



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 024  
Monday, November 2, 2020

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 2, 2020

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

### OIL TANKER MORATORIUM ACT

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC)** moved that Bill C-229, An Act to repeal certain restrictions on shipping, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-229, which I think frames a very, very important issue for our country.

On June 21, 2019, the Liberals celebrated victory in the passing of Bill C-48 in this chamber. The Oil Tanker Moratorium Act was celebrated in Ottawa while thousands of Canadians in western Canada, in those two million square kilometres to the left of Ontario on the map, were grieving over yet another blow to their way of life. It was another blow to the economy of my home province of Alberta and ultimately to the entire Canadian economy.

This was an election commitment by the Prime Minister in 2015, and it was in ministers' letters less than a month after the election. There was no time for due diligence, which would set the precedent for a lack of due diligence for years to come.

Bill C-48 prohibits oil tankers carrying more than 12,500 metric tons of crude or persistent oils as cargo from stopping, loading or unloading at ports and marine installations in northern B.C. The bill was never about marine traffic, nor about transportation safety or the ecological life of northern B.C. It was the first step in the Prime Minister's singularly focused goal of phasing out the country's strong oil and gas sector.

Since 2015, Canada's energy industry has been repeatedly attacked by the Liberal government. There has been a mass exodus of billions of dollars of energy projects because of the government's anti-energy policies, such as Bill C-48, the shipping ban, and Bill C-69, the pipeline ban. By 2019, 100,000 jobs in this sector had already been lost because of Liberal policies. Capital investment in Canada's oil and natural gas sector has dropped by over half since

2014. I cannot imagine what these statistics would mean in other industries and what the reaction of the government would be.

It was looking like every attempt to get oil out of Alberta was being choked, whether it was by pipeline, by ship or by rail. It was looking like the only way we could get oil out of Alberta was to buy a barrel of oil a ticket on an airplane. That is why in February of this year I introduced my private member's bill, Bill C-229, an act to repeal certain restrictions on shipping. Once COVID-19 hit, it was all hands on deck and the bill was put on the shelf, but I am just as excited as ever to reintroduce the bill and am more excited than ever help our oil and gas sector and our economy.

In retrospect, the dismal outlook of the economy in 2019 was the calm before the storm that nobody could have predicted. Here are some facts, and quite frankly, they are not pretty.

Today, our federal debt-to-GDP ratio is at 50% and climbing. We are on track to reach a federal debt in excess of \$1.2 trillion by the end of the fiscal year. We have the highest unemployment rate in the G7, with pretty much the highest level of spending, and we lag in productivity and innovation when we compare ourselves with our peers. On top of this, we do not have a robust plan for the economic recovery, unlike in the fantasy world the Minister of Finance spoke about when she said that we took on debt so Canadians would not have to. Frankly, someone is going to have to pay it back.

What do we do? I painted a very grim picture of our economic future, but the good news is that to find a solution, we only need to look within. In 2019, mineral fuels, including oil, accounted for 22% of our country's total exports. They are the number one exported product. Granted, most of this goes to the U.S. In addition, we have the third-largest proven oil reserve in the world and are the third-largest exporter of oil.

In poet William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, he writes:

How can the bird that is born for joy  
Sit in a cage and sing?

With that, I ask this: How can a country with the ability to raise the economic well-being for all allow our resources to go to waste?

*Private Members' Business*

Our country is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, an abundance that can make all of us prosperous beyond our wildest dreams. This pandemic has decimated our economy, and we owe it to our children and grandchildren, particularly my new grandchild, to take care of this financial mess. One of the ways we can do this is by exporting our natural resources to new markets.

All credible climate-science experts, clean-tech innovators and scholars in the field acknowledge that as we undergo a global shift to sustainable energy, the world will still require oil for decades to come. Renewables are nowhere near ready for sole use and right now are only a marginal energy source. In Canada, petroleum and natural gas account for 73.9% of energy use; followed by hydro and nuclear at 22.3%; coal at 0.5%; and other, wind and solar at 3.3%. The switch to clean energy, ironically, is not going to be a clean break. As we invest in and grow our still undeveloped renewable sector, we can think of oil and gas as the training wheels we need for propping up our sustainable goals.

The Canadian energy sector has already started to innovate and make some green moves. The intensity of greenhouse gas emissions per barrel of oil produced in the oil sands in 2018 was 36% less than in 2000. Natural gas emits 50% to 60% less carbon dioxide than coal, which countries like Russia, China and the United States still depend on. On average, coal-to-gas switching reduces emissions by 50% when producing electricity, and about 33% when providing heat. We can think about how much lower the CO<sub>2</sub> levels would be if everyone switched from coal to natural gas.

Private sector innovation is what is going to lead us into the future and provide us with the technology we need to shift to global sustainability. Our strong Canadian energy companies see the global demand and are responding with hundreds of millions of dollars in renewable investments. Different energy projects are funded by oil and gas companies, and to kill this industry will kill investment. Believe me, government is not the solution to innovation.

Here are a few projects to talk about.

Enbridge is one of Canada's leading suppliers in renewables. It committed more than \$7.8 billion in capital for renewable energy. It has 22 wind farms, six solar energy operations and a hydro facility.

Suncorp completed Canada's electric highway project in 2019, a coast-to-coast EV charging network positioned no more than 250 kilometres apart. It also created four wind power stations.

TC Energy supported the Ontario elimination goal of coal-fired power generation through its 48.5% ownership of the Bruce Power nuclear facility, which provides emission-free electricity to roughly one-third of Ontario.

Global oil demand has grown by about 11 million barrels between 2010 and 2019 to above 100 million barrels pre-COVID. The fact is the world needs oil, and Canada is the only country on earth that can deliver this product in the most energy-efficient and ethical method.

Let us talk a bit about that. On the world democracy index, Canada came seventh, tied with Denmark. Our competitors in this industry are Nigeria, at 109th; Russia, at 134th; Venezuela, at 140th; and Saudi Arabia, at 159th. Between 2009 and 2017, green-

house gas emissions intensity in mined oil sands fell by more than 25%. That is innovation.

These are GHG emissions by country in 2016. China is at 25.8%, and its natural gas industry produces 0.911% of overall global GHG emissions. The U.S.A. is at 12.8%. Iran is at 1.7%. Russia is at 5.3%. Canada is at just under 1.6%, and of that, Canada's oil and natural gas industry produces about 0.29% of overall GHG emissions.

● (1110)

In switching from coal to LNG, there is 50% to 60% less CO<sub>2</sub> from combustion in a new efficient natural gas plant compared with emissions from a typical new coal plant. From 1990 to 2018, China increased its coal consumption from 0.99 billion tons to 4.64 billion tons. In 2008, coal made up 59% of China's energy use. Since 2011, China has consumed more coal than the rest of the world combined. These are staggering numbers.

Some are referring to this time, and the economic recovery to follow, as the great reset. The inconsistencies, inadequacies and contradictions of multiple systems, from health to finance to education, are more exposed than ever, and there is great concern for the future of lives and livelihoods. This pandemic has shaken our country. There is no doubt about that. As we head into recovery, I would urge the government and my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to think very carefully about what a fair and equitable recovery is going to look like.

Never has the integrity of our country's Confederation been more threatened. From west to east and north to south, our country is bruised. It is bleeding. Some may even say it is on the brink of broken. Political stability cannot be sustained in the absence of economic growth, nor can economic growth be sustained in a state of political instability. To this end, including indigenous Canadians in the economic recovery space will be crucial and, if done correctly, will forge stronger, more understanding relationships among all Canadians.

