout in Coquitlam. This left residents in the area waiting for days for results to their COVID-19 test.

It is unfortunate that the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam spent the week trying to prevent Canadians from getting answers on COVID-19 rapid tests, as he did in his speech to the House yesterday and as he did in the health committee when he oversaw Liberals trying to gut our motion on the same.

I have a very simple question, because I do not think any Liberal has raised this in the House yet. When will COVID-19 rapid tests be widely available in Coquitlam?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said from day one that testing is one of the most important tools we have to respond to COVID-19. We are working around the clock to review and approve new testing technologies every day.

We have already approved several of these tests, and we can expect more as the technology develops. Rapid tests have arrived, and rapid tests will be disseminated throughout the provinces and the rest of the country very soon.

• (1120)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “very soon”, that is great. That is that guy.

This week, in Richmond Hill, people were being prevented from travelling to reunite with family members abroad because they do not have access to COVID-19 rapid tests. Rapid tests are now often needed to board flights to international destinations, especially for family reunification, but people cannot get their results because the Liberals have failed to get rapid tests. They are not widely available.

I have a very simple question for the residents in Richmond Hill. When will rapid tests be widely available to them?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, we know the importance of having quick access to test results. We are fast-tracking the review of COVID-19 tests across the country, including rapid response test kits.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that the people who need to be tested are able to be tested and will get these rapid tests.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is the member for Gatineau who is actually responsible for helping to procure rapid tests, and yet in Gatineau there are some of the longest lines for COVID-19 tests. People are waiting for days for this.

I believe the member for Gatineau also has some role in procurement, which means that he would have known that plum Liberal in-

sider Frank Baylis would have gotten this great contract instead of getting rapid tests for the people of Gatineau.

I have a question for the member's colleague. When will rapid tests be widely available to the people of Gatineau?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, early diagnosis is critical to slowing and reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.

We have made emergency changes to allow faster access to COVID-19 tests in Canada. Through the safe restart program, we have provided billions to provinces to help them build their capacity.

We are on this.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “we are on this”, okay.

[Translation]

Okay. Let us see if the government is telling the truth. Is it being honest, yes or no?

This government got elected five years ago by saying that it was going to make the judicial appointment process cleaner than clean, but obviously there are still some red Liberal spots that did not come out.

My question is very simple. In three days, the minister has not given a clear and honest answer. Can the Minister of Justice, who is an honourable man and an esteemed academic, assure the House that the Liberal Party has never interfered with the judicial appointment process in any way, yes or no?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I can assure the member opposite that, as the minister himself said, he has never experienced any political pressure with regard to the appointment of judges. Judges are appointed on a strong, merit-based process designed to increase diversity among Canada's judges. We made changes to the process, good changes that are taking us in the right direction.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Radio-Canada's sources contradict the parliamentary secretary's claim.

A former employee in the PMO said that the infamous Liberalist database was used. This database held the names of Liberal Party friends and indicated whether they had put up lawn signs during election campaigns or donated money to the Liberal Party.

Can the Minister of Justice assure Canadians that the Liberalist database was not used in any step of the process, yes or no?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that partisan pressure was in no way involved in the appointment of a judge by the Minister of Justice.

As I said, we take this situation very seriously. We base appointments on merit and qualifications. The objective is to diversify the judiciary, and we have been successful in that regard. For example, more than 50% of judges appointed by our government were women. That figure is much higher than the Conservative Party's record.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is deeply grateful to the guardian angels who are saving lives in our long-term care facilities. Among them are hundreds of refugee protection claimants who have risked their lives for Quebec's seniors.

The Bloc Québécois supports the will of the government and that of Quebec to grant them permanent resident status for exceptional services rendered. Two months after it was announced, the program is still not in place and the department is suggesting that it could still take months.

When will the guardian angels be able to apply?

• (1125)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the extraordinary work being done by the guardian angels, the men and women who have been working diligently from day one, making a difference for so many people by accompanying, helping, feeding and washing them and accomplishing many different tasks. The government recognizes this work and stands by them.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we fully support this, but we are simply asking the government to show the same kind of dedication to the guardian angels as they have shown to Quebec's seniors.

We are concerned because, even before COVID-19, Ottawa was taking years to process immigration requests. People had time to settle in Quebec, find a job and start a family before they heard back from the federal government, and then when they did, it was often bad news.

When will the guardian angels finally be able to apply for permanent residence?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we acknowledge the work of these guardian angels. I know many of them because they come from my region of eastern Montreal.

Oral Questions

I am pleased that the Bloc Québécois raised this issue because it is extremely important to recognize all that these people have done from the very start and the personal and family-related sacrifices they have made. That has not gone unnoticed, and the Government of Canada will work with them.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq fisheries have faced violence and had their property destroyed. In Ontario, Haudenosaunee land defenders had guns turned on them. There are reports that some have been shot by police with rubber bullets. Despite their love of talking about the right thing, Liberals have failed to negotiate in good faith and do the right thing.

The federal government has the power to ensure a peaceful resolution and ensure that we move forward and that no one else is hurt. Why do indigenous people have to fight the government for their very rights every step of the way?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes the best way to resolve outstanding issues is through a respectful and collaborative dialogue that is vital to building stronger relationships and advancing reconciliation for the benefit of indigenous communities and all Canadians. We deeply value our relationship with Six Nations. We are committed to continuing to work collaboratively to address historical claims and land rights issues. Our government is actively working with the community and look forward to meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. This week an Ontario court sided with private developers and applied a permanent injunction against the Haudenosaunee people on their own traditional territory at 1492 Land Back Lane. Last night, the OPP opened fire on land defenders with rubber bullets, setting the stage for a sharp escalation in violence there. This conflict is not new. It is the direct result of the government's refusal to negotiate these land claims in good faith, resulting in this violence. When will the government finally get back to the table with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy council and allow these claims to be peacefully settled?

Oral Questions

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada deeply values its relationship with Six Nations and is committed to continuing to work collaboratively to address the Six Nations historical claims and land issues. We have put in place flexible processes to allow for the exploration of new ways to achieve these goals such as those identified in the Coyle report. This independent report by the fact-finders marked an important first step in opening lines of communication at that time and also helped build understanding of negotiations and discussions that followed.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions the Prime Minister boasted that Canada is back in the business of peacekeeping, but like everything else, it was just another empty promise. In February 2019, the government's officials told the Standing Committee on National Defence the quick reaction force had been entered into the UN capability registry. Now, according to Global Affairs and the United Nations, Canada never registered the quick reaction force. Why did the Liberal government mislead the defence committee?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we very much regret that it was an honest mistake before the committee, but I do reassure the member that we did promise Canadians that we would renew our commitment to peacekeeping and that is exactly what we are doing. Our aviation task force in Mali provided life-saving medical evacuation and tactical airlifts to the United Nations forces in Mali and, following a temporary operational pause due to COVID-19, the tactical detachment in Uganda completed its mission in Entebbe, Uganda.

• (1130)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made all sorts of promises about his big plans for peacekeeping, but now that he is suffering an embarrassing loss for his coveted UN Security Council seat, all those promised troops have disappeared. In fact, the Prime Minister has let the number of troops that Canada has on UN missions fall to zero, *nada*, nothing. The Liberal government misled a parliamentary committee into believing Canada had registered the quick reaction force. A tweeted acknowledgement of the error means nothing. Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs do the right thing and table an official apology for misleading Parliament?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, we should be proud of the Canadian Forces, which have been operating around the world on peacekeeping operations.

I had the privilege to spend some time with them in Mali during the MINUSMA. Many of our men and women in uniform are making a real difference, and I assure the member that Canada will continue to be a key component of UN peacekeeping forces around the world.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals were busy handing a \$237-million contract to yet another Liberal Party pal, former MP Frank Baylis, restaurants and bars in Quebec were closing because of COVID-19, and their situation is critical. One way to help them would be to provide access to rapid tests.

Why do businesses, restaurants and the provinces not yet have access to these tests when other countries have been using them for months?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said in the House numerous times, testing is one of the most important tools we have for responding to COVID-19. We are working around the clock to review and approve new testing technologies, and I can tell the member that rapid tests are arriving daily and being moved across the country daily.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, big countries around the world have been using rapid tests for weeks. We are no different from other countries. Why can we not get the tests?

I talked about restaurant operators and bars, but the aviation sector and travel agencies are also in survival mode right now. They too have been waiting for rapid tests for months.

When it comes to giving money to Liberal Party friends, it does not take long; just a couple of days and it is a done deal. Millions of dollars are being spent. However, when it comes to helping businesses, money to pay for rapid tests is not forthcoming.

Why?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we are approving tests on a regular basis. We are receiving tests on a regular basis. We have our own process through Health Canada. We rely on our own testing data. We have our own approvals process.

From the beginning, we have had faith. We have followed science and data in our response to COVID-19, and we will continue to do so.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Neskantaga First Nation, in my riding, has been under a boil water advisory for 25 years. Now, because of the shutdown of its water treatment plant, many community members are being forced to evacuate. This is, by all accounts, a public health emergency, and one that could have been prevented if action had been taken sooner.

Oral Questions

The government has shown that it can spend billions of dollars to address a crisis within a very short time frame. When will it finally eliminate all long-term drinking water advisories on reserve?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned by the shutdown of Neskantaga's water distribution system, and we are actively working with community leadership to find immediate and long-term solutions to this health emergency. We are funding the repairs needed and the temporary evacuation of community members, as well as working with the Ontario government to ensure seamless access to health services and that appropriate public health precautions are taken to safeguard evacuees.

We will not rest until Neskantaga has access to clean and reliable drinking water.

• (1135)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is, unfortunately, very close to many people in my riding. Over the past eight years, half of Ontario's identified cases took place in the Kenora region, so I was very disappointed to learn that the government is planning to sit on the results of the final MMIWG report.

My question is simple. When will the government present a real plan to keep indigenous women and girls safe?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the voices of indigenous women are essential to our journey of reconciliation. The work done by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is essential to a path forward. We will be working with all parties and the indigenous leadership involved to ensure that we meet and exceed the expectations put forward in the report.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, over half of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh had already been displaced because of the conflict that has erupted there, and 90% of those displaced are women and children. Not to mention that this is all happening in the midst of a pandemic.

The Armenian community is on the Hill today to express its profound concern over the escalating conflict. The mayor of Laval also wrote to the Prime Minister to convey the concerns of Quebec's Armenian population, but we have heard nothing but radio silence in response.

Can the government explain what concrete action it has taken to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As he is well aware, Canada was one of the first voices in the world to express the need to de-escalate the conflict. I was in Europe last week to meet with our partners, including the Organiza-

tion for Security and Co-operation in Europe. We will continue to support the de-escalation and try to get a ceasefire.

Yesterday we announced over \$325,000 in emergency humanitarian aid. We are all concerned about the Armenian conflict and we will continue to show leadership to bring—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the atrocious human rights abuses against the Uighur people in China have been going on for many years. Simply put, they amount to genocide. The House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights has officially recognized them as such. The situation is untenable.

The Chinese Communist Party must be held responsible for these acts of genocide. Do the Government of Canada and the Minister of Foreign Affairs agree with the findings of the subcommittee, of which Liberal MPs are members, and do they recognize that the Chinese government is committing genocide against the Uighur people?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

We are all deeply troubled by the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We have publicly and systematically called on the Chinese government to end the repression of the Uighurs. I recently raised this issue directly with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Bachelet, to see what the international community could do. More recently, Canada and 37 countries have strongly denounced the violations in this region of China.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the GTA needs a Union Station of the north, but the government refuses to invest. For the citizens in my riding and across York Region, the Yonge subway extension is their top priority. The Ontario government has committed to investing, but five years and two business cases later the government still will not act.

Why will the government not invest in the Yonge subway extension and get this critical project on track?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a bilateral agreement with Ontario that will see our government invest over \$11.8 billion in Ontario over the next decade, including \$8.3 billion for public transit. We are absolutely committed to moving forward on good public transit projects.

I would like to remind the member opposite that it was under their election platform that they were going to cut infrastructure investments. Would they have cut this project?

• (1140)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has promised \$8.3 billion just to public transit in Ontario, but none of it will go to the Yonge subway extension. The Yonge line is the lifeblood of the GTA, with 800,000 commuters a day and almost 100,000 of them passing through Finch. The extension would create 60,000 jobs, reduce gridlock and deliver economic growth for the entire GTA.

The business case is obvious, so what is the real reason the government will not invest?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat our commitment to public transit. We have committed \$8.3 billion to public transit in Ontario. I have had direct conversations with the minister responsible for this project about the opportunity to move forward.

Once again I would like to ask this of the member opposite. When they said they would cut \$18 billion from the infrastructure budget, would they have cut the investment in this project?