The energy sector is the largest employer of indigenous people in the country, with about 6% of the sector's workforce identified as indigenous. In 2015 and 2016, \$48.6 million was invested by oil producers into indigenous communities. Coastal GasLink has awarded \$620 million in contract work to indigenous businesses for logistical operations, there was significant support for the Northern Gateway pipeline, and the Eagle Spirit proposal is indigenous-led.

Global context aside, I urge all Canadians, with the government at the helm, to hail this great reset as a call to action. Going forward, I urge the government to administer neither special treatment nor punitive action on any province or territory in its approach to economic recovery.

The punitive and retaliatory measures taken by the government are eerily reminiscent of what many Albertans believe: that the national energy program was an unjustified intrusion of the federal government into an area of provincial jurisdiction, designed to strip the province of its natural wealth. Investors need to know that they have access to markets, and Alberta should have access just like every other province. We cannot move oil by pipe. We cannot ship it. We have been left with no options, and what used to be a few marginal murmurs has become full-blown western alienation.

We need to get our product to market. There is no way around that. Bill C-48 is an overt attack on Alberta's resource sector. Some have suggested that my bill, Bill C-229, is a waste of a private member's bill, but frankly, given the absolute sorry state of this country, it is anything but a waste. This bill would right a wrong and fix an incredibly discriminatory piece of legislation. This bill is essential for an industry that has helped fuel the economy for decades. This is essential for the thousands of workers who are proud of their work in this sector and the product their efforts produce. It is essential for manufacturing across the country. It is essential to the environment, as Canada has the opportunity to displace other world players that do not produce products to the same stringent environmental standards.

Canadian oil is in everything. It is not just what we put in our cars: the hydrocarbons we use to make the green upholstery in these chairs, the glasses members wear, the shoes on my feet, the capsules that vitamins are put into and the ink in my pen contain oil, and it can all be Canadian.

• (1115)

I am a proud Canadian and a proud Albertan who recognizes the important part the resource sector has played in our country's economic successes. I have lived through many of the ups and downs, and firmly believe we can gain market share, grow the economy and continue to reduce global emissions. Canada has led before and continues to do so. All the sector needs is to be given the opportunity to have access to markets so that we can compete and grow.

**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 concluded his remarks by saying that the industry needs access to markets. Tidewater access was denied to the industry through 10 years of the Harper administration. In fact, this administration, through the Trans Mountain expansion project, is ultimately going to see more oil getting to market via tidewater. The moratorium is an issue related to our environment, and it makes a lot of sense.

With the Conservatives trying to portray western alienation to satisfy their own political gains, does the member not realize that the Government of Canada, over the last number of years, has been there for Alberta?

*Private Members' Business*

• (1120)

**Mr. James Cumming:** Mr. Speaker, I would tell the member that that is not what Albertans think. They do not think that way because the Liberal government continues to bring in legislation that is punitive to the province and comes into a jurisdiction that very much affects that province.

The member used the example of Trans Mountain, which is not a deepwater port. It does not allow the ability to export to many countries. It is predominantly going to go back into that same U.S. market, so it is not the answer to the equation. The answer is access to deepwater ports.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. He made several economic arguments to justify his bill. However, I rarely hear my Conservative Party colleagues talk about the environment.

Are there any rules or environmental standards that he thinks should be applied to the oil industry?

Could he tell us what environmental regulations he thinks would be fair to apply to the oil industry?

[*English*]

**Mr. James Cumming:** Mr. Speaker, the energy industry within Canada is one of the most regulated industries in the world. We have regulations in place that are solid, and companies are following them.

As I mentioned in my speech, companies are innovating. They are working hard to reduce emissions in this tough environment. I am proud of the energy sector. I am proud of the work it does, and I know that it can deliver in a very effective way and be a leader throughout the world.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech and his argument for scrapping Bill C-48: the moratorium on crude oil tankers in the region that I call home.

He mentioned indigenous Canadians at one point. I would hope that the member is aware that the indigenous nations of B.C.'s north and central coasts, under the banner of Coastal First Nations, have asserted their own ban on oil tanker traffic on their coast under their traditional laws.

I am wondering if the member, in crafting his private member's bill, reached out to any of the indigenous leaders from those nations that are signatories to that ban, such as the Haida, Heiltsuk, or the Xaixais. Were there any?

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. James Cumming:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the same question could have been asked of the government. Did it reach out to all of the other indigenous groups that supported pipeline development, which needs deepwater ports to get access to markets?

I believe that there has to be consultation. However, consultation would be broad-based and would look at the lives and livelihoods of many people across Canada, which is what I certainly know our government would do.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks about the punitive strategy of the Liberal government. He mentioned the national energy program. In Ontario we had the Liberal green energy program, which really killed our competitiveness. My question is about Ontario because the oil and gas sector has so many manufacturing jobs that spin off from it, such as steel, pipelines, valves, electronics, harnesses, wiring, plastics and coatings for pipe.

Could my colleague comment on the Liberal government's overall approach and its lack of foresight, lack of consultation and its threat to Canadian unity? What is it actually doing by pushing forward with these acts?

**Mr. James Cumming:** Mr. Speaker, the energy sector is a big player in all of the markets, including manufacturing in Ontario, and throughout the country, whether it be pipe that is being put in the ground or some of the by-products that are produced by the energy sector.

This is an incredibly important sector for the country, not just for Alberta or Saskatchewan. It is important to the rest of the country as well. That is why I think it is important that we recognize that, and also that we have an opportunity to get our products to market.

• (1125)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we resume debate, compliments to the hon. members for keeping their interventions in that five-minute round at the end of the first speech during Private Members' Business succinct. It is difficult to get four questions put in, but because members were very concise with their questions and responses, we were able to do that, so that was good.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport.

**Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today on Bill C-229, an act to repeal certain restrictions on shipping. As we know, this bill proposes to repeal the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act in its entirety, which would thereby prohibit all relevant prohibitions and requirements that are currently in force.

I would like to discuss the importance of the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act and the role it plays in complementing the environmental protection efforts that we, as a government, are advancing from coast to coast to coast. Today I rise to speak to the importance of the marine ecosystems in communities on British Columbia's north coast and how we, as a government, are committed to the sustainable use and management of these ecosystems, which serve many communities along this coast.

Of course, the emergence of COVID-19 has created distressing and lasting impacts on many aspects of our lives. We continue to

feel these impacts today, and we will continue to feel them into the future. In spite of this, the pandemic has triggered a renewed sense of the importance of protecting the health of the communities where we live and our attachments to them. While our government's focus has shifted over the last number of months, we remain committed to implementing a world-leading marine safety system, a plan that builds on the concept of being able to provide economic opportunities for Canadians today while protecting our coastlines for future generations.

The government's vision is one in which we strive to continuously improve marine safety and responsible shipping on all three coasts. This vision includes protecting Canada's marine environment and advancing and renewing partnerships with indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnerships.

Canada's transportation sector is undergoing a transformation as the government continues to implement two major initiatives. The first is transportation 2030, which is a vision for the future of Canada's transportation, and the second is the oceans protection plan. These initiatives will build a national modern transportation system that supports inclusive economic growth, job creation and Canada's middle class. Among transportation 2030's major themes, our waterways, the coasts and the north form a vital component to building the innovative and contemporary transportation system that hard-working Canadians deserve.

Alongside transportation 2030, the government launched the oceans protection plan in November 2016. It is a \$1.5-billion initiative that reflects and advances many of the same themes within transportation 2030 that focus on the marine environment. The Oil Tanker Moratorium Act complements these initiatives. The Government of Canada is committed to preserving coastal marine ecosystems across the country. This is why the Oil Tankers Moratorium Act is so important for British Columbia's northern coast.

We already know that the marine environments off the coast of British Columbia are among the most diverse ecological systems on the planet. From coastal areas to the deep sea, British Columbia's Pacific waters support tremendous diversity of life, which sustains the province's economy and many coastal communities' way of life. We know that now, more than ever, the livelihoods of these communities demand protection.

Our oceans continue to support a range of valuable biological resources, from fish to crustaceans, to larger marine mammals such as orcas and humpback whales. Other important fish species, such as salmon and herring, use our waters as spawning and schooling grounds. These are waters that similarly deserve our protection.

The Oil Tanker Moratorium Act was a commitment made by the Prime Minister in 2015 to protect the pristine and unique ecosystems and the livelihoods of many communities served by the waters of British Columbia's north coast, and we are proud that we delivered on that commitment. The act now prohibits tankers with more than 12,500 metric tons of crude oil or persistent oil products on board from stopping, loading or unloading at ports or marine installations in northern British Columbia.

The moratorium area extends from the Canada-U.S. border in the north down to the point on British Columbia's mainland adjacent to the northern tip of Vancouver Island. At this very moment, it protects the delicate ecosystems in the northern coast, including Haida Gwaii.

Our government recognizes that when the delicate balance of this coastline becomes threatened, it upsets the relationship between the environment and its inhabitants, which spans thousands of years. We know that there is a deep historic and cultural tie to this coast that supports cultural practices and social structures. This is exactly what makes it worth protecting.

● (1130)

The moratorium protects the livelihoods of communities on British Columbia's north coast by providing a heightened level of environmental protection while continuing to allow for community and industry resupply. A wide range of economic activities continue to feed and sustain the region's economic life cycle, including commercial fisheries, processing facilities and logging. Many communities in the industry in this region rely solely on marine shipments for critical petroleum products to sustain their livelihoods, which is why we continue to allow shipments of crude oil products below 12,500 metric tons.

Canadians were consulted extensively on the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act. We heard from many Canadians and listened attentively to what they had to say. Starting in January 2016, Transport Canada held approximately 75 meetings on the moratorium, including 21 round tables. The department received over 80 letters and more than 300 submissions on the online engagement portal. We engaged directly with the inland indigenous groups and coastal communities of British Columbia that would be affected or that expressed an interest in the moratorium. We engaged with our colleagues from provincial and municipal governments to solicit their views on improving marine safety and formalizing this moratorium.

We also listened to the hon. members in the Senate. That is why we supported an amendment that required a mandatory review of the legislation after five years to study its impacts. This review will consider the impacts of the act on the environment and on the social and economic conditions of indigenous peoples. It will also provide the opportunity for all interested indigenous communities, provinces and other stakeholders to express their views once the moratorium has been in effect for a reasonable period of time.

While we heard a diversity of views, the need for environmental protections of this region was made abundantly clear. Canada is a maritime nation. We enjoy more coastline than anywhere else in the world. This is why the oceans protection plan is so critically important. Canadians rely on their coasts and waterways to earn a living, import goods and export Canadian products.

### *Private Members' Business*

Indigenous coastal communities have ties to Canada's oceans that span generations. They have distinct cultural and spiritual traditions that are attached to the land and sea they inhabit. They rely on coastal waters as a source of their livelihood, for food security and as valuable transportation routes. The government wants to ensure these coasts are protected and can be enjoyed for generations to come. There is a need to allow safe and responsible commercial marine traffic on every coast. Our economy depends on it.

However, this must be balanced with strong environmental protections. The Oil Tanker Moratorium Act accomplishes this, and I hope I can count on support from other hon. members in this House to allow the protections of this act to continue for generations to come.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to my colleagues that the Bloc Québécois will not be voting in favour of Bill C-229 because the existing legislation is legitimate and protects ecosystems.

I listened carefully to my Conservative colleague's speech and I would like to come back to a few of the things he talked about. I am intrigued by two major issues with respect to Bill C-229.

First, I get the impression that my colleague is using Canadian unity as a lever to get out of certain environmental commitments. Bill C-229 does bring forward the thorny issue of environment versus economy. Generally, the Conservatives deal with this issue by putting the economy first. Now, they are adding a new layer to that by saying that, if people are against oil sands development, then they are against Canadian unity. We often hear that in order to open up western Canada we need to create pipeline projects and reduce environmental assessments.

However, I often get the impression that if any province in Canada has been left out in the cold, it is Quebec. The forestry industry has been in crisis for over 20 years. Did the federal government do anything to support the forestry industry? As far as I know, it has not done much.

Let us look at the period from the early 1980s to the late 2000s by comparison. During that time, the oil and gas sector received over \$70 billion in federal government support, \$14 billion of which came from Quebec. When people talk to me about alienation, that leaves a pretty bitter taste in my mouth.

*Private Members' Business*

I have spent some time looking at the period from 2017 to 2020, during which the federal government pumped \$24 billion into the oil and gas industry, including \$17 million for the Trans Mountain pipeline. What did the federal government do for the forestry industry during that same period? It invested \$952 million, 75% of which was in the form of loans, not money invested directly into the sector.

If we are keeping score, the government has given about \$70 million per year to Quebec. My region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, contributes more to the federal government than the government invests in the entire forestry sector in a given year.

People talk about alienation and say we need to address the West's concerns, and that is fine, but we have to look elsewhere too, especially given the ever-present environmental crisis. I think we can probably dispense with the western alienation argument.

There is another interesting aspect to this. Our Conservative friends are the champions of debt. They see debt as the modern sin, the new crisis that looms. They are probably right. I like hearing from the member for Carleton on this, as he has some rather interesting things to say.

My colleague talked about the debt-to-GDP ratio in his speech. He sees the fossil fuel sector as our best chance of solving the economic crisis that is upon us. However, we never hear our Conservative friends talk about the environmental debt we are leaving behind.

If they want to avoid leaving a huge debt to our children, I do not think they would want to leave them in a precarious situation, either. This precarious situation we are leaving to our children is the environmental crisis. Our children will be able to do little about it, if anything at all. We can take action right now to address this environmental crisis. I would like to discuss this with my colleague when we have an opportunity to do so.

For these reasons, it goes without saying that we will be voting against the bill.

I understood the Conservatives' vision from my colleague's speech. I get the impression that the Conservatives' aim is to repeal any standards that might displease the shareholders and owners of oil companies.

• (1135)

In that sense, the Conservative Party may often seem like a huge fossil fuel lobby. I have never heard a Conservative Party colleague say anything negative about the oil industry. Still, it is quite surprising to see how united my Conservative colleagues are on this sector of the economy.

During the election campaign I also found it rather funny to remind the Conservative member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord that while the Bloc Québécois defends exclusively the interests of Quebec, there is another bloc in the Government of Canada, namely the western bloc, that defends solely the interests of the oil industry, and does so far too often, if you ask me. That bloc is embodied by the Conservative Party. The major problem is that the Conservative Party refuses to take environmental protection into account in most of its interventions.