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier of Nova Scotia said to The Chronicle Herald regarding the fishing crisis, “We are in a position where [all parties] are not sitting at a table to find what is a workable solution.... This is only getting more entrenched.” He continued by saying, “We need the federal minister to sit down with all sides in a room. It is not enough to sit down with indigenous leaders or with fishing associations by themselves.” No one is happy with this minister's performance, including the Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia.

When will the minister meet with both indigenous and non-indigenous fish harvesters to come to a peaceful solution?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work collaboratively with first nations communities to fully implement their treaty rights. Right now, our government's number one priority is keeping people safe. We need to work together to lower tensions on the water and find a calm resolution to this impasse.

We know these issues are long-standing, complex and deeply personal to everyone involved. The only way to resolve them is through a respectful and collaborative dialogue, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after dithering, hiding and ignoring the dispute over how

to implement a moderate living for indigenous communities as outlined by the Marshall decision, the fisheries minister has decided to appoint a negotiator to do her job. However, it is too late. People are speaking out and blaming the minister.

Chief Sack has been unhappy for months; so are fishing community leaders. Alan Clarke, who was head of DFO fisheries enforcement in southern New Brunswick for 25 years, also blames the minister. Former MLA and once provincial fisheries minister Sterling Belliveau puts the blame squarely on the hapless MP for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Why should Nova Scotians continue to have faith in this minister?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to working in collaboration with first nations to implement their treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood.

Right now, the minister's number one priority is to keep people safe, lower tensions on the water and find a calm resolution to this impasse. She has spoken directly with first nation leadership and industry representatives in Nova Scotia, and our government will continue to work collaboratively with first nations communities to fully implement their treaty rights.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, residents and families at Parkview Place care home are in a crisis. There are now 14 deaths due to COVID-19. Families are devastated. The Liberal government has done nothing to keep people safe during the pandemic. They refuse to get profit out of long-term care and to ensure the well-being and security of long-term care residents and workers.

People need urgent help now. When will the federal government end for-profit care homes, develop national standards for long-term care and ensure that workers and residents have what they need to be safe?

Oral Questions

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned by the outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. We are working with provincial counterparts closely, and PHAC released guidance for facilities on how they can protect their residents from COVID-19. Under the safe restart agreement, we are providing \$740 million for measures to control and prevent infections, including in long-term care.

Going forward, we will work with provinces and territories to set new national standards for long-term care.

• (1145)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the second COVID wave hits Canadians, our loved ones in long-term care are bracing for the worst. They have good reason to be worried. Some of the deadliest outbreaks in Ontario and Manitoba happened in for-profit homes owned by the federal government. These homes were grossly understaffed and there was not enough protective equipment to keep residents or workers safe, all to maximize profits.

The federal government is failing our seniors in care homes it owns. When will it act and fix the problems in for-profit care?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we know that we must act to protect our loved ones in these facilities and those who care for them. The Public Health Agency of Canada has created interim guidance for long-term care facilities, which was validated by chief medical officers of health. The guidance recommends that a no-visitor policy be considered, that physical distancing take place at all times and that staff in long-term care homes stay home if they are ill.

We will continue to work closely with our partners and with our provincial and territorial colleagues to ensure we do everything possible to protect our valuable seniors.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, isolating and maintaining their mental health are among the greatest challenges faced by seniors during this pandemic. Many seniors live alone and may have difficulty finding ways to communicate with others.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health tell us what measures our government has taken to ensure that our seniors remain connected on all levels to break their isolation and support their mental health?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has made many seniors feel isolated, and we need to be there for them when they need us the most.

That is why we launched the Wellness Together Canada portal to provide confidential support to Canadians during this pandemic.

Canadians in need can access this service through canada.ca/coronavirus or the Canada COVID-19 app. We also invested an additional \$20 million in the new horizons for seniors program to keep seniors connected to their communities.

Together, we will get through this.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Calgary airport will soon offer international arrivals the option to quarantine if they have a negative COVID-19 result. This is after seven months of the industry calling for action, both WestJet and Air Canada setting up pilot programs in Vancouver and Toronto international airports, as well as robust testing all around the world in other nations.

Canadians needed this months ago. Why did it take the government so long to act?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to enforce border measures, including a mandatory 14-day quarantine or isolation period for travellers entering Canada.

Any changes to public health measures, especially testing and quarantine requirements, must be supported by strong scientific evidence. There is a study with Alberta to determine the feasibility of using a rigorous testing and monitoring program as a strategy to reduce the mandatory quarantine period, while at the same time keeping Canadians safe.

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[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, five years ago the Liberals promised to repaint the Quebec Bridge.

Since then, rust has been eating away at our heritage gem. If the Liberals had kept their promise, the paint would have dried a long time ago. However, they decided to appoint a negotiator to buy time. His report has been under wraps for over six months. When will the Liberals release the Charest report and implement its recommendations? They need to act now before the bridge rusts out.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, five years ago, Canadians chose a progressive government that was open to the world, would be there for all Quebecers and Canadians, and would deal with the Quebec Bridge.

We made a promise and the bridge will be fixed. Mr. Charest has submitted his report and it is being studied. I can say that this is a matter that will be dealt with by the Government of Canada.

* * *

• (1150)
[English]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last five years, Liberal policies have been an assault on Alberta and the west. They made resource extraction more difficult, less profitable and highly uncertain. Liberals have outright cancelled already approved projects that would have provided much-needed market diversification and access.

They have done nothing for our farmers and producers at a time of tremendous need and difficulty. Liberals have attacked our plastics manufacturers and are even getting in the way of Alberta becoming a plastic recycling hub.

Why does the Prime Minister not just show the west what he truly thinks of us, just like his father did?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, there are right now 5,600 workers building the TMX pipeline. This is because of the time we took to do the hard work necessary to meaningfully consult with indigenous partners. Now there will be thousands of more workers going to work because we approved NGTL 2021.

The House knows very well that skipping steps and rushing through projects do not get them done. Taking the time to do the hard work to meet our duty to consult does get them done. We work with partners. We want to be sure that good projects are able to move forward and will create good jobs for the people of Alberta and western Canada.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jordan is a student in Saskatoon and he believed in the Prime Minister's call to volunteerism. He applied for the Canada student service grant within a day of its being announced. He was matched to a program adviser and he happily volunteered his time in Saskatoon to better the community. Jordan had no idea this was just a sham to launder millions of taxpayer dollars to the Kielburger brothers. The Prime Minister's friends keep getting richer, but Jordan gets nothing.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to Jordan?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the public

service worked to find the best possible delivery of this program to get students grants for their volunteer hours. The public service worked with the WE organization to develop this agreement, and this work was done and negotiated at the officials' level. I work with students in my riding as well. We need to continue to support our students and young people across the country.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals gave \$237 million to a friend, former Liberal MP Frank Baylis, to manufacture medical ventilators at twice the market value. There was no bidding process and the contract went to a shell company that did not exist seven days earlier and that does not manufacture ventilators for retail.

I try really hard to act in good faith. Just because someone is a Liberal does not mean that they cannot offer their services. The urgency of the pandemic may explain the lack of a bidding process. It is costly, but it is local.

Even then, why did they grant a contract for ventilators to a shell company that does not manufacture them?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind members what it was like in March. Canada was worried that it did not have enough ventilators. We called on Canada's private sector to help out. We signed agreements with four manufacturers who dropped everything to help Canada meet our supply needs. That is what we did and that is what Canada will continue to do. We will continue to protect Canadians, and Canadian ingenuity will help us achieve that.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. The Liberals are confusing Canada with its friends.

We can try to show good faith, and I tried hard to do so earlier, but all we see are irregularities and Liberals who are benefiting from them. Today, it is a former MP who is pocketing \$237 million through a shell company. Yesterday, it was the friends at WE Charity who were given \$900 million dollars, again through a shell company. I am tempted to talk about what will happen tomorrow, but that is not part of my speech, so I will leave the House in suspense. Let us remember that, when cannabis was legalized, no fewer than five former Liberal ministers were waiting with outstretched hands for contracts.

Why is it that everywhere we look all we see are Liberals who are getting richer—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Speaking of confusion, Mr. Speaker, I do not confuse Quebec with the Bloc Québécois.

On this side of the House, we are focusing on ensuring that Canada meets the challenges around domestic supply, both in terms of PPE and other equipment. That is what we are doing. Canadians want us to be there to provide the necessary resources. That is what the Government of Canada is doing and will always do.

* * *

• (1155)
[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those Liberals have greater consideration for violent criminals than victims. Victims' rights matter.

The Liberal government is allowing violent criminals to have in-person visitors, but will not allow victims and their families to give their victim impact statements in person or even by video conference during the Parole Board process.

If the Prime Minister believes it is safe for violent criminals to have in-person visits, why is government refusing victims the right to give their victim impact statements in front of their tormenter? Why the double standard?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member for Oshawa on our commitment to ensure that the rights of victims are respected and their voices can be heard.

During this unprecedented situation of COVID, we enhanced the protocols in order to allow victims to participate at parole hearings via telephone, but we heard from victims and the victims ombudsman that it was not good enough. Therefore, we have undertaken the necessary testing to ensure that secure video conferencing can be put in place.

I am pleased to advise the member opposite that we are launching video conferencing for victims at parole hearings in Ontario and Quebec on November 9 and for the rest of the country on November 23.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one bid on the Department of Public Safety's first attempt at an invitation for a contract to design ways to pay off confiscation victims, referring to forced seizures as potential buy-backs of firearms. The deadline to apply for a second attempt to criminalize and confiscate is November 3. This new call for bids does not include a budget.

Is the minister contemplating the operation of this program in the same manner that the rest of the country is being governed, with no budget?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I am proud our government has taken the necessary steps to ensure public safety by prohibiting a significant number of weapons that, frankly, have no

Oral Questions

place in a civil society. That overwhelmingly is agreed to by the vast majority of Canadians and in most other sensible countries that have taken similar steps.

We are also examining, through the public service, the means by which we can most effectively and fairly deal with those individuals who currently possess those weapons now that they are prohibited. We will do the work necessary to ensure that all Canadians' interests are addressed properly.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently met the reeve and CEO of Stone Mills, a beautiful community in my riding. Like many municipalities, it has been inundated by the presence of organized crime groups that are running illegal cannabis operations worth many millions of dollars.

Municipalities like Stone Mills are on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars in cleanup costs after police raids. All agree that the framework pertaining to legalization is broken.

Will the minister commit to hearing the concerns of these municipalities and addressing them during the upcoming review of the Cannabis Act?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did, and we continue to do, seek to meet with municipalities to hear local concerns.

I would point out for the member opposite that as a direct result of the new regulatory framework that we put in for Canada's production, consumption and retail in the country, over half of the profit has been taken away from organized crime. That is literally billions of dollars not going into the hands of organized crime.

We still rely very much on the excellent work done by our police services to ensure that those who operate outside the law are dealt with according to the law, because that activity remains a criminal offence in Canada.

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[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the poppy campaign is how the Royal Canadian Legion raises essential funds to support our veterans across the country. That is the case for branches 94 and 159 in my riding, Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine. This year's campaign kicks off next Friday, but things are much different because of the pandemic.

Can the minister tell us how the government is helping the Legion do its important work?

Oral Questions

● (1200)

[English]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that our veterans have served our country and we know that legions across the country do tremendous work. We will always support our legions and we will always support our veterans, especially at this time when we remember the sacrifice and the service.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, in what has been characterized as a black day in human rights, egregious human rights abusers, including communist China, communist Cuba and Russia, were elected to the so-called UN Human Rights Council. Maduro's Venezuela was elected last year.

With more than 60% of the council comprised of dictatorships and human rights abusers, does the government continue to have confidence in the so-called UN Human Rights Council?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Canada is one of the foremost supporters of human rights around the world. The protection and promotion of human rights is a core priority of our foreign policy and it will continue to be. Whether it is about Belarus, Xinjiang, Hong Kong or about the rights of religious minorities, Canada will always stand up and speak up around the world.

Obviously, we will continue to work with the UN bodies, making sure that human rights is always the first and foremost agenda item when it comes to defending the rights of people around the world.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May, I called on the government to limit the amount that tax credit promoters could take from people's CERB payments. The House unanimously passed my private member's bill to limit the amount that tax credit promoters could charge, but it has been five years and the government still has not set the regulations.

Now these same companies are preying on the confusion created by the CERB transition. When will the government stop taking the side of these tax credit predators who charge up to 30% on people's CERB payments?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are difficult times for Canadians and our government will do what it takes to support them. Throughout the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, helping people with disabilities maintain their health, safety and dignity has remained a priority for our government.

DTC to CERB delivery services were seen an essential from the onset of the crisis, so that Canadians who need them can receive the financial support they need. The agency continues to actively work to improve the services it provides to Canadians.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just Alberta that is suffering under the government's anti-resource ideology. The natural resource minister's province of Newfoundland is seeing the \$2 billion west White Rose project thrown into jeopardy. One Newfoundlander from Marystown echoed the feelings of energy workers across the country, saying, "It puts food on our tables, roofs over our head, clothes on our back and gas in our car."