As everyone here in the House knows, the oil sands leave a massive environmental footprint. A little while ago, Neil Young compared the oil sands region to Hiroshima. He may be right. According to numerous environmental studies, the oil sands are the primary causes of pollution not just in Canada, but in the world. We must take that into consideration.

Earlier my colleague mentioned environmental studies. I asked him whether he agreed with the regulations established for the oil and gas industry. He told me that Canada probably has the most stringent standards in this area. However, many publications, including *Nature Communication*, report that the oil sands probably emit 64% more greenhouse gases than what the oil companies report. If we refuse to see how that can undermine public confidence towards this sector of the economy, there is a serious problem.

The third most significant source of the world's dirtiest oil is Alberta's oil sands. It is not the sovereigntist MP for Jonquière who is saying so, but the Arc Energy Research Institute of Calgary. It is understandable that some may be reluctant to put all their eggs in one basket and invest significantly in this industry.

The oil sands tailings are already so toxic that they are having a significant impact on indigenous communities. Earlier I said that it often seems as though my Conservative Party colleagues are lobbyists for the oil industry. In my opinion, this industry just wants to make as much profit as possible as quickly as possible without any concern for the environment.

In response to a question I asked last week, one of my Conservative colleagues told me that the Conservative Party was not asking the federal government to give additional funding to the oil sector; it was asking the government to get out of the way. What does that mean? Seems to me that they want as little regulation as possible and they want the government to allow oil companies to regulate themselves. That comes across in my colleague's bill.

I will conclude by saying that oil is not as popular among investors as it once was. Most of the big investment funds are getting out of the oil and gas sector, and especially the oil sands sector, which is probably among the most polluting in the world. Consider Teck Resources' Frontier mine, which was shelved not because of environmentalists or the government but because nobody wanted to put up the cash for the project.



I think the best thing we can do today is develop better regulations and stricter environmental standards for the oil and gas sector. If we want to help Alberta, we need to figure out an energy transition plan that does not leave that province mired in an outdated industry.

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Conservative bill, Bill C-229 before us, which seeks to repeal the oil tanker moratorium on the north coast of British Columbia, an internationally renowned area also known as the Great Bear Rainforest.

I have learned in my short time here that one of the greatest honours of this position is not the opportunity to share our own ideas, but rather to carry the voices of others, the voices of the people and the places we represent. Today I rise on behalf of the people of northwest B.C. to speak in opposition to a bill that would tear up an oil tanker moratorium 50 years in the making, place coastal livelihoods at risk, trample on indigenous rights and threaten the integrity of one of our country's greatest natural treasures.

When I heard about this bill, my thoughts first turned to the Heiltsuk people. In the early hours of October 13, 2016, the Heiltsuk awoke to news that the American-owned tug and articulated barge, the *Nathan E. Stewart*, had run aground on the rocks at the entrance to Seaforth Channel just west of Bella Bella. On board the boat was 190,000 litres of diesel fuel. At 9:30 a.m. the boat sank and, despite the valiant efforts of the Canadian Coast Guard and the Heiltsuk people, 110,000 litres of diesel spilled into the marine environment. The epicentre of that spill was a mere 50 metres from the spot where the Heiltsuk's creation stories have the first ancestors of one of their tribes descending from the skies. Four years later, the clam-beds, so vital to Heiltsuk culture and sustenance, have still not recovered, so today my thoughts go first to the Heiltsuk, Wuikinuxv, Kitasoo, Nuxalk, Gitga'at, Metlakatla, Haida and other nations of our coast whose lives are so closely linked to the marine ecosystems that crude oil tankers would threaten.

I am also reminded of the hundreds of northwest B.C. residents who came before the joint review panel hearings into the northern gateway project. From all walks of life, they came forward to share their opposition to crude oil on our coast and provide a positive vision of a more sustainable future. Taken together, the transcripts of those hearings read as a love letter, a witness statement and a thesis defence all wrapped into one from a people unflinchingly committed to the place where they live.

I am reminded as well of the local governments that amplified their residents' opposition by passing formal resolutions in opposition to oil on our coast, the Village of Queen Charlotte, the City of Terrace, the City of Prince Rupert, the Town of Smithers, the Village of Hazelton, the Village of Fort St. James and others.

My thoughts turn to the good people of Kitimat. If there is any community in Canada that has a level of comfort with big industry, it is Kitimat. This town was built around an aluminum smelter and today is home to Canada's largest industrial project. The people of Kitimat are also the people of the Douglas Channel. Their former mayor, Joanne Monaghan, went as far as holding a plebiscite on the

### *Private Members' Business*

issue of oil tanker traffic. When the votes were counted, the people of Kitimat voiced their clear opposition. Northwest B.C. is a place of both rugged independence and tight-knit communities. It is a place that understands resource development, but also understands the importance of taking care of the lands and water. Amidst all the debates over the past 40 or 50 years on pulp mills, moose harvests, salmon allocations, annual cuts, protected areas and open-pit mines, there has emerged a strong regional view that bringing crude oil tanker traffic to our coast presents a risk that is simply not worth taking. Why is that? Because the people of the west coast know that when oil spills, it kills. We know that even a successful oil spill response recovers only a fraction of the oil that gets spilled. We know that current clean-up tools are all but useless in even the slightest inclement weather, much less in the harsh winter storms that batter the north coast of B.C.

• (1145)

Of course, on paper the oil industry continues to promise all manner of technology to respond to every situation and contingency, but as the Heiltsuk know all too well, there is very little that can be done when the guy steering the boat falls asleep and runs it into the rocks.

As a society, we have ingenuity in spades but what we lack sometimes is the wisdom to know when the consequences simply are not worth running the risk.

For so many people the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act represents a victory of wisdom over ingenuity, of place over profits and of culture over catastrophe. Bill C-48 was the culmination of over 50 years of grassroots effort. The people who fought so hard for it all those years are certainly not going to lie down and let this private member's bill take that all away.

I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech. I understand that there are many workers in Alberta who are facing tough times right now, as are Canadians across the country, as we ride out this pandemic together. Nonetheless, I am surprised the Conservative member decided that this issue was the one that should be made a priority at this challenging time, not ensuring indigenous communities have access to clean drinking water, not fixing the deplorable conditions in our long-term care homes and not improving supports for seniors and people with disabilities.

*Private Members' Business*

Indeed, it is striking that this bill comprises only a single clause, which repeals the oil tanker moratorium wholly and replaces it with, wait for it, absolutely nothing. It offers no alternative measures to protect the north coast. It does nothing to consider the views of the indigenous people and the communities in the area that is most affected. It is no more than a blunt, ideological Conservative rebuke that would tear up almost five decades of consensus building in the region I represent.

However, there may just be a silver lining in all of this. We get a hint of it in the weathered billboards when we drive along Highway 16 or in the signs that are still in the windows of houses from Old Massett to Bella Bella. I think it was Haida leader Guujaaw who once observed the paradox that our communities are never happier and more united than when we are standing shoulder to shoulder, facing a common threat. Stephen Harper and Joe Oliver discovered this phenomenon, too, that threatening the people of the northwest only serves to bring us closer together.

As an example, 1,000 people gathered in a gymnasium in Kitimaat Village at the invitation of the Gitga'at and Haisla to witness the indigenous nations of B.C.'s north and central coast putting in place their own tanker ban under their indigenous laws, with the cutting and distribution of a copper shield. I wish the hon. member had been there to witness it. It was a truly spectacular sight.

Suffice to say, while there are many other pressing issues facing us right now, I have no doubt that if need be, the people of northwest B.C. will rise up once again and protect our coast. Let us hope we do not have to. I am looking across the aisle and very much hope that the Liberal members still hold the same resolve they did just a couple of years ago and will join us in voting down this wrong-headed bill.

This issue of oil tankers on B.C.'s coast has a long history, and not just in our region but in this place too.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the member for Skeena was a man named Frank Howard. Like my father and brother, Frank was a logger. He was a union man and a champion of the working people of the northwest. On May 15, 1972, Mr. Howard rose in this House and he moved:

That this House herewith declares that the movement of oil by tanker along the coast of British Columbia from Valdez in Alaska to Cherry Point in Washington is inimical to Canadian interests especially those of an environmental nature....

Frank's motion was carried unanimously, and led eventually to a voluntary exclusion zone that kept oil tanker traffic off our coast for decades. Fast-forward to just a few years ago, when my predecessor, Nathan Cullen stood in this House and fought tooth and nail to make that voluntary moratorium into a proper law. As members know, that came be with Bill C-48, which this Minister of Transport brought forward. It was passed into law in June of last year.

● (1150)

Today, I am so honoured to stand on the shoulders of these former members for Skeena, generations of northwest British Columbians and indigenous leaders from across our region, and voice strong opposition to the bill before us, which would do away with so much that we have worked for.

For the people of the northwest, this issue has been settled for decades. I'm looking to my colleagues in the House to recognize that fact once again and vote against the bill. It will not come to pass.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to second the motion by my colleague for Edmonton Centre. His private member's bill, Bill C-229, would repeal the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act, which has held back the country's economic development, the country's environmental development and the country's social development since it was passed over four years ago. This bill came about after Bill C-48, which was one of the last pieces of legislation the government enforced in its last mandate in the 42nd Parliament.

Undoing the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act is obviously very important. It is very important for the country for so many reasons, but it is very important to recognize the value it adds, if we were to repeal this, for our entire country. We cannot talk about the repeal of this act without talking about infrastructure in Canada. We are talking about ports and we are talking about pipelines. As much as we can talk about ports because this is a repeal of a shipping ban on oil products above a certain quantity, we really have to speak about pipelines because this emanated from the pipelines.

To get our resource to market, because our oil resource industry in Canada is inland, it has to traverse a long distance in order to get to the ports that will take it to market. Those pipelines are inextricably linked with the industry that supplies their product. That product, of course, continues to expand in Canada and legitimately continues to expand in Canada because it is a very well-known, environmentally friendly resource that the world needs at this point in time and is going to need for decades to come. For us to turn our backs on that reality at this point in time is short-sightedness on our part.

We are competing in a world where oil is produced in much less environmentally friendly jurisdictions around the world. We need to make sure for the environment's sake that we get the better product to market, which has much less of a footprint around the world.

The thing about the oil and gas industry is that it looks to getting its resource to market efficiently and economically. That requires a constructive regulatory environment to build infrastructure like pipelines. Getting a pipeline to the coast to get that product off the coast and to its customer is essential. Long-term planning and economics are involved in all of this. Every one of the companies that builds these or plans these puts those perspectives together at the outset so that it actually knows what the transparency of the outcome is going to be. That is something that has been lost in Canada, as far as getting projects built goes, and we need to address that.

Let me talk about a concept called “monopsony”. I am sure the members on the opposite side know that a monopoly happens when there is one supplier. A monopsony is when there is one customer for a product. That is what we have in Canada with our oil industry at this point in time. All of our exported oil from Canada goes to one international customer and that customer, of course, is the United States.

Getting oil offshore is essential to break that monopsony and, therefore, get a better price for our oil and gas resources. That is not happening right now. When we quantify what that means for the Canadian economy, it equates to about \$16 billion per year on what we are currently producing in oil alone. Sixteen billion dollars is disappearing from the pockets of Canadians to somewhere else. That is because we get such a discount, what is called a “differential”, on our price in the American market. Sixteen billion dollars a year, for the last five years of the current government's mandate, would equate to about \$80 billion to the Canadian economy. That is \$80 billion. I know it seems small in relation to the amount of money that is going out the door right now, but \$80 billion is real money.

The shame of this is that we export much of this product to our monopsonistic partner, the United States. It goes to refineries and some of it comes back to Canadians where we pay the world price for it, so we are not only losing money on the export but we are actually paying money on the import, which is a shame across this country.

● (1155)

Let us talk about the oil and gas industry here. It is a high-cost industry in Canada. It is high cost for a reason. Part of that reason is the regulatory and environmental demands we put on the industry to make sure it produces a product that is accountable to Canadians but also meets an environmental standard that is world class. It is the most environmentally friendly oil produced in the world.

I want my colleagues in the House to become more educated on the full-cycle environmental costs of the production of Canadian oil. It beats the world. We have many things to consider in this regard. Cost is one, but environmental performance is very important.

Canada produces about five million barrels of oil per day. Of course, this is before COVID. We have all cut back. The pre-COVID demand was about 100 million barrels per day. We have the third-largest reserves in the world, but we are down as far as production goes because of other constraining factors. We have a great resource and a great value to add to the world in this respect.

I would like to add something else economically that I am sure people in the House understand, which is the balance of payments. Canada right now has about an \$18-billion balance of payments on its goods deficit in 2019. When we go back to how much we are not getting world price for our oil product, that is \$16 billion. Our goods deficit would be whittled down substantially. There is no product we produce in Canada that contributes more to our balance of payments than oil does at this point in time.

We need to think about that because it means something. That means jobs and benefits for Canadians as they pay their taxes, get their pensions and contribute to social services across the country.

### *Private Members' Business*

Taxes, services, governments and individuals, we all prosper if we have a more economically beneficial industry.

Where is this \$16 billion per year going? Who is making that money? It does not just disappear. Someone else is taking that world price; we are not. Somebody is making money and there is an interest here that has not been identified openly, which is an economic interest in the United States. They are also collecting taxes on a value-added product that we do not receive the benefit for here in Canada.

Into this mix on pipelines entered Enbridge in the mid-2000s, thinking it could solve so much of this with a new project called northern gateway and get our oil to market. That was a \$7.9-billion project on paper.

It went through almost a decade of regulatory hearings. A total of \$100 million was spent on the regulatory process in Canada in order to get our oil to market. This would have solved so many things, including breaking the monopsony, creating jobs, increasing production from an environmentally friendly resource across Canada and contributing, in a beneficial way, to the world environment.

In addition, indigenous participation was written into the agreement. They actually had equity participation in the pipeline, which was the first of its kind. This is something that is being replicated now, but this project was the first one that had indigenous equity participation.

● (1200)

In June 2014, that pipeline was approved with 209 conditions. Those 209 conditions included a spill response mechanism for the north shore of British Columbia. That spill response mechanism was essential to get around the moratorium on oil shipping that had been in place since 1972. I know my colleagues in other parts of the House would say that was necessary to ensure we did not have any oil spills off the north coast, such as they had, one time, in Alaska.

The 209 conditions, including the spill response, would have effectively solved that. There is risk here. There is risk in the U.S. continuing to export oil in the areas where Canada excludes the export of oil. This environmental benefit does not exist if it only constrains Canadian oil. It does not constrain any other oil that is in the area. This is not acceptable to Canadians.

*Government Orders*

The pipeline was overturned by the Liberal government. The Prime Minister, when he came in, made no bones about it. He was going to play to special interests without the balance of considerations about who was going to actually benefit from the cancellation and carry those costs. There are no costs without benefits, and there are no benefits without costs. That assessment was not made properly. I suggest that this ban on foreign shipping was wrong-headed and that this motion to undo it is completely acceptable. I support it, 100%.