When will the government show real support for this pivotal sector of our economy all across Canada?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the sector since day one. I want to congratulate the Minister of Natural Resources for his hard work in his province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the funding of \$320 million to support that sector and the struggles it is going through.

Obviously the member forgets the support for TMX. Right now, there are 5,600 jobs in Alberta and B.C. As well, we have just approved NGTL, which will be thousands of jobs in that area. We have approved Line 3. We support Keystone. We have actually funded \$1.7 billion for orphaned gas wells.

We have been there for the people in the resource sector and we will continue to be there to support that sector.

* * *

● (1205)

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the economy has begun to recover from COVID-19, we have seen that women are not returning to the workforce at the same rate as their male colleagues. One major reason is child care.

Without access to safe and affordable child care, it will not be possible for both parents to choose to return to work, and most often it is the woman who will stay at home.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell us how the government is going to address this and finally make a Canada-wide early learning and child care system a reality?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for her advocacy on behalf of working mothers and families that are looking for high-quality and affordable child care.

Our government understood that this was a significant challenge as far back as 2015 with a \$7.5 billion investment to set the stage for an early learning child care strategy right across the country. This year we have invested a further \$600 million to top up to \$1 billion the investment in early learning and child care, the largest single investment in child care by any federal government in the history of the country. However, we know there is more to do, and that is why the throne speech projects a new early learning child care strategy with new funding later this year.

We are committed to making sure that women and families get back to work safely and that their children are cared for.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when asked about the grossly inadequate RCMP response to violence against Mi'kmaq fishers in Nova Scotia despite ample warning, the commissioner said that they were “managing this issue.” Most people watching what is happening would agree with Senator Murray Sinclair who said that this answer “flies in the face of the evidence.”

The Prime Minister has defended the commissioner. The Minister of Indigenous Services has been less than supportive. What does the minister in charge think? Is it time to look for a new commissioner or does he think she is “managing the issue?”

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the police have a very difficult job to do right across the country, in communities across the country, to uphold the law, maintain peace, prevent crime and serve and protect the people of this country.

In Nova Scotia, they are in a very difficult situation. We have taken the steps necessary to ensure they have the resources they need to maintain the peace and uphold the law. They have conducted investigations and laid charges where appropriate. They have a difficult job to do. We are making sure they have the resources to do it.

* * *

SENIORS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, we failed an entire generation of Canadians. It has been said time and time again that the pandemic has exposed the negligence that prevails in long-term care homes in each province and territory. Half of Canadian deaths from COVID-19 stem from cases in long-term care homes. We are talking about the lives, well-being and safety of Canadians who raised us and helped build the country we love.

A report issued by the New Brunswick Nurses Union revealed that the province requires only 2.89 hours of care time daily: signif-

icantly below the 4.1-hour, best-practice standard. It is unacceptable.

My question is not if quality of care norms will be harmonized and standardized across the country, but when?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her advocacy on this issue. I have seen from the time she was elected that she has been very, very serious about this issue and I appreciate that.

I share her concern about the outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. As I said earlier, we will continue to work with our provincial counterparts closely. The released guidance for facilities on how they can protect their residents from COVID-19 is out there. Also, our government has invested heavily through the safe restart agreement, with \$740 million for measures to control and prevent infections. Going forward, we will work with the provinces and territories to continue setting new national standards for long-term care.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During question period, the member for Red Deer—Lacombe used inappropriate, disrespectful hand gestures at the end of his question, counter to Standing Order 18, and I would ask him to apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I am not too sure if the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe is still online. I would ask him if he wishes to intervene or make comment.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's intervention. It is not uncommon for people to be able to wave or to use hand gestures in the House of Commons. If there is a particular hand gesture that I have used that has been offensive to someone, then I unreservedly withdraw that gesture.

● (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine for raising the point and for the response by the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

I would just remind hon. members that, whether they are in the House or online by video conference, the standards of decorum for the Chamber apply. I would encourage all hon. members to observe that in each and every instance, especially when they are online.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I look to you for guidance, but I think a non-apology apology is not really adequate if anyone took offence. It is the ultimate defined hand signal offensive gesture.

Routine Proceedings

I took offence. I think a lot of us took offence. If someone took offence, I do not think withdrawing the gesture qualifies as an actual apology. Perhaps the Speaker finds it adequate.

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to go back to the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe to see if he has further comments to add. It is the convention and tradition of this place that, when a member withdraws or expresses regret for something they have done in the context of debate, they do so in a categorical way. I would ask the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe to see if he has any additional comments on the matter.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I unreservedly withdraw the gesture.

The Deputy Speaker: We will leave the matter for the time being. I am going to review the record from today and will get back to the House, if necessary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order and the same matter at hand. A number of individuals were actually quite offended by the gesture that was made, so we appreciate the fact that the Speaker will review it and come back to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his additional comments. Indeed, this is a matter that is clearly in need of review. That will be done and I will get back to the House as necessary.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the following treaties. The first is entitled “Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation”, done at Gatineau and Ottawa on October 5, 2020. It is known as the 2020 HQ Agreement.

Second, I would like to table, in both official languages, the “Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization”, done at Ottawa and Miquelon on June 5, 2019, and June 13, 2019.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, there is someone appearing on the screen without a shirt on and I think that probably is not within parliamentary decorum. That is an awkwardness that we may need to be mindful of.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary. It is probably fortunate that we do not have a full screen of the various members participating on the call. There have been instances where members have inadvertently left their cameras on when they do not intend to do so, but we will see if our team at the broadcast centre can advise the member accordingly to get the camera turned off.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, missing one's tie seems to be offensive, but the whole shirt was missing.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his additional comments. As I say, we will try to get that sorted out. I ask for some patience on the part of hon. members. When we are operating in this hybrid-type format, it is a little awkward moving back and forth between those contributing by video conference and those present. I appreciate the patience of the hon. members.

* * *

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (refund – cancelled air service).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Jean, for supporting the introduction of this important bill today. This bill is the product of months of work with consumer groups as well.

I thought it was important to introduce this bill on behalf of regular people who bought plane tickets and are entitled to a refund. The Minister of Transport's response is ambiguous. He does not seem prepared to tell them that they are entitled to a refund even though the law says they are. This bill answers that question, reaffirming that passengers are entitled to a refund.

I hope that I will have the support of many members of the House. I am quite confident that we will get substantial support.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to table e-petition 2675, which was sponsored by Sonja Wood and signed by 1,185 people.

They cite that the Windsor causeway in Nova Scotia was constructed across the Avon River in 1968 with gates to manage water levels, but without proper fish passage. To this day, it impedes migration of fishes, including the at-risk inner Bay of Fundy wild Atlantic salmon and American eel. The gates have been occasionally opened over the past 50-plus years to control water levels for Lake Pesquid and, more recently, to facilitate improved fish passage during periods of high water levels. The first salmon in 50 years were caught last summer beyond the causeway. The gates have never been opened to facilitate the annual runs of wild Atlantic salmon during the summer, which are really important. The petitioners want DFO to change this.

The petitioners are calling on the minister to ensure that the gates of the Windsor causeway are kept open for an extended period of time during every incoming and outgoing tide to allow a more natural method of fish passage during seasonal migrations.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first is specifically on gasoline prices. The petitioners are calling for accountability in the pricing of gasoline. This chamber passed a legislative process for that and it was never implemented. It was a gas price monitoring agency. Monitoring and recording is something the U.S. does. The petitioners are asking for a similar type of work.

• (1220)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is with regard to the auto industry. The petitioners are calling for a national auto strategy. We have been losing our significant market share of the auto sector. Even though there have been two good announcements recently because of Unifor negotiations with regard to plants in southern Ontario, we are still losing our percentage of market share across the world. The petitioners are calling for a national auto policy.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my last petition is about protecting Ojibway Shores. It is the last piece of shoreline property in the hands of the port authority. The petitioners want that transferred to the Ministry of Environment to protect over 100 endangered species. It is a hot spot for the environment, and this last woodlot on the Detroit River is important and precious for a national urban park.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up the question, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George had three min-

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utes remaining for questions and comments, so we will go to that now.

The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off my comments by giving thanks. I want to give thanks to indigenous Canadians for giving us the opportunity in this imperfect Parliament and this imperfect country to work toward reconciliation. I also want to give thanks to my colleagues, because this debate has been very non-partisan and I think there is a willingness to move forward. I want to particularly give thanks to my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George. I do not know if people watching now saw him give his speech, but he had a whole pile of notes and he hardly looked at them. He gave us a speech that came from the heart, and I think everyone who heard what he had to say is going to be affected by it.

My colleague mentioned living next door to a house of horrors. Sadly, many Canadians are in that situation, and they do not understand the whole situation with regard to indigenous Canadians. I know my colleague has sat down with too many families, too many victims and too many people who have been affected negatively.

We have heard over and over that this day cannot just be a holiday. I will go on the record as saying I do not think it should be a holiday for federal employees. They should be working this day to help indigenous Canadians.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on what we could do to improve the bill so that this day is about celebration and education and is not just another holiday.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I opened my speech with an analogy: Imagine living beside a house of horrors and knowing the families and children who came through there, only to find out later on in life about the horrors that took place. It chokes me up when I speak of it. My staff had to compile a number of documents for me, but I did not refer to them because I have spent a considerable amount of time, not just during my political career but throughout my lifetime, seeing this. My friends and family are from the area that went through this program, and they live today with the scars.

My fear in making this a national holiday for federal employees or public sector employees is that the meaning and importance of this day will be lost. As I have said a number of times, it will just be another day for people to load up their RV and go on a holiday.

It is so important that we build a national education strategy within the bill. This is just one amendment I would like to see, but it is very important. It is critical to the success of this.

Government Orders

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

I thought my riding was the only one to have such a long name, but I see that my colleague's riding does too.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix have unanimous consent to share her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, in the 1973-74 school year, when she was six years old and went to St. Joseph Mission residential school for the first time, a young Phyllis wore a beautiful orange shirt her grandmother had just bought her.

Just imagine being five or six years old and getting a present from your grandmother, and think about what a special gift that would be.

As soon as she got to the residential school, officials there stripped off her clothes and took away her orange shirt, and she never saw it again.

That should be enough to spur us to action to try to repair the damage caused, as is our ultimate duty. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of stories like that of young Phyllis. Thousands of children like Phyllis had everything taken away from them—the light that was inside them, the peace and love they had once enjoyed, the great and noble values of their nation that already defined who they were, the comfort provided by their families.

That is what hurts the most: when everything that comforts us and defines us is lost. These victims and their families endured immense, terrible grief. This huge void will remain if we do not find a way to help heal the memories of first nations peoples,

Often the best way to fill such a void is to draw on the teachings of our elders. From my grandfather, I have kept the memory of an expression that has always stayed with me and, believe it or not, is directly related to Bill C-5.

On this particular Friday, where there seems to be unanimity, I will share the origin of this expression. My grandfather Bouchard had his rituals. A 90-year-old proud retired seaman and farmer, he spent his afternoons sitting on his rocking chair on the porch of his home on Chemin des Coudriers. Every day after his midday prayers he would be joined by his old friend and best audience who was nicknamed, and I am not joking, “Canada”. Grand-papa would tell legendary stories of treacherous winter crossings in an ice canoe, his anecdotes about horses chomping at the bit and his tall tales of the water's edge. He had an endless supply of these stories to the great delight of tourists who would greet him with, “Hello. Your stories are great. We do not often hear stories told that way these days. Can we record you?”

So many people would gather around the porch that sometimes there would be a bottleneck in the street. One day a tall, tanned

man, with very dark eyes and hair, stopped, listened for a long time and took a great interest in the way my grandfather spoke, in the accent typical of Île-aux-Coudres. The indigenous man approached him and said, “Memory is a treasure that allows us to build a future of peace. It is most important that you tend to it, sir.”

My grandfather repeated this phrase every day until he died. He was not ill and, as he liked to say, he died from living. His indigenous friend's phrase were his last words to us: “Memory is a treasure that allows us to build a future of peace.”

There is a good chance that the memory we are referencing today in the House and that bears the heavy burden of the past is the most valued tool that will help us take another step, and then another, and then others towards this reconciliation that is often mentioned but too infrequently made.

There were 3,200 children who died in residential schools and who were abused in every sense of the word. Their bodies, their hearts and their spirits were abused. What about the families and parents who had their children snatched from their arms? What about all the wounds of the past, but also those of today, that are very real, absurd and so sad?

Our memories harbour a thousand and one reasons, and it is up to us to make the present better.

Bill C-5 is a small step, compared to everything that needs to be acknowledged, reconciled and repaired, but it is a meaningful one. We hope to see many more steps, but this is at least something.