• (1205)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### WAYS AND MEANS

#### INCOME TAX ACT

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.)** moved that a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act be concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** As usual, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wants to request a recorded vote or request that the motion be passed on division, I invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

*And one or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1325)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 16*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bessette
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)

Bloch	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Chiu	Chong
Collins	Cooper
Cormier	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gould	Gray
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Harder
Hardie	Harris
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jaczek
Jansen	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukwiski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor

MacKenzie  
Maguire  
Manly  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKenna  
McLean  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Melillo  
Mendicino  
Miller  
Moore  
Morrison  
Motz  
Nater  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Powlowski  
Ratansi  
Redekopp  
Reid  
Richards  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Ruff  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
Sajjan  
Sangha  
Saroya  
Scarpaleggia  
Schmale  
Seeback  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Shin  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Sorbara  
Spengemann  
Steinley  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Tassi  
Therrien  
Trudel  
Uppal  
van Koeverden  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Vidal  
Vignola  
Vis  
Wauh  
Weiler  
Williamson  
Wong  
Young  
Zahid  
Zimmer

MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Maloney  
Martel  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
Mazier  
McColeman  
McDonald  
McKay  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
McPherson  
Mendès  
Michaud  
Monsef  
Morantz  
Morrissette  
Murray  
Ng  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Patzner  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Poilievre  
Qualtrough  
Rays  
Regan  
Rempel Garner  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Rood  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
Saini  
Samson  
Sara  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Schulte  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Shields  
Shipley  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Sloan  
Soroka  
Stanton  
Ste-Marie  
Stubbs  
Tabbara  
Thériault  
Tochor  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Van Popta  
Vandenbeld  
Vecchio  
Viersen  
Virani  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Wilkinson  
Wilson-Raybould  
Yip  
Yurdiga  
Zann  
Zuberi — 322

NAYS

Nil

### Government Orders

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy), be read the first time and printed.

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

\* \* \*

### CITIZENSHIP ACT

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin by acknowledging that the House of Commons is located on the traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples.

Today, I have the privilege of speaking to Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

[*Translation*]

If passed, the bill would amend the oath of Canadian citizenship to ensure our indigenous peoples have their right place within the solemn declaration made by newcomers as they are welcomed to the Canadian family.

[*English*]

Allow me to explain the importance of this legislation and why the government is seeking to pass it into law.

This bill continues to fulfill our government's commitment to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, specifically call to action number 94. The government first proposed this amendment some time ago as part of our overall efforts to significantly advance reconciliation. As members of the House will know, similar legislation was tabled previously in both the last Parliament and last session, and that is why I am so proud to be reintroducing it today.

[*Translation*]

This is a difficult time for Canadians and for the entire world. Throughout the global pandemic, the government has focused on supporting indigenous communities, working to control the spread of COVID-19 and keeping everyone safe.

[*English*]

That is something the government will continue to do as we walk the shared path of reconciliation with indigenous peoples and remain focused on implementing the commitments made in 2019.

*Government Orders*

Racism hardly took a pause during this pandemic and, indeed, arguably it has exacerbated it. The government is committed to addressing racism in a way that is informed by the experience of racialized communities and indigenous peoples. This is hard work, not just for Parliament, but for all Canadians. Renewing the relationship with indigenous peoples must be based on a recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Our laws and policies must foster co-operation with indigenous peoples and reflect how we can all work to protect indigenous languages, traditions and institutions.

[*English*]

As Senator Murray Sinclair has said, “The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek.... When it comes to truth and reconciliation we are forced to go the distance.”

We have made advancements to address reconciliation, but there is clearly more work to be done. I hope we will use this time as an opportunity to have a constructive debate on this bill, starting with an all-party agreement that the amendments it proposes to the Citizenship Act are one more vital step toward reconciliation.

Before discussing the substance of the legislation, allow me to provide some historical context that gave rise to call to action number 94.

As said at the time of the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, too few Canadians know about the tragedy of the residential schools. There was a deficit of public awareness regarding the systemic way in which indigenous children were forcibly torn from their families. Previously shamed into silence about their backgrounds, thousands of survivors shared their painful residential school experiences with the commission, helping to start an important dialogue throughout Canada about what was necessary to recognize and start to heal the trauma.

We all have much to learn from listening to their voices, and it is in the spirit of this sharing of knowledge and learning that we put forward this bill to help new Canadians, at their inception as citizens, begin to understand the history and rights of indigenous peoples as a part of our country's fabric.

The stories of first nations, Inuit and Métis are the story of Canada itself. That is why the approach we are taking with this new oath is so important. We must, as Senator Sinclair has said, demonstrate “action that shows leadership”. With this bill, we are taking a step to change the oath of citizenship to be more inclusive and to take steps to fundamentally transform the nature of our relationship with indigenous peoples.

For hundreds of years, even before the residential schools, indigenous peoples faced discrimination in every aspect of their lives. Our government firmly believes that we must acknowledge the injustices of the past and envision a new relationship based on the inherent rights of indigenous peoples.

The bill we have put forward helps to lay the foundation for that journey. If adopted, the new oath of citizenship would read as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

To arrive at this language, the government engaged indigenous leaders, including the national indigenous organizations. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada began consultations in 2016, with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council. In addition, the department engaged with members of Land Claims Agreements Coalition, an organization that represents indigenous modern treaty organizations and governments in Canada.

To summarize our consultation, I would say that while there was general support for the intent behind the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action, it was clear that further efforts were needed to make the oath as precise and as inclusive as possible. However, it is the government's sincere belief that the wording put forth in this bill is inclusive of first nations, Inuit and Métis experiences, responding not only to call to action number 94, but to the substance of what my department heard throughout our consultations.

[*Translation*]

The bill we put forward to the House today includes a proposed oath of citizenship that would introduce and, we hope, instill the principle of reconciliation among our new citizens.

[*English*]

Many hon. members would agree that newcomers and prospective citizens represent an ideal group to embrace this principle. Becoming a citizen is a significant milestone, and over the last decade Canada has welcomed nearly 1.7 million new citizens.

In my time as minister, I have already had a number of opportunities to participate in citizenship ceremonies right across Canada, and I can tell hon. members that they are among the most emotional, moving and inspirational functions that I get to participate in. We see the pride on the faces of new citizens and how the oath represents a major commitment as part of their journey to settle in our country. The oath is an integral part of the citizenship process. It expresses a commitment to equality, diversity and respect within an open and free society. By taking the oath, new citizens inherit the legacy of those who have come before them and the values that have defined the character of Canada.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Essentially, our history becomes their history, and their history becomes part of ours.

*Government Orders*

[English]

With this bill, that shared history would also ensure that newcomers recognize and affirm the rights and treaties of indigenous peoples and see them as an integral part of Canada's past, present and future. It is a long road and we still have a long way to go, but our goal is to ensure that new Canadians recognize the significant contributions of indigenous peoples to Canada. In doing so, the government is also reaffirming its commitment to reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples.

However, this transformation will extend far beyond this proposed legislation and will take mutual respect, determination and patience. It will mean listening to and learning from indigenous partners, communities and youth, and acting decisively on what we have heard, which is to build trust and healing. It will also mean doing everything we can to support the inherent right to self-determination of indigenous peoples that will lead us all to a better future. We can and will build a better Canada together, but we can only do this in full, honest partnership with indigenous peoples, who truly know what is best when it comes to their own communities.

I want to end by acknowledging again that this has been a challenging time. However, this legislation represents a significant opportunity for Canada. The oath of citizenship is a time to celebrate our great country and should be an opportunity to recognize that indigenous peoples have been on this land since time immemorial. In doing so, we can work to address racism and its impacts on everyone in Canada, because as active and engaged citizens, we can all be part of the solution.

Let us move forward toward a new and better nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples based on inherent rights, respect and partnership. I look forward to working with all members of the House to support this legislation, which represents yet another step forward on the path to reconciliation.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister stated that this is part of the path to trust and healing. We are talking about a change to the citizenship oath that I think is very appropriate and supportable. We talked about a statutory holiday as well. However, in the meantime, the things that are actually making a difference for indigenous people, such as clean drinking water and an action plan on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, are missing.

The Liberals have completed 10 calls to action, so this may be a step, but does the minister not believe that trust and healing would come with following through on other commitments, such as clean drinking water?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, there is a part of my hon. colleague's question that I agree with: We must continue to work with indigenous communities right across the country to ensure that every indigenous person has access to clean and safe drinking water. My colleagues, the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, are making good progress on that, and we acknowledge there is still a way to go. It is the same with respect to ensuring that indigenous children get access to health and education. These are all important priorities.

With regard to the MMIWG, I would point out that it was my hon. colleague's party that refused to support proceeding with that inquiry in the last Parliament. I certainly hope there has been an about-face on that.

With regard to this legislation, as I said, it is an important part of the pathway toward reconciliation. We hope both she and her colleagues will support it.

• (1340)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I will be voting in favour of Bill C-8. It is a good bill, but I am wondering whether the Liberals are avoiding implementing more practical measures that would do more to improve the lives of indigenous people.

I am thinking of two things in particular. The first is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The fact that we have not yet ratified this declaration is a disgrace to our country internationally. Second, I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and I am wondering when the measures from the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls will be implemented. That is absolutely critical.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her support for Bill C-8. It is so important that all members of the House work together to advance reconciliation. This bill is a step toward this important objective.

As I said earlier, I completely agree that we need to continue to make progress to ensure that our indigenous communities have access to clean drinking water. That will continue with the work of my colleagues.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also will be supporting this bill, and I am happy it is coming forward.

I wanted to thank the member opposite for his comments today and for some of the interventions we have seen from colleagues on both sides of the House. One thing I did want to highlight is that, as we have heard, there have only been 10 of the 94 calls to action implemented so far, and that all happened before 2018. Since 2018, zero have been accomplished.

We should look at the fact that even this small change, which is very important and which I am very supportive of, has taken an astonishing five years to make happen. The government continues to drag out reconciliation efforts. It continues to demonstrate its failure to establish a successful nation-to-nation relationship. I am wondering what the member can say about the fact that it has taken five years to do only this one piece of those 94 recommendations and how he would speak to indigenous populations, who obviously do not see this as a true meaningful relationship.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague will get no resistance from me, nor from anybody on this side of the House, saying that there is still a long way to go. As part of my mandate I was asked to contribute to reconciliation by tabling this legislation. As I said, it had been introduced in the last Parliament, it was introduced in the last session and I hope that she will see, by my retabling it at this time, a genuine commitment to do my part, within the context of my portfolio, to take the step that is necessary to educate new Canadians.

I will say, having participated in many citizenship ceremonies, even virtually throughout COVID, that there is a real opportunity there to inculcate and to educate people, as they become part of the Canadian family, about the importance of our relationship with indigenous peoples. This law would achieve that objective.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the original TRC recommendation 94 was worded differently than the recommendation in the bill. Could the hon. member comment on why there is a difference? Why did he not just use the original wording from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, as my friend will have heard throughout my remarks, we engaged in extensive consultations with indigenous leadership and communities, going back to 2016. We believe that the language that we have put forward in this bill is most inclusive of first nations, Inuit and Métis experiences. Of course, we are looking forward to having the committee study this bill, where I know there will be ongoing debate, but certainly the product of the language that has been put forward is very much consistent with the consultations, which were extensive leading up to this point.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this bill before us has been in the making for five years. Back in 2016 the former minister, John McCallum, introduced Bill C-6, and at that point I made an amendment to bring in this change to that act. It did not pass. It did not get through the system, and so here we are, five years later, and it has taken the government this long to get to this place.

So, given this is where we are, there is a real serious question as to how the Canadian public and newcomers can take the government seriously with respect to reconciliation for indigenous peoples. As well, I am wondering what the minister is doing to ensure that newcomers have access to information so that they can learn about the history and internalize that history, so they can fully respect the human rights of indigenous peoples.

• (1345)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my hon. colleague for her advocacy, which I have come to experience on a very frequent basis. I appreciate it very much.

Certainly, with regard to this bill, I agree with my hon. colleague that we hopefully will pass this legislation as quickly as possible. I would encourage her to urge all of her colleagues and all members on the opposite side to support it so that it can become law. We also do need a concurrent strategy to educate and to really create as much transparency about the reason for the change. I think that is work that she will find a willing partner in.

With regard to the other parts of her question, we have made progress with regard to ensuring that indigenous peoples get access to safe water, as well as education and health services, and that work will continue.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question about the wording of the new proposed oath. When I was consulting with indigenous leaders in Manitoba, they raised some questions about why the word “aboriginal” was used in the Liberal proposed oath, whereas the Truth and Reconciliation Commission used the word “indigenous”.

I am looking for some clarity there and about the more appropriate terms we use today versus yesterday, so to speak.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mr. Speaker, a variation of the same question was asked earlier. As I mentioned, this language is the product of extensive consultation with indigenous leaders and communities that goes back to 2016. We believe it reflects the spirit of those consultations. This bill will go to committee to be studied, where I am sure it will hear additional evidence, and afterward we will look forward to receiving a report back from committee.

The most important thing is that we pass this legislation into law as quickly as possible. I certainly hope that my colleague posing the question will see fit to support it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we go to the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul to resume debate, I will let her know there are only about 11 to 12 minutes remaining in the time for Government Orders before we get to the time for members' statements and question period, so I will interrupt her in the usual way. Of course, she will have the remaining time when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating I am delivering my remarks on Treaty No. 1 territory and in the homeland of the Métis nation here in Manitoba.

As a Canadian and as a member of Parliament, I deeply respect the oath of citizenship of Canada. The proposed Liberal amendment to the Citizenship Act is something to which Conservatives have given much thought and consideration. The amendment under debate today represents a historic step forward in Canada's relationship with its indigenous peoples and an important component of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.



In my remarks, I will discuss my personal experiences with indigenous history and the Canadian oath of citizenship. I will also highlight the profound significance of the purpose of the words in the oath of citizenship and the equally profound significance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I will also include discussions on the contrasting Conservative and Liberal positions on these important matters. In conclusion, I believe Bill C-8 importantly and necessarily elevates the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and our treaties with them to the institutionally symbolic affirmation of patriotism and loyalty that is our oath of citizenship.