• (1230)

The idea of voting in favour of a national day for truth and reconciliation will be met with arguments about the economic costs of legislating another statutory holiday. However, how can we put a price on the more than 150,000 children and families who were torn apart and stripped of the very nature of their existence?

I want to address all of the parents here today. How much are our children's lives worth? What price would we put on their mental and physical health, their laughter, their joy, and their hearts? How much is that worth? Let us think about it. How much will this legislation cost? We can compare.

Let us get back to what really matters. I want to read an excerpt from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:

The federal government's policy of assimilation sought to break the chain of memory that connected the hearts, minds, and spirits of Aboriginal children to their families, communities, and nations.

Survivors shared their memories with Canada and the world so that the truth could no longer be denied. Survivors also remembered so that other Canadians could learn from these hard lessons of the past. They want Canadians [and Quebecers] to know, to remember, to care, and [most importantly] to change.

In order for us to know, to remember, and to care about what can be done to bring about deep and lasting change, we must designate this day dedicated to truth and reconciliation. The Bloc Québécois has repeatedly pledged to be an ally of first nations peoples. That is why we will vote for this bill in principle, because it is part of the process of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. It responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations because it will keep the memory of the tragedy experienced by residential school survivors alive and foster an ongoing public dialogue about our national history.

As part of its work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada refined its definition of reconciliation, and that, in and of itself, is an important sign of progress and a willingness to act. These principles, which can guide us toward reconciliation, are based on and supported by four pillars. They are the right to know, the right to justice, the right to reparation, and the guarantee of non-recurrence, which is the ultimate goal of this process.

This day should be an impetus for us to carry out our individual duty on the other 364 days of the year by carefully assessing the importance of our own actions in fulfilling our obligation to wholeheartedly, honestly and diligently participate in the advancement and improvement of the quality of life of first nations and peace and harmony between our respective nations. That is what it means to take care of something, and caring heals.

In closing, I invite everyone to take out their cellphones, open the “Notes” app and type in this precious memento from my grandfather Bouchard: “Memory is a treasure that allows us to build a future of peace.”

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always encouraging when we see on the floor of the House a recognition of just how important truth and reconciliation are to our nation. It goes beyond the chamber. In fact, we want to recognize it in all forms of society. One of the ways we do that is by acknowledging the calls to action. We have seen a number of areas where the government has responded to the calls to action, and we appreciate very much when we have that unanimous support for legislation.

My understanding is that the Bloc will be supporting the legislation. I just wanted to provide the member an opportunity for further comments.

● (1235)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments on our desire to advance the debate in this chamber and go beyond the simple exercise of our duties.

Clearly, we will not be voting in favour of a national day for truth and reconciliation simply to get another statutory holiday, without doing anything else. I think each and every one of us has an important role to play in our ridings to convey the importance of education, teaching, awareness and reconciliation in our respective communities.

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I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to expand on that, since it is very important that the action we are taking here in the House be just the beginning, the start of concrete action on the part of each and every one of us to inspire and motivate those around us in our respective societies.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her colourful and vibrant speech, as is typical of her.

I would like to hear a little more about these personal stories, like that of her grandfather. These are beautiful stories that help us reconcile, even just a tiny bit. I would like to know whether creating a special day like the one we are discussing will make it easier to share more of these beautiful stories, which are also part of the path to reconciliation.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments.

As the culture critic, I am doubly interested in how culture can contribute to reconciliation in our ridings and communities. I believe that it will be important to involve our cultural communities and get them working on this so that we can all be nourished by their creativity and so that this process of reconciliation, which is sometimes shrouded in sadness and charged with emotion, can be transformed into something positive, significant and even happy. If we can achieve reconciliation, we will all experience great joy.

I believe we are making progress, slow though it may be. The Bloc Québécois recognizes that and would like the process to move a little more quickly. We know that this bill has some limitations, but we recognize that it is an important gesture. We are certainly in favour of this major step.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to my colleague's comments on the process, this is just one part of an overall process. The next part is to get it through this chamber and to the Senate, and last time it failed there. It is always just words here until it becomes an actual law.

What are the member's thoughts with regard to getting this to the next stage and getting it through the Senate so it can come to fruition? Until that time, it is just words and theory; it is not really the day we want for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this pertinent question.

Clearly, what we do here must be passed in the Senate. Hopefully it will happen this time, and the Senate will act quickly, with as much unanimity and good will as we have in this chamber. I truly hope so.

Government Orders

• (1240)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 29, the Minister of Canadian Heritage introduced Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding a national day for truth and reconciliation.

The purpose of this bill is to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 80 by creating a holiday called the national day for truth and reconciliation, which seeks to honour first nations, Inuit and Métis survivors and their families and communities and to ensure that public commemoration of their history and the legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

If passed, the bill would add a new holiday, namely, national day for truth and reconciliation, which would be observed every year on September 30.

The Bloc Québécois has repeatedly pledged to be an ally of first nations people. That is why we will vote for this bill in principle, because it is part of the process of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, and will keep the memory of the tragedy experienced by residential school survivors alive and foster an ongoing public dialogue about our national history.

There is no denying that residential schools are a real blot on Canada's history. Between 1874 and 1996, there were 130 residential schools in Canada attended by over 150,000 indigenous children. The living conditions in those schools were poor. One of the direct causes of the sickness and deaths that occurred was the grossly inadequate funding from the government, which meant the food was of low quality, quantity and variety. The children in most residential schools had to cope with loneliness, a lack of contact with parents and family, frustration with not being allowed to speak their mother tongue, poor-quality teaching, hunger, institutionalization, overwork, strict rules, brutality, and the fact that there was no one they could trust.

When they arrived at the residential schools, the children were stripped of their personal belongings and traditional clothing. They had their hair cut off and their names changed, and they were assigned a number. They were given new clothing, white people's clothing, which differed depending on what age group they were in. The children were punished if they spoke their mother tongue. These schools left them scarred and deeply traumatized. Most residential school survivors tell stories of loneliness, strict discipline, and physical, sexual, pedophilic and psychological abuse. Being separated from their parents and families was just the first trauma they endured. The children had to deal with a new culture, a new language and a new disciplinary system imposed on them by white people. Taking these children out of their communities, uprooting them, stripping them of their culture and destabilizing communities that had been shunted onto reserves resulted in deep trauma and social upheaval.

Every year, since September 30, 2013, we have been encouraged to wear orange in honour of the indigenous children who were sent

to residential schools. Orange Shirt Day has become an opportunity to keep the discussion on all aspects of residential schools happening. The date was chosen because it is the time of year in which children were taken from their homes to residential schools, and because it is an opportunity to set the stage for anti-racist and anti-bullying policies for the coming school year. It is also an opportunity for first nations, local governments, schools and communities to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope for generations of children to come.

Phyllis Webstad started Orange Shirt Day to teach Canadians about the residential school system and to honour the survivors and their families. This day was inspired by Phyllis's own experience. On her first day at a residential school in British Columbia in 1973, her new orange shirt, a gift from her grandmother, was confiscated. She never got it back. This story is a sad example of how the residential school system sought to assimilate and colonialize indigenous children.

From a more technical point of view, the bill we are debating today amends three acts to bring about a single change: establishing September 30 as the national day for truth and reconciliation and making it a statutory holiday. The three acts in question are the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code.

• (1245)

Clause 1 of the bill clearly situates its purpose within the context of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Clause 2 of the bill amends subparagraph 42(a)(i) of the Bills of Exchange Act to add the new national day for truth and reconciliation to the list of statutory holidays covered by the act. In practical terms, what this means is that, if Bill C-5 is passed, September 30 will no longer count in the calculation of deadlines shorter than three days as set out in the Bills of Exchange Act. Consequently, a bill of exchange or cheque payable by September 30 will be payable on the next business day.

Clause 3 of the bill amends the portion of the definition of "holiday" in subsection 35(1) of the Interpretation Act before paragraph (a) to include the new national day for truth and reconciliation. The act guides the courts in interpreting federal legislation. The new statutory holiday would therefore be enshrined in federal legislation.

Clause 4 of the bill amends section 166 of part III of the Canada Labour Code to include the proposed new day in the definition of "general holiday".

Clause 5 of the bill amends subsection 193(2) of the Canada Labour Code to entitle employees to a holiday with pay on the working day immediately preceding or following the general holiday if the holiday falls on the weekend.

Clause 6 provides that the bill will come into force two months after it receives royal assent on the day with the same calendar number as the day on which it receives royal assent or the last day of that second month. For example, if the bill receives royal assent on December 30, 2020, it would come into force on February 28, 2021. It receives royal assent on January 1, 2021, it would come into force on March 1, 2021.

As you know, the riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, which I represent here in the House, has several families who survived residential schools. It is therefore important to me that this bill is passed out of respect for them and in the interest of remembrance.

In the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, two quotes caught my attention.

The first is, “Survivors shared their memories with Canada and the world so that the truth could no longer be denied. Survivors also remembered so that other Canadians could learn from these hard lessons of the past. They want Canadians to know, to remember, to care, and to change.”

All those who attended residential school suffered terribly from being separated from their parents, their brothers and sisters and their culture.

This is the second quotation: “The federal government's policy of assimilation sought to break the chain of memory that connected the hearts, minds, and spirits of Aboriginal children to their families, communities, and nations.”

Imagine for a moment being taken from your family, denied your culture, your nation and your language, having to wear different clothing than what you are used to, and living entirely differently. We would be damaged for the rest of our lives.

In closing, commemoration requires more than just the declaration of a special day as proposed in Bill C-5. It needs to happen through ceremonies and activities that will spark dialogue on the history of Indian residential schools. However, these measures must not relieve society of its responsibility for past mistakes.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight something from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which is the calls to action. It says, “In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes the following calls to action.” Then they made 94 calls.

I would like to go to the 80th and ask the member to provide her thoughts in terms of just how important these calls to action are. This is what call number 80 states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

Government Orders

Can the member provide her thoughts on the importance of the calls to action?

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, call to action number 80 states, “We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday”. They should not have to ask. As I have always said, there have been discussions with indigenous peoples for years, almost a century, and no action has been taken by the government.

This act is very important because action will finally be taken and it is proof of the government's will.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a moment and acknowledge former MP Georgina Jolibois for bringing this issue forward. If it were not for her, I do not know if the bill would actually be before us today, so I definitely want to acknowledge her. I was very pleased to second her bill at the time.

The minister made comments earlier about the importance of this day being about education. With respect to education, does the member think the government should in fact put initiatives and resources in place to support education on the history of indigenous peoples in Canada and how we can all collectively take action on the path to reconciliation?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for her idea.

Education is very important. Indigenous peoples have problems. They do not have enough money. There is the issue of the transfer of resources for education and the commemoration to be observed. It is important that the government again take steps to establish an effective solution for indigenous peoples and communities.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

One trap that we must not fall into is making this statutory holiday an ordinary holiday like any other.

I liked the suggestion made earlier by a Conservative member who said that we, as parliamentarians, have a major role to play and that we must take the initiative, in collaboration with indigenous communities, to do something special on that day.

I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that the government should go a bit further in supporting this type of commemoration activity when we celebrate September 30.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind words.

Government Orders

It is important that this not be just another holiday, as my colleague and other members just said. It must be a way of supporting reconciliation with indigenous people. The reconciliation process is very important, as are the recommendations given by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They ensure that people do not forget the trauma endured by residential school survivors. It is time to move forward. The tragedy endured by the victims will forever be a part of their lives.

The government needs to show some humility. It must finally take action and pass Bill C-5.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here today to speak to Bill C-5, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the MP who brought this bill forward initially, Georgina Jolibois. I am continuously inspired by her work and by her amazing representation of indigenous communities across Canada.

We are here today for many reasons. This bill is really about the reality that on September 30 we celebrate Orange Shirt Day, a national day to recognize truth and reconciliation. We want to take that day and make it into a statutory holiday, one where all members of Canada are committed to being a part of recognizing this part of our history: the stealing of children from their families; the many deaths of indigenous children during these terrible, long, dark times; and the trauma and torture they and their families experienced.

An elder from my riding named Alberta Billy once told me to imagine what would happen to myself and my community if every child from the age of four to 16 were suddenly removed. No one knew who they were with and who was caring for them. That always hits me hard. I cannot imagine any of us thinking about all our precious children, however we know them, being removed from our communities, and the silence and sadness that would hit all of us as we looked around and did not see their beautiful faces.

This day should be a day where Canadians understand the incredible resilience of indigenous communities, because they are still here in the face of such adversity.

Today, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize my husband, Darren Blaney, who is a survivor of residential school. When he was in residential school, his number was 97. When I think about a soul, a human being, identified by a number and losing so much more of their identity, I am absolutely heartbroken.

Many members in this House have spoken about the importance of education in this bill. I want to let people know that as of March 31, 2019, the government had only spent \$4.5 million over its four years on education initiatives around indigenous history and residential school. This is simply not sufficient and not strategic, but is another piecemeal approach to this complex and dire situation the country needs to understand more fulsomely.

I want this day to be treated in the future with the sacred solemnness it deserves. That means resources so all Canadians can take the moment and the time to remember these beautiful souls and the reality they and their communities are faced with. We want people to remember the story of Phyllis Jack, whose beautiful and sad story gives us Orange Shirt Day. She was six when she went to residential school. Her grandmother bought her a beautiful orange shirt to wear.

Who does not have a memory attached to those first days of school? It is a moment where, as kids, we felt proud, a piece of clothing that tells a child they are loved. As a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or loved one, we sometimes buy a special piece of clothing for the first day of school knowing that in that act, we are sending that child into something new and sometimes scary, with a little bit of love.

In residential school, imagine how much more important this was. Not only were we buying a beautiful piece of clothing for a beloved child. We also knew that child would be leaving their family. They would leave and not understand how long it would be until they got to see their family again.

Imagine being a grandmother and feeling the utter hopelessness and fear of being forced to send a beloved grandchild to residential school, knowing all that grandmother can do is buy a shirt to somehow comfort that small body who will soon be longing for family and home. All too often in the history of Canada and today in Canada, indigenous people, communities and children are dehumanized.

● (1255)

Today there are still just too many children being taken from their homes into care through apprehension. These numbers are even higher than the numbers of children taken from their families to be put in residential schools. This is something that we all must be accountable for as Canadians. We must all understand that we have an obligation. Every time the government does not fulfill the compliance orders that are asked of it, it shows again that the dehumanization of indigenous children is continuing and it is not okay. We must always speak against it, not just in platitudes but in action and in resources so that those communities can begin to rebuild in a more profound and sustainable way.

We know that there are still too many suicides in indigenous communities across Canada. One chief in my riding told me not too long ago, "I am working so hard to build up an economic base of strength for my community so that we can have a future that is positive and something hopeful for our young people, but when I have young people hanging themselves in our community, it is so hard to continue to push and to build. These are the everyday lived experiences of indigenous communities across this country. We cannot pretend that it is not directly linked to colonialism and to the residential school history that this country holds and still does not disclose in a more profound way so that we can all carry this burden, not just indigenous communities."

We continue to work in our indigenous communities across Canada because of generations of residential school. That is important to recognize. This is generations of residential school, generations of communities that were suddenly empty of every child between the ages of four and 16. What does that do to a people and a community, and how do they rebuild after generations and generations? They only rebuild by resiliency, which indigenous communities have displayed again and again, but they also need the resources to be able to do that.

Parents are still learning how to parent. Traditions are still coming back to our communities and those communities need to be supported to allow parents the time to learn how to parent, build those capacities. A lot of communities across my riding have been asking for support. They want to see things get better in their communities. They see those beautiful pearls of resilience and growth and strength, but they need the resources to invest in them.

When I hear people say again and again, sadly, that it is over, that those days are over, the history is over and indigenous people need to get over it, I am both devastated and angry. It is not over. We are seeing that today in situations in indigenous communities across this country. We are seeing that today with the RCMP not responding appropriately when they should, because they do not know how to do it. We need to do better than that and Canada needs to do better than that. The impacts of residential schools and colonialism are not over; they are resounding through this country every single day.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report stated, "Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered."

The bill is a small step, but it is a step toward all of Canadian society reconsidering, reviewing and looking at things differently. One of the things that I know to be true is that impact and intent can totally be separated. When we look at systemic racism and we look at racism, some people know an intent that they may have, but they do not understand the impact. We must be responsible for our impact, not only our intent.

Today, as we go through the reality, we know that systemic racism continues to be a huge issue and all Canadians have to be responsible for addressing it.

I want to talk about systemic racism because I have people tell me that they do not understand what systemic racism means. We are seeing it right now in the Mi'kmaq community. The reality is no one should be surprised that this has been the outcome. The fact is that the federal government did not take leadership, did not create a plan and did not create space for this disconnect; it created a space for discontent and violence and for it to continue to grow.

● (1300)

Reconciliation is a Canadian problem, and one that has a long history.

We need a government that will actually pay attention and create a plan so that we do not get to these places where people are incredibly unsafe, where the disruption in the community is profound and the wounds will take a long time to heal. It is unfair that the federal government does not take leadership and instead allows small in-

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igenous communities to face these challenges with few or no resources to address them. That is systemic racism. Not having a plan is systemic racism.

Systemic racism can also look like other things, and this brings me back to the intention and the impact. My son, when he was in grade 5, went to school one day. When he was in class, the teacher brought them to the library and sat the classroom down. The librarian showed a picture of a class of children at a residential school and asked them, "What do you see in this picture?" The indigenous children, all with their hair severely cut, looked very sad. They were all wearing uniforms.

A lot of the children had things to say, like, "Maybe they didn't get their hot lunch" or "Maybe they were planning to go on a trip but they didn't get to, and that is why they are so sad."

My son talked about sitting in that room, listening to a lot of non-indigenous young people give their ideas. He talked about his pain and frustration as he looked at that picture were because he knew immediately what that was. As he listened to the other children not knowing what it was, it made him realize how alone he was, how so few people understand the history of this country, and how much pressure he felt to have to educate and disclose the reality.

Finally, it burst out of him. He said, "Maybe it is because they are indigenous children in residential school and all they want is to go home to their parents."

I do not think this teacher had any bad intention. I believe her complete intention was to educate and to show the kids in the class the history of Canada, but she did not think about the impact.

This is so important. I have had a lot of young people talk to me and their parents about Orange Shirt Day, and how that day actually scares them. As indigenous children, as they learn this history, they become fearful that they may be taken from their families. The impact can often be unintended. That is why it is so important, when we address systemic racism, that we begin to ask questions, that we be curious about these issues, and that we stop putting the burden of educating on indigenous families, children and communities.

Years later, when my son moved up to middle school, he was actually able to work with his father on a piece of art for his school to recognize the history of indigenous residential school. This piece of art is still hanging in Southgate Middle School. It was a transformation mask that talked about the intention of residential school to take the Indian out of the child. On the front of it, there is a white face that opens up and shows an indigenous face. My son was very proud when they brought it to the school. It gave him the ability to talk about the history that was a reality for him every day in his life.

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It is important, as this bill says, to dedicate a day to recognize the amazing power and resilience of the first people of this land. I want to make sure that this is really recognized as a part of this day. My granny went to Lejac Residential School in British Columbia for the majority of her childhood.

She was a fierce woman who I admired greatly and was slightly terrified of. I never once in my life saw her in a pair of pants. Even in the coldest parts of winter, she was always done up, wearing a dress, her hair and face made up, and often wearing a fabulous hair-piece, which she was known for.

She used to tell me, frequently, “No complaining, Rachel, we are still here. If you don't like it, work on fixing it.” It took me years to understand that she was teaching me the power of indigenous people across this country. We are still here, and the guilt of non-indigenous people and what they feel is really not helpful.

● (1305)

In the face of colonial history, including initial contact, there has been smallpox, residential school, racism, systemic racism, child apprehension and constant interference, at all levels of government, in indigenous communities and their ability to create economic development. In the continuous face of all these challenges, generation after generation, indigenous people are still here, still fighting and still finding a way to hold on to their traditions and their history. They are still here.

When I think of Orange Shirt Day, I think of my granny who survived tremendous challenges, and of my dad and my aunties and uncles who have worked so hard to reclaim our culture and our history and make sure that her grandchildren have had that connection.

This bill would help acknowledge, for one day, the history of this country and the current reality of this history. There is so much work to be done. I hope that all members in the House and all Canadians understand that we must all be part of working toward that. This is one step. It is not enough, but it is a step, and in all the steps that we take we continue to move forward. This bill moved through the House before, in the last Parliament, and it died in the Senate. I certainly hope that does not happen again.

In closing, there have been conversations among the parties and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders this day or when no members rise to speak, whichever comes first, Bill C-5, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, shall be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole; deemed considered in committee of the whole; deemed reported, without amendment; deemed concurred in at report stage; and deemed read a third time and passed.

● (1310)

The Deputy Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, and for the sake of clarity, I will ask for only those who are opposed to express their disagreement. Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member for North Island—Powell River moving the motion please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would have been nice to see this bill proceed as there is a great deal of expectation among many groups to recognize the importance of the issue. Having said that, I was impressed with the member's sharing of those personal stories. I thank her for doing that.

The member was talking about the severity of the impact on children. In the province of Manitoba, there were in excess of 10,000 children in foster care. I do not know the actual number today, but what is quite striking is I believe over 90% are of indigenous background.

What it emphasizes to me is that there is so much more that we still need to do. We need governments and indigenous leaders to come together and do more collectively so that we can try to keep more harmony within the family unit.

I wonder if the member might be able to add some thoughts from her perspective in terms of what Ottawa could be doing, working with others, to try to deal with this very serious issue.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member takes some time to look at the reality of his own government. Bill C-92 came up in the last Parliament. One of the things that was fought for, by me as the vice-chair of the indigenous and northern affairs committee and by many indigenous leaders across Canada, was the amount of resources the people need to get this work done.

The reason indigenous children are in care today at such high rates is because we have had continuous Conservative and Liberal governments pass the buck and continue to use language like the parliamentary secretary did in his question: to get indigenous communities to come together and create solutions. They are coming together. They are working hard every day because they do not want to see their children leaving their communities. What they require are the resources. Any time any government wants to stand up and be accountable for that I will be happy to work with it, but I still have not seen it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from North Island—Powell River for her speech. It left me speechless. I understand the depth of emotion in her speech. I agree with her that we must not forget.

We are talking about designating a day of commemoration, and I am absolutely certain that it is essential for these communities. I have many friends, young and old, who belong to the Innu nation and the Naskapi nation. Through no fault of their own, they were part of a real cultural genocide. I am feeling a little emotional, but I imagine that will be part of the conversation we need to have with first nations peoples.

My colleague also mentioned the need for actions and resources. Time is also part of the equation. I hope that everyone will vote in favour of this bill.

In her opinion, what actions need to be taken quickly and urgently, and what resources are needed?

• (1315)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, for me, the resources most urgently needed are resources to support families to help children stay at home, and to look at and address systemic racism across Canada. When we see such high numbers of indigenous children being removed, we need to ask more questions and stop laying blame on families who are struggling. All families have to be accountable, but we need resources there to support those families.

Moving forward, we also need actual resources and planning so indigenous communities are not dealing with huge crises such as the ones we are seeing right now across our country. They need to have those supports beforehand so they are not left cleaning up significant messes.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to sincerely congratulate the member for North Island—Powell River on that incredible speech. There should not be a dry eye in the House. That was amazing, and I just wish to send her my love and appreciation.

The member mentioned the ongoing issue of the fishery dispute in Nova Scotia. Could the member perhaps comment on the juxtaposition of the idea for a national holiday and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with what we are seeing on the ground, regarding protecting the rights of indigenous people, and how we continue to fail? I would like to hear what she would say about that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's congratulations and her response to the important subject we are talking about today and the personal stories I have to share. When I look at what is happening with the Mi'kmaq, I remember a chief saying to me not too long ago that if there is a court decision where the indigenous people do not win, it is implemented the next day, but if a court decision is made and the indigenous people do win, it takes 21 years.

I look at this and think, how long do indigenous communities have to wait? How long are we going to have governments that say their rights and title are something they can negotiate, and how long are we going to have decisions that say indigenous people are allowed to make a moderate living?

I hope everybody takes a moment to think about what that actually means. It means they can make a little bit, but not too much, because if they have too much what independence could they take that the government could not fight back? That is a continuous concern. Economic development in indigenous communities has been put by the wayside by different levels of government repeatedly, and that is a part of reconciliation we have to own.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I only rise today to express solidarity to the member for North Island—Powell

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River. I watched intently as she expressed her emphatic desire to have this passed. I also wanted to rise to express disappointment that it will not be as expedient as we had hoped. I know I should be framing this as a question, and I will, but I wanted to go on the record and express solidarity and an interest in supporting her, her community and various other indigenous communities in any way possible.

My question is, how can I help?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his statement and bit of a question.

One of the things the elders told me is that it is not our job to fix this. I think people do the work inside themselves and make sure that they are understanding the history and not putting that on indigenous people to teach them.

The member is on the government side, so I hope he is working hard to let the others know that they need to fund appropriately the services and supports that are needed for communities. If we want to see strong and resilient indigenous communities, which they are doing mostly on their own, they need to get the adequate resources to take the next step and we need to get out of their way.

• (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: For all hon. members, during this period of questions and comments, comments on their own are perfectly fine. It is absolutely not necessary to pose a question. Comments are quite acceptable.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for North Island—Powell River for her incredibly moving and thoughtful speech. I cannot imagine how difficult it must be for her, time and again, to share her personal experiences and those of her family to provide lessons for all of us, to make the point to Canadians that action has to be taken and for us to stop dithering, especially on the government side.

She raised the issue of indigenous children. This is, in essence, really a commemoration of indigenous children who were ripped away from their families. Even today, in my riding of Vancouver East, indigenous children continue to be taken away from their families. It continues. This is modern-day colonization. Part of the reason is because they cannot access safe, secure, affordable housing.

I wonder if the member has any comments with respect to the programs, or lack thereof, from the government with respect to addressing urban, rural and northern indigenous housing.

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Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her tremendous work on addressing the housing issue and how important it is.

I am still waiting for the indigenous national housing strategy that the government said it would provide years ago. When I look at the numerous urban indigenous communities that exist across the country, I can see that they need housing desperately. This is a huge gap in supports and services. It is heartbreaking when children are taken from their families, sometimes incredibly strong families, simply because they do not have adequate housing. Putting in a bill that we will not do that is not enough. Children should be kept safe: all children should be recognized and indigenous communities, both off and on reserve, need the housing. We have to stop dithering. We have to take action.

How long are indigenous communities going to have to wait? That should be a question that all government members ask themselves daily.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-5, an act that would amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code to add a new statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation.

I want to begin by acknowledging that I am speaking from the largest Mi'kmaq community in the world in my home community, which is also the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

Today, we are discussing an important step forward on the path of reconciliation and healing for first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It is a step forward in publicly honouring survivors, their families and communities by implementing calls to action 80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish a statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation.

Before my time as an MP, I was a professor at Cape Breton University. I taught Mi'kmaq history and about the Indian residential schools. I was also the treaty education lead for Nova Scotia, which meant that I would do presentations for schools, businesses, industry and all those who asked about the truth and reconciliation and the Indian residential schools. People would ask me why they were never taught this before, why they were just learning this for this first time.

The Indian residential schools operated in my home province of Nova Scotia between 1929 and 1967 in Shubenacadie. In my home province, for more than 40 years, children were forcefully removed from their homes. They were forcefully removed from all they ever knew, taken from loving Mi'kmaq families.

I will share two startling facts that I always shared in those presentations.

The first comes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The odds of dying for a soldier in World War II was one in 26. The odds of dying for children in the Indian residential schools was one in 25. Let that sink in. These were not soldiers with guns and helmets. These were children wearing their Sunday-best clothes, Sunday dresses, and they never came home. That is why we call them survivors, like my Aunt Eleanor Mitchell, my Uncle Fudd Lewis

and the brave author from Sipekne'katik, Isabelle Knockwood. When I was a young student at that same university, I read her book and realized the horrible legacy of the residential schools and the horrible treatment of these children.

When we talk of truth and reconciliation, we speak of the children. However, I want members to think about their children at home. For all who are listening and for all in the House right now, imagine all the joy children bring into our lives, the birthdays, Christmas. Imagine all the things we do with our children that bring utter joy into our lives. Now imagine a community without those children, without that joy—

• (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: I do not want to interrupt the hon. member in the course of his remarks, but I want to ask him if he is sharing his time. The information at our end indicates that might be the case. I would ask if he could verify that, and we will carry on from there.

The hon. member.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Oakville North—Burlington.

Getting back to what I was just saying, I am a father of a 10-year-old Mi'kmaq boy and I think about all the joy that he brings into my life. I ask members to think about what it would be like, as a community, to have successive generations of children taken away. Imagine the apathy that would create. Imagine the heartbreak of having your children removed from your homes.

Colleagues, this is why it is important that we reflect on the TRC calls to action and why we need a national day to remember that terrible chapter in Canadian history. That is why we are here, to bring call to action number 80 to life and make September 30 the national day of truth and reconciliation.

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said:

Reconciliation must become a way of life. It will take many years to repair damaged trust and relationships.... Reconciliation not only requires apologies, reparations, the relearning of Canada's national history, and public commemoration, but also needs real social, political, and economic change. Ongoing public education and dialogue are essential to reconciliation. Governments, churches, educational institutions, and Canadians from all walks of life are responsible for taking action on reconciliation in concrete ways, working collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples. Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us.

This national day would honour the survivors of the painful legacy of residential schools, along with their families and communities. It would be a reminder to everyone in Canada to never forget the pain and trauma that residential schools caused and continue to cause, passed on as intergenerational trauma. It would create an opportunity for indigenous survivors of residential schools and their loved ones to tell their stories, and it would be an opportunity for the rest of us to learn carefully.

I firmly believe that the proposed national day of truth and reconciliation will be a way for us to amplify and strengthen the voices of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It will be a way to ensure that the stories and experiences, the pain, the trauma and the history of first nations, Inuit and Métis people are never forgotten. It will be a way to keep these histories alive in our hearts and in our minds, so that they may inform our actions going forward. With this, we may build a brighter future based on a renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government and Inuit-to-Crown relationship based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

It is important to emphasize that this day should be utilized like Remembrance Day, as an opportunity to educate all Canadian children across Canada on this vital and tragic part of our history, should this legislation become law.

I would like to quote Senator Murray Sinclair, who stated, “While Indigenous children were being mistreated in residential schools by being told they were heathens, savages and pagans and inferior people—that same message was being delivered in the public schools of this country.” We need to change that. We need to see real funding and material support allocated to heritage, so that we can provide educational materials and tangible supports to school boards across Canada in telling these stories and this part of our shared history.

This is of fundamental importance to schools across the country. I remember, in December of 2015, when they talked about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and it was launched. I remember our Prime Minister telling a story of when he went to school. When it was time to discuss indigenous history, it was skipped over by the teacher saying, it was not very interesting. That day, our Prime Minister made a vow that never again will indigenous history be skipped over and never again will indigenous Canadians be told that their history is not integral to Canadian history. With the passage of the bill, we help ensure that people will never ask why they were never taught this in our schools.

• (1330)

I always used to talk in my treaty education presentations about the rice experiment by Dr. Emoto. There were two jars of water and rice. One jar was fed nothing but positive energy, saying, “You’re great. You’re good. You’re good rice,” whatever they tell water and rice in an experiment. The other jar of water and rice was fed nothing but negativity, saying, “You’re worthless. You’ll never amount to anything.” After seven weeks of this experiment, they noticed that the water and rice that was fed negativity began to mould and go bad.

If this is what seven weeks can do to water and rice, imagine what seven generations can do to an entire people when they are told they are worthless and inferior. This is what indigenous people in the country have had to deal with.

The failures of one generation can be the opportunities of the next. With this bill, with education, with awareness, this is where we could be in the future.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minis-

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ter of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to express solidarity with my colleague and to thank him for teaching me so much about Mi’kmaq culture and for speaking the Mi’kmaq language in the House of Commons for the first time. His interventions and interjections on the committee we mutually serve, indigenous and northern affairs, have brought so much to the conversation and debate.

I called him last week to chat about the situation in Nova Scotia with the Mi’kmaq lobster fishers. He shared with me a video. I want to stand in the House today and go on record to say that it is the first time I have learned anything, at the age of 38, about the Mi’kmaq treaty system. It is important for all of us in the House to take 10 minutes to watch the video and continue down the path of truth and reconciliation through education.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for those comments. When I was treaty education lead for Nova Scotia, we put together a treaty education Nova Scotia video on YouTube.

The fundamental point of that video was to create awareness of our treaties, to create awareness that we were all treaty people in the country but, most important, that we are all in this together.

I am reminded of the late Noel Starblanket from Saskatchewan, who shared with me this wisdom about treaty education. He said that if we wanted treaty education to succeed, the message had to be about hope and moving forward together. It could not be about bitterness. It could not be about anger. It could not be about resentment. It had to be about moving forward together.

He was an Indian residential school survivor, and I thank him from the bottom of my heart for that teaching.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I see this bill as a step in the right direction towards reconciliation, but more needs to be done.

Earlier I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage whether he agreed that we need to accept and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and he said he agreed. When my colleague asked a question about whether the Indian Act should be amended and quickly, the minister would not commit to anything.

Does my colleague think that that legislation is racist and must be amended immediately?

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the Indian Act is racist legislation. There is no doubt that we need to change it.

I really hope we can do so with UNDRIP, being something that takes its place. My father is one of the initial drafters of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is an amazing document and we should move forward on it.

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When they were trying to change the Indian Act back in 2005, I remember an elder telling me that the Indian Act was like a rusty sword. They had gotten used to it and it no longer cut them. We have to be very careful moving forward on what replaces the Indian Act, because to some it will be seen as a sharper sword.

What we have to do is move forward on UNDRIP, while not looking so much at archaic acts that government has passed. We must look to the future. UNDRIP will be that future.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise and echo the deep honour and privilege of working with the hon. member. We have had many conversations around dismantling white supremacy and decolonizing our spaces, including this one in the House of Commons.

We have heard arguments against the expedited passage of the bill, having economic arguments about people taking a day off. In his remarks, the member referenced the solemn nature of Remembrance Day.

Recognizing the solemn nature of Remembrance Day and the need for our country to recognize the atrocities of war, what would the member's opinion be on taking this day as a solemn reflection of the atrocities of the colonial genocide of indigenous people across these territories?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I have had some great conversations with my colleague about systemic racism in Canada and how we need to move forward on this. Awareness is a big part of that. This day gives us, all schools, all school boards, all businesses within Canada, an opportunity to learn.

I was part of a group that did the KAIROS blanket exercise and I feel it is days like this, September 30, when not only should people have a chance to remember and reflect but also be able to educate themselves on what happened, just as we do on Remembrance Day on November 11 every year when we remember the soldiers who passed away during that time.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging that I am on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

I think we can all agree on the importance of acknowledging the history and legacy of residential schools and their tragic impact on first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. It is my hope that Bill C-5 will receive the support of all members of the House.

The last residential school closed its doors in 1996, just 24 years ago. This is not ancient history. The number of survivors is great, the victims and their families greater. The healing process will take time, and this bill is a step toward righting the wrongs inflicted throughout our colonial past.

September is a painful time for many indigenous peoples. It was the month that their children were taken back to school year after year and forced to leave their loved ones and communities behind. It is appropriate to mark this pain experienced by generations of indigenous children, parents, families and communities, a pain that continues to be passed on today in the form of intergenerational trauma, with a solemn day of reflection, remembrance and action

toward reconciliation. It is a day to honour residential school survivors and their families and to learn about their stories.

On September 29, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action number 80, which seeks to establish, as a federal statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation. This day will honour survivors, their families and their communities while ensuring that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

This bill seeks to establish a national day for truth and reconciliation that will be observed on September 30. As members may know, this is a particularly significant date for indigenous peoples. It is the date of a grassroots movement called Orange Shirt Day, started by Phyllis Webstad, named for the orange shirt that she and her grandmother chose for her first day of residential school, only to have it stolen away when she arrived. Her orange shirt has become a symbol for the cultures, languages and childhoods that were ripped away from the more than 150,000 students of residential schools.

Every year on Orange Shirt Day, we encourage Canadians to take time to listen to the stories of survivors, learn about residential schools and come together to give hope to every child of current and future generations. This day would further spread these stories of pain and hope.

This year, on September 30, I walked by a school in my riding during lunch hour and on the playground I saw a sea of orange. Students had all come to school wearing orange shirts and, more importantly, were learning the legacy of residential schools. This is something that did not happen when I was their age or even when my son was in school.

The work of preserving these stories and educating Canadians about the horrors perpetrated at residential schools is extremely difficult and painful. That is why I would like to praise the work done by the amazing people at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario. Opened in 1972, the centre aims to preserve, present, create and educate people on the history, art, language and culture of the Haudenosaunee people of the Eastern Woodlands. It was established at the site of the Mohawk Institute residential school, the oldest residential school in Canada, which was operated from 1829 through 1970. It was nicknamed the Mush Hole by its students, as the children were fed only oatmeal three times a day, every day.

With its museum, art galleries, library and language centre, I encourage anyone able to visit the Woodland Cultural Centre for a unique and sobering learning experience to do so. It will be offering a virtual public tour on November 18 at 7 p.m. More information can be found at woodlandculturalcentre.ca.

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Earlier this year, I attended a performance of *The Mush Hole* at The Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Telling the terrible story of what happened at the Mohawk Institute through dance and theatre, *The Mush Hole* is based on interviews and writings by residential school survivors. It explores not only what happened at the Mush Hole, but the intergenerational trauma experienced by the survivors and their families.

To further preserve and spread the history of residential schools, the Portage la Prairie residential school in Manitoba and the Shubenacadie residential school in Nova Scotia are being declared national historic sites this year. It is my hope that the Woodland Cultural Centre will also be declared a national historic site.

The residential school system is a national tragedy, a stain of colonialism upheld by systemic racism. Acknowledging its past and educating Canadians about the experience of indigenous children in these schools will ensure that this history is never forgotten and never repeated. It is a step toward righting past wrongs.

● (1340)

The introduction of Bill C-5 is a step forward in the healing process of survivors and their families who were harmed under this federally operated system. Once this bill has passed, the residential school system would be designated as an event of national historic significance, helping Canadians understand our history and its consequences.

While the government has taken important steps toward reconciliation, much more needs to be done. Canadians' understanding of the painful legacy of residential schools is vital to truth-telling, reconciliation and the recognition of past injustices. It will inform our future actions with the full knowledge of what has been done to indigenous people across this land.

A few years ago, in my riding, I held a screening of the documentary *We Were Children*. It tells the story of two children who were taken from their homes and placed in residential schools where they suffered years of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Afterward, an 80-year-old former MP said he learned more in that night than he had in his entire life. New Canadians in attendance asked why they had never learned about this when they came to Canada. This all speaks to the importance of educating Canadians about our colonial past and the impact on generations of indigenous peoples.

In 2012, I had the opportunity to visit Pelican Falls First Nations High School in Sioux Lookout, a former residential school that is now run by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council. While there, I had the honour to meet executive director Norma Kejick, an incredible woman whose good work was highlighted in the book *Seven Fallen Feathers*. Norma gave us a tour which included the surrounding forest, where many students died while trying to find their way home when it was a residential school.

When I left the school, I broke down in tears. How could a country treat innocent children in such a horrific way? How could we strip them from their families, the love of their parents and their broader community? How could we try to erase their culture and language? It is unimaginable to me that we could treat other humans this way, and yet we did it in the not so distant past.

A national day for truth and reconciliation would give us the opportunity to listen to all indigenous voices, reflect on past wrongs, learn from our mistakes and take action to advance meaningful reconciliation. On Orange Shirt Day, every child matters, and every indigenous child deserves to be cared for, feel the full sense of their worth and feel hopeful for their future. Every single person in Canada shares the burden and shame of our reality.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, I know how important reconciliation is to our government, but I also know there is much more work to be done. Designating September 30 as the national day for truth and reconciliation would represent a national acknowledgement of our country's history and a way to honour survivors of residential schools.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I am fortunate to serve with her on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which is studying systemic racism within police services in Canada. I know she is doing a great job on that file, and I thank her for it.

I am going to ask her the same question I asked her colleague earlier. We were talking about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Indian Act. Does she think that that legislation is racist and that it must be amended as soon as possible?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I too, quite enjoy working with the hon. member on the public safety committee. I want to recognize her commitment to improving the lives of all Canadians.

I do support the passage of UNDRIP. In terms of the Indian Act, we know that provisions in the Indian Act are racist. That is why our government is working with indigenous people across the country to ensure we can provide for self-governance and provide the tools they need to be able to govern themselves, as it should have been all along.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech on respecting human rights.

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While I have the floor, I would like to state my concern about human rights issues in Colombia, where political dissidents are being subjected to harsh repression. Murders and abductions are being committed. I think this deserves more attention from us and the federal government.

I have a very direct question for my Liberal colleague. We have heard a lot of fine words on the subject of reconciliation. Obviously, we agree with what is being said, but we have to do much more than that.

Is my colleague prepared to pressure her government to drop the legal action against the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling on health care for indigenous children?

• (1350)

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I know our government is working diligently to ensure these court challenges are dealt with in a way that serves the people who brought them forward with respect and dignity.

I thank the hon. member for his question. We, as a government, recognize there is still a lot more work to do. We are not there yet. This bill is one step on the path to reconciliation, but we certainly have much more work to do.

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2000, I had the wonderful privilege of conducting a three-year review of our indigenous communities in the Northwest Territories and their access to natural resources. One of the things that became obvious to everyone very quickly was the extent the lingering effects of residential schools on our indigenous population were hindering its ability to fully participate in economic opportunities. For example, there was a major debate, which still rages, between impact benefit agreements and equity participation in major resource projects.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could share some of her insight on the extent to which we have progress to make, the distance yet to go, in making sure our indigenous communities are full participants in these resource projects and their development.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work in previous Parliaments on this issue and for his wise words now.

The member hit on a very important point, which is that we need to ensure that indigenous peoples can fully participate in the economy. Certainly, that has not been possible in the past for many reasons, some of which are directly because of the Government of Canada. However, there are a number of things that our government is doing, one of which is that the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is striving to reach a goal of 5% procurement from indigenous business.

I know from my conversations with Tabatha Bull from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, that many indigenous-owned businesses are in fact in the resource sector, so we must ensure that they are able to fully participate in the economy.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting day listening to speeches. I worked last night on

this intervention. It is challenging, in the sense of my background and culture.

It takes me back to the heritage committee when we dealt with this topic, and my understanding and knowledge were lacking. We depended on the witnesses to inform, explain and educate us. Were they all on the same page? No, there were differences of opinion about which day, indigenous day, orange shirt day. We heard opinions about more important things that should be done. It was interesting to listen as they brought it to us at that committee.

By the way, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Fredericton.

The bill has now been returned to the House. The goal of this legislation is extremely important, with the reconciliation with indigenous people as the national objective. The residential school is a dark chapter in Canadian history. I did not live it. My family did not live it, but I have visited Siksika Nation, which is in my riding. It is the second-largest nation in the country. On that nation there were two residential schools run by two different Christian faiths. One school is gone. The other school is still there. I visited those places with elders. Where the school is gone, there is what they believe to be an unmarked graveyard with no recognition but memories of who went there and never came home.

The other one that is still standing is now called Old Sun Community College. The building has been refitted, changed and provides programs that suit the times that are needed now. As I walked through that building with an elder, there were parts of that building she would go through and parts she would not. She remembered some horrific things in that building, like the day her sister fell three storeys and landed at her feet and it killed her. That should not have happened, but it did. I cannot remember that because it is not part of my background, but I could listen to an elder tell me that story. The story of when she was six years old and would go to school and escape and go home. Her parents would be horrified that she was there, because they knew the Indian agent would soon arrive at the door threatening to take away anything that they had unless she was returned to school. That is not part of my memory, but it is part of my learning.

The bill is important and we are putting the onus on 5% of the population to teach us. Is that the way to do it? We have adults in this country who do not have this education or the opportunity. The town of Strathmore has done phenomenal work with the Siksika Nation. Many students from both communities, Siksika and Strathmore, go to that school. The drama teacher in that school wrote a phenomenal play called *New Blood*. It is put on by high school students from Strathmore and Siksika. It needs to be seen far and wide because it would educate adults.

I have visited our National Arts Centre, which now has two indigenous employees, but it has no money. I want the play to come to Ottawa. We need adults educated. As mentioned many times in the House, education is a critical piece. However, it is not just for students, it is for adults as well. I have watched that play and seen what the adults learned from it. It is put on by indigenous and non-indigenous students working together to produce a fantastic story of reconciliation with history in it.

Today, as I look at the notes I had and listen to the members, I look at the structure of, for example, Siksika.

● (1355)

Members can look at what the federal governments, provincial governments and municipal governments are responsible for, but do they understand what a municipal government, supposedly, at the band level does? Siksika Nation's council takes care of the roads and the sewer and the water, when it works, if it works, if it is there, but they are also responsible for education in their nation and they are responsible for health. There is a whole broad range of things they are responsible for, and we, as an adult country, do not understand the challenges that level of government has and the responsibilities it has. We do not know that unless we take the time to learn.

How are we going to learn it? Are we putting the onus of this bill on 5% of the population, without resources, to teach the rest of us? That is not going to work.

We have a piece of legislation that should be approved. I totally agree that it should be approved. However, where is the backup, in the sense of what the responsibility is to get the education for this to the population? I am not talking about schoolchildren; I am talking about the adult population. Where is it? We are now putting a heavy debt back on the indigenous people to educate the rest of us by saying, "You've got a day".

I totally agree with the day. On Siksika reserve, one of the councillors led a walk from those unmarked graves at the school, which is gone, across the nation to the other school. That is an education those people understand. They are walking those footpaths. They are walking the footpaths that their elders walked when they went back and forth. We were not there. We do not know that path. We have to learn it, or this just becomes another holiday, which is wrong. We cannot let this slip into another holiday, yet we are putting the onus on the indigenous people to do it. We are naming it. I am a person who is not of that culture. It is not my history.

I remember when we passed the indigenous languages bill, Bill C-91, at the heritage committee. We had many witnesses come, and the ones I liked the best were the ones who said, "How is the money going to get to our school kids so we can keep our heritage and our culture with our language?"

I made amendments at that committee, and they did not pass. I wanted the money to go directly to the school level, just like the federal government does with the gas tax, which goes directly to the municipality. We bypass the other people and it gets done. I wanted the money to go to the indigenous communities and their schools. That is not where it went. It went to the three major organizations in this country. The leadership of Siksika Nation asked me about this legislation and the money. I said to ask the govern-

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ment and to ask their indigenous organizations where it is. Where is it? They are not preserving their language; they are not getting the money.

We have to work at the grassroots level, just like the indigenous people understand they need to do with their language. They need to get into their schools and teach their own children their languages to keep their cultures. It is an oral culture. They have passed many things orally. It is a story culture, from elders to generation to generation, but they are not getting the money.

My fear is that we will pass this and we will have a day of recognition. They will be proud to have it, but will the 95% of the rest of Canadians have a clue? That is my fear.

● (1400)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to hear my colleague speaking on this important topic today. I know that he shares my love of history, of education and of understanding our heritage, especially when, as he so aptly put it, we were not there.

On the question of how we, the 95%, can learn, I wonder if my colleague is aware of the different funding programs that are available at Canadian Heritage. That is what my city of Châteauguay did in conjunction with Kahnawake, which is our neighbour, in producing a joint festival called "la Fête du maïs". It has been going on for three years now. It is, of course, cancelled this year, but it has been a tremendous source of mutual education.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the compliment from my colleague. Again, we both share the interest in history and would like to make sure people are aware of it. Is there any information she could share with me? We get a lot, so anything she could remind me of would be great.

However, I will tell members a problem that we have. The heritage committee has a study and now we have brought it back. Siksika nation has a world-class place for artifacts called Blackfoot Crossing. The people were trying to get the original clothing of Chief Crowfoot, who signed the original agreement in 1877. It was in a museum in London. They cannot get it back because we have legislation that says it has to be a museum that requests it. We have an archaic word in there that does not allow some indigenous people to bring back artifacts to places on their nations.

We need to fix it. Again, I will have it on the heritage committee for a study. We need to change that so these people can have their artifacts, and we do not have to use that archaic word. They have beautiful facilities, but we have to fix that.

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• (1405)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I hear him talking about the importance of education, the many benefits of learning more about indigenous culture, and the duty to remember.

I also hear him talking about the process in committee, where amendments can be proposed. I understand that some of his colleagues refused to fast-track the study of the bill to have it deemed studied in committee and passed at third reading. I would like to know what improvements they wanted to present in committee that would justify not fast-tracking the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, on the technicality of that, I was sitting here and I did not realize who said what. I just assumed it was coming to committee. The heritage committee is meeting right now and the parliamentary secretary is at that meeting, scheduling Bill C-5 to come before it. I was looking forward to it coming to committee, not from the point of view of voting against it but to learn more about those things and having witnesses come to speak to us about that.

I understand what the member is saying, but it had been moving along that line. We thought it was coming to committee as did the parliamentary secretary. That is being organized in another room on the Hill at this moment.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hope, with that comment, that it will be moving through committee rather quickly since it did move entirely the same way through the chamber already. It already received support, not only within this room but also across the country, to move it as expeditiously as possible.

Perhaps the member can enlighten us on how he will ensure it actually will move through quickly and also ensure his party in the Senate will not block it like it did last time.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, as we know, committees are the master of their own destiny. That is what I hear year after year. What happens in a particular committee? That will be interesting, as it always is. We do not know that destiny because we are not there yet.

I will be interested in it at committee and my support in this bill is as it was last time.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the land on which I speak today in Fredericton, which is Wolastoqiyik territory, unceded, unsundered land operating under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. We cannot just say these words. We must have intention and action behind them, and I implore each member of the House to do just that.

It is an honour to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-5, and I wish to thank my Conservative colleague for sharing his time with me today.

The issue of meaningful reconciliation is an issue that is important to my constituents and to people across this country, and it is

particularly close to my heart for many, many reasons. The first is as a mom of indigenous children. My boys are Wolastoqiyik. They are being raised with an appreciation for their identity, language and culture.

My oldest son is in grade 3 in a public school that has made incredible efforts to not only include indigenous knowledge, history and culture but to truly celebrate it. It is front and centre at every school assembly and event, and in daily routines. There are integrated educational opportunities for all children, and there are unique learning opportunities for indigenous youth through permanent staff employed by our local first nation community, who work at the school every day in innovative and exciting ways.

My youngest son is three years old and attends an on-reserve head start program at the Welamukotuk Early Learning Centre. He receives instruction from his family members and some of our close friends. He is surrounded with love and care and dedication to culturally responsive education. Incidentally, his first day of school was on Orange Shirt Day last year. I could not help but think of the beauty of coming full circle like that, and the symbolic significance that his education will begin and proceed so differently than so many of his ancestors'.

My oldest child looks more like me, with Celtic roots and light skin, although he is proud to be indigenous. My youngest looks more like my husband, with dark skin and dark eyes. My prayer for him is always that he will not grow to experience racism and discrimination because of who he is. I pray he will not feel like he does not belong or that he is not represented in the curriculum he learns throughout his educational journey, as my husband has felt.

Another reason Bill C-5 is so important to me is due to my passion for teaching. My work in the public school system in New Brunswick was on behalf of first nation communities. I worked to include accurate history and improve access to language and cultural experiences for indigenous students, as well as to advocate for institutional reforms for enhanced social justice equity in our provincial education system.

I have seen the many ways our system continues to fail indigenous students. I have also seen the incredible resilience of indigenous students, and I have had the honour to witness inspiring growth, activism and leadership. This generation of youth is ready to tackle our biggest challenges and to lead Canada into a brighter future as the fastest-growing demographic. The seven generations concept comes to mind and reinforces the idea that we bring with us the lessons and experiences of our ancestors and that both trauma and healing pass through the bloodline to the present day, that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable and equitable world seven generations into the future.

This brings me to our responsibility as Canadians. Orange Shirt Day, in an educational context, is an opportunity to learn, honour and acknowledge the calls to action, and to create space for indigenous elders and survivors to share their truth and feel our love and appreciation. Schools, businesses and organizations across New Brunswick proudly wear orange and undertake events and activities. This takes the form of healing walks, school assemblies, language lessons, mini powwows and other creative and formative expressions.

I worry Bill C-5, which would make this day a holiday, could have the consequence of losing some of the momentum that has been built around awareness, particularly in our schools. I also worry that the concession of this day being only for federal employees may have the consequence of losing the power of the intent of a national holiday. I will certainly do all I can to prevent this in my community, and I would like to see some extra assurances with dedicated investments around this bill.

I am also not convinced the bill represents a meaningful act of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, especially considering events that are transpiring around the country. It seems to me the government makes a habit of selecting only the easiest calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, abandoning those that require genuine effort, abdicating responsibility for the hard work we must undertake.

I remind the House there is a long list of education and health outcomes that should be our focus, those that would have lasting impacts for positive change, the sorts of changes that would mean indigenous women would not have to suffer as Joyce Echaquan did in her last moments of life and the sorts of changes that would mean Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi might still be with us today.

• (1410)

So far, most of the change I am seeing in Canada is a result of the efforts of indigenous communities and individuals. This is unacceptable. Canada has a responsibility to make things right. Canada must make amends. Canada must have these difficult conversations and must show leadership.

Our success will be measured in the way we respond to indigenous nations on an ongoing basis when questions of sovereignty arise, as they have in Nova Scotia in recent weeks. It will be measured in the way we embrace the collective and inherent rights of indigenous peoples, the way we carry out our relationships with these nations, and the way we embolden or chastise racist commentary from Canadians who do not yet understand these rights.

I recognize that a national memorial holiday was included in the TRC, and I have committed to stand behind each call to action; therefore, I will certainly vote in favour of the bill. However, I hope the government understands its continuing responsibility to support educational initiatives and to fund events and activities around this national holiday. The work we do today in the House will have repercussions on the next seven generations. It will be the foundation of a future in which we understand the truth of our past and celebrate what we have built together.

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I implore Canadians to observe this holiday, to learn the true intention behind it and to take on the challenge of becoming allies and champions of reconciliation.

I will end with a metaphor sent to me by Eddy Charlie, a member of the Cowichan Nation and a residential school survivor. He described the long-term intergenerational impacts of the trauma inflicted by residential schools as poison leeches into a river, contaminating everything along the way. He said, “We’ve been contaminated by hate, pain and aggression, and until we clean up that river, we’ll always be stuck in a really bad place.”

The process of cleaning up that river is under way. It is our job as parliamentarians, and as Canadians, to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

* * *

• (1415)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, the Chair has notice of an intervention on a point of order that we were dealing with earlier this day.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I unreservedly apologize for the gesture I made in question period today.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe for his response. Accordingly, I think we can consider the matter closed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fredericton for her remarkable speech. I learned a lot from it.

I was also very pleased to hear about her two boys. I am sure that her two little guys are in very good hands.

I obviously believe that we must support this bill, which stems from the work of my former NDP colleague, Georgina Jolibois. However, as my colleague from Fredericton stated, we must do even more.

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I would like to ask her two questions. First, does she think that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be enshrined in all federal legislation? Second, does she agree that the federal government should drop its court challenge against the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling with respect to social services for indigenous children?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his questions and for his comments about my children.

[*English*]

I absolutely believe that we need to enshrine the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into our federal framework. I certainly believe that children should not be in court defending their rights, especially when it comes to their social welfare.

I wish to add to the record that indigenous communities are more than well equipped to handle child and family services on their own behalf, for their own children, and that we very much need to honour the sovereignty, self-governance and self-determination that I mentioned in my speech.

I want to congratulate first nations communities across the country for the incredible work they continue to do on behalf of their children. I implore my colleagues in the House to continue to do our work to catch up to what they have been doing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a valid point with regard to the national legislation and where it has impact. Hopefully, through the legislation, we will see other jurisdictions do likewise and emphasize its importance. As has been pointed out previously, it is not a day off, but rather an opportunity for us to be a better society by getting a better understanding of why we are designating this day.

I would like the member's comments on that.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I certainly think it is important to formally enshrine this as an official holiday in Canada. I just wonder what that means. I think we need to have more conversations about the responsibility of non-indigenous Canadians to reconcile what we have done. I think about how we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day. A lot of positive actions come out of such a day.

I ask that more Canadians learn. For me, it is really about the educational opportunity, so it goes back to investments, and it goes back to supports. If we were to do better in our education system, if we were to have a more culturally responsive curriculum as part of the provincial system in general, I think that would have a bigger impact than, perhaps, a national holiday.

Again, I support this, but we must go much, much further.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. I thank her for that.

This is difficult for people like me who did not experience the atrocities that others in the community did. What we can do is put ourselves in their shoes and be allies. It is our duty as parliamentarians to do this in our own communities, to raise awareness about this day and to ensure our constituents have opportunities to learn and commemorate.

There is consensus among opposition and government members on this bill. I think everyone wants to move towards reconciliation.

What does my colleague think the government should do as a next step towards reconciliation? It seems the opposition parties are very likely to support everything the government does to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

• (1420)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

There is a lot that we need to be doing as parliamentarians. In my speech I looked to the other calls to action. I mentioned some of the outcomes in education and health. I highlighted some of the ways that we continue to fail in these areas.

I also think about the comparisons that have been made with Remembrance Day and with what this holiday could be. It is really about our next steps as members of Parliament in how we choose to observe and promote awareness in our communities around this national holiday. I would like to see more concrete investments and funding commitments because it is going to take a lot more than our words. It is going to take actions, and it is going to take funding, so I think that is a big step.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by advising the House that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

I am joining the House from my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

I am honoured to speak here today on the national day for truth and reconciliation. It is a day marked by September 30, traditionally Orange Shirt Day. I want to thank the many survivors and family members who have taught me so much about residential schools over the years. I am particularly honoured to work with colleagues, such as the member for Northwest Territories, who himself is a survivor; former member of Parliament Romeo Saganash; and former member of Parliament Georgina Jolibois, who was the initial sponsor of this bill.

I am also inspired by the work of so many of my colleagues here, including the member for Winnipeg Centre and my good friend the member for Sydney—Victoria. I am also inspired by the words of the member for Fredericton and the member for North Island—Powell River, members representing many different parties within our House.

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Let us be clear, this day is to respect, honour and reflect on the enormous number of lives lost in the generations of first nations, Inuit and Métis, and those whose lives have been forever changed. It is equally to recognize the enormous resilience of the survivors and their families. It is about education, as many have said, but it is not about indigenous people educating non-indigenous people about what has happened with residential schools and the many other oppressive things that have happened in this country since 1867. It is about Canadians learning and taking the initiative to understand what this day marks.

This is not about revictimizing those who have enormous pain, enormous struggles to overcome and intergenerational trauma that cannot be erased overnight. When I speak about reconciliation, I often qualify this term, because I know it is a term that is used quite regularly. It is used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 94 calls to action, and it is a term that our government uses quite regularly.

As someone who has worked on the issue of reconciliation, it is not one where those who are affected, those who are victimized need to reconcile. It is about those who perpetrated these atrocities who need to come forward, and make sure the conditions are there for reconciliation.

As long as we have a survivor, as long as we have a child of a survivor who is directly impacted by residential schools, it will be very difficult to reconcile. As long as those lives continue, in terms of every socio-economic measure, to not be at par with non-indigenous people, the conditions will not be there for reconciliation to take shape.

As much as we mark this day, as much as this day is important and significant, it is a day for Canadians to recommit and double down on the need for reconciliation to take place, the need for all the social determinants of health to be rectified and to ensure that we have a proper plan and path forward to ensure that true equality can take shape in Canada.

A number of questions were posed about the Indian Act itself. I can categorically say that it is a deeply flawed and deeply racist act that continues to subjugate first nations people from coast to coast to coast in a very colonial setting. I do not know how else to say it, but it is a deeply racist piece of legislation.

Sadly, it is one of those pieces of legislation that cannot just be undone; it took generations to put together.

• (1425)

In many ways, to be able to address some of the issues within first nations communities, it is important that we are working toward nation-to-nation relationships. This would allow first nations communities, nations and peoples to actually negotiate and establish their own governance and self-determination over both very basic and very complex things, including land, resources, language, justice and culture.

Until we do that, it would be too simplistic of a solution to say we are going to eliminate the Indian Act altogether. It is one of those acts, as the member for Sydney—Victoria said quite well, that

is unfortunately not ready to be taken down yet, but that is where we need to end up.

Let me speak more on this day itself as the parliamentary secretary who was working on this file. We heard from so many different people on the need for this day. There was a lot of discussion. The TRC call to action number 80 did not specify September 30, but it definitely called for a day that would mark this important recognition of residential schools. In fact, September 30 became the natural fit, and that was the consensus we received from many individuals, survivors, leaders, communities and indigenous people from all walks of life. That consensus allowed us to move forward with this date.

It is also something that will not mark the end. In fact, it will be the beginning. Someone mentioned that we could establish this day and then go away. No, this is in fact the beginning of a longer journey, a longer discussion and a more elaborate conversation as to how this should be marked in each and every community.

In Scarborough—Rouge Park, in places like the GTA, there are very few resources available. Even though we have very large populations of urban indigenous people, we have very few resources for education. This is where our school boards and provinces need to come in. It would be similar to Remembrance Day, when there are actual events in schools. In Ontario, at least, it is not a provincial holiday. This should be a day where people are able to mark it locally and speak about it. Young people will be able to understand and learn from each other and from their teachers on this.

I began going to school in Canada in grade four, and I can tell members I did not learn about this until well into my university years. Even then, I would say it was insufficient. That learning and education needs to take place on a day like this. It would not be a holiday in many provinces, until they bring legislation, but it would allow schools to mark the day and be able to observe it in a very poignant manner. This statutory holiday will ensure that public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

Throughout the witness testimony for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, commissioners heard from many organizations and groups that highlighted the importance and value of a day to commemorate. They talked about the need to have a date to reflect on the harm that has been historically inflicted upon first nations, Inuit and Métis people. I hope this House is able to adopt this.

Government Orders

• (1430)

I want to note that there are many calls to action, and almost 80% of the calls to action under the sole responsibility of the federal government and shared responsibility of the provinces have been completed or are well under way. This is one of them. I also want to note that call to action number 50, which calls on the Pope to apologize on behalf of the actions of the Catholic Church, may gain traction given the developments from the Pope this week on same-sex marriage.

I am hoping that we will be able to work together as faith groups, as governments and as indigenous people to advance reconciliation in Canada. I hope to see this legislation pass as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: We are just about at the time of adjournment, so we will have five minutes remaining for questions and comments when the House next gets back to the bill.

Before we adjourn, I have to ask the parliamentary secretary about the image behind him. I wonder if that is a print of Canada's first national urban park, which happens to be in his riding.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, it is an absolutely shameless promotion of the most beautiful park in Canada. I know many of my colleagues would completely disagree, but yes, indeed it is.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

The member for Windsor West on a point of order.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his work on the first national urban park. We are trying to get the second one in Windsor, and the Rouge is a shining example.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a good start.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:32 p.m.)

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