I want to begin by sharing that my personal journey of understanding the realities faced by indigenous peoples and their history in Canada did not really begin in a fulsome way until later in my life, whereas today children are learning about indigenous history much earlier in their education. Frankly, the only learning experience I had before adulthood about indigenous history came in high school when I first learned of Helen Betty Osborne, the 19-year-old Cree woman who lived in The Pas, Manitoba, where she was abducted, beaten, stabbed over 50 times with a screwdriver and killed. It took 16 years to solve her case and it was later found that racism, sexism and indifference from those who had power over her case were the cause of the 16-year delay in justice. The provincial government of Manitoba formally apologized for this injustice in 2000.

Following this experience, I went on to study political science at McGill University and the University of Manitoba. During that time, my understanding of Canadian indigenous history was further expanded. I was fortunate to study under Professor Niigaan Sinclair, who happens to be the son of Senator Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although our policies and politics do not always align, I learned a great deal from Professor Sinclair about indigenous history and took advantage of Canada's largest native studies faculty located at the University of Manitoba.

Shortly before the completion of my undergraduate degree, I realized I had sufficient credits to graduate with a Canadian history minor, save for one issue. The McGill criteria for Canadian history did not permit the inclusion of native studies as part of the Canadian history minor requirements. I felt that this was an injustice considering native studies is, of course, the study of Canadian history. As a result, I made the formal request to McGill University to change its requirements to consider native studies as Canadian history. It agreed, and I graduated with a Canadian history minor, and it is my expectation that McGill students have been permitted to do the same ever since.

I mention these events because they had a profound impact on me as a young woman. They laid bare just how far Canada and its institutions must travel on this journey of reconciliation. The inclusion of 19 additional words through Bill C-8 to our country's short but profound oath of citizenship is another important step on this important journey.

That is why Conservatives will be supporting this bill. I have had very positive experiences with the oath of citizenship. In fact, those experiences stand out in memory with their deeply historic Canadian traditions and all the pomp and circumstance that comes with them.

### *Government Orders*

I will never forget the first citizenship ceremony I ever witnessed. It was a very hot summer day in Manitoba, and I was attending the ceremony as the head aide for the Manitoba minister of culture. The ceremony was officiated by Dwight MacAulay, the former chief of protocol of the Manitoba legislature. He spoke so eloquently to the soon-to-be Canadian citizens about the significance of Canadian citizenship and the hope it provided to all of them in their new role as citizens of Canada.

The people there were of many different ages, races and religions, and they were absolutely beaming with pride to be there on this very special day. Some even shed tears of joy after they had taken the oath of citizenship. I remember feeling very patriotic in that moment. To that point, citizenship was something I had really taken for granted, having always had it, but I felt very fortunate I was able to witness such a profound moment in the lives of those new Canadian citizens.

As we debate changing the oath of citizenship today, I believe it is important for us to recognize the rich history of Canada's Westminster-style democracy to provide context to its sanctity of the oath and the profound importance it has on Canadian culture. It is deeply symbolic and rooted in customs and traditions that have evolved since the first English Parliament was convened in 1215 with the creation and signing of the Magna Carta. Canadian democracy and the freedoms and stability we enjoy are a result of over 800 years of development of our governing institutions. As a result, our customs and traditions are deeply embedded in the fabric of what it means to be Canadian.

● (1350)

That is why the second reading debate today on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, is so important.

The oath of allegiance makes up the first portion of our oath of citizenship. The oath of allegiance is taken by all those who wish to become judges, policemen and women, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, people who have been elected to serve in Parliament and provincial legislatures and others.

What is the oath of allegiance? It is a powerful, historical, solemn declaration of fealty to the Canadian monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, who is the personification of the Canadian state. The oath we use in Canada has roots in the oath taken in the United Kingdom, which was first implemented in 1689 by King William II.

I recently took the oath of allegiance to the Queen as part of the process to be officially sworn in as a Canadian member of Parliament. It was a short, but hugely symbolic phrase that reminded me of the serious obligations and responsibilities I was about to assume. I rested my hand on a bible and swore under my name, "that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second." When Members of Parliament swear these words, we are swearing allegiance to the institutions the Queen represents, which includes our Westminster-style democracy and when we swear the oath, we are pledging to conduct ourselves in the best interests of Canada. Our obligation as MPs to swear this oath of allegiance dates back to the Constitution Act of 1867.

*Government Orders*

However, the oath of citizenship, which was adapted from the oath of allegiance, came as a mandatory requirement for citizens many years later. It was not until 1946 that Canada's House of Commons passed the Canadian Citizenship Act, which officially established the creation of Canadian citizenship. Interestingly, the oath of citizenship in Canada only became law when the Citizenship Act was amended in 1977, which was 110 years after Confederation, and it marked the introduction of the symbolic affirmation of patriotism and loyalty into our oath of citizenship.

Bill C-8 represents the first change to our oath of citizenship in over 40 years. Given the history and symbolic significance I have just highlighted, this amendment to the citizenship oath is, to put it plainly, a very big deal. In sum, the oath of citizenship connects new Canadians to our constitutional monarch, who embodies our governing institutions in a timeless way and by doing so, it brings people into the historic Canadian identity.

The oath of citizenship, in its current form, is as follows:

I swear (or affirm)  
That I will be faithful  
And bear true allegiance  
To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second  
Queen of Canada  
Her Heirs and Successors  
And that I will faithfully observe  
The laws of Canada  
And fulfil my duties  
As a Canadian citizen.

Bill C-8 would add 19 words to our oath. Should the bill pass, the oath of citizenship will be as follows, "I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen."

By including the historic amendment to include indigenous and treaty rights in our oath of citizenship, it elevates and signifies the inherent dignity of Indigenous peoples and the agreements that were made with them. It informs newcomers of the Canadian commitment to both our national duty and allegiance to the Queen of Canada as well as our commitment to truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Given our discussion today on Bill C-8, it is of course important that we include mention of the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was activated by former prime minister Stephen Harper and organized by those involved with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

The purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to document the historical impact and the lasting legacy of the Canadian Indian residential school system on the indigenous peoples of Canada. There were more than 130 residential schools in Canada and 150,000 first nations, Métis and Inuit children were subjected to them. Seven generations of indigenous Canadians were impacted by residential schools.

More than 6000 witnesses were interviewed during the commission. Their stories shared the horrors and abuse, including sexual

abuse, that was inflicted on them during their time in residential schools. We have learned that 3,200 children died of tuberculosis, malnutrition and other diseases while attending these schools. Many indigenous parents were never informed of the deaths of their children. For those parents, their children were simply taken from them, never to be seen again. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996.

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was as its name is: telling the truth about what happened to indigenous peoples in Canada, notably the horrific abuse and forced cultural assimilation of indigenous children in residential schools as well as the failure of over 150 years of federal governments to fulfill treaties rights that were agreed to in partnership with indigenous peoples in good faith.

Senator Murray Sinclair has said that the process of reconciliation follows and involves educating the broader Canadian public on that truth and asking the public to accept that there are more things that need to be done to reconcile with Indigenous peoples. Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we understand that residential schools are one of the defining factors of why indigenous people continue to suffer disproportionately in Canada. One in four indigenous persons lives in poverty and 40% of indigenous children live in poverty.

• (1355)

The 2016 Canadian census found that over 33% of indigenous Canadians did not have a high school education or equivalent certificate compared to 18% of the rest of Canada's population. Further, indigenous people have historically faced much higher unemployment rates than non-indigenous Canadians. Moreover, the number of indigenous people in federal prisons has never been higher, with more than 30% of all federal inmates identifying as indigenous despite making up only 4.3% of the Canadian population.

Tragically, suicide rates are five to seven times higher for first nations youth compared to non-indigenous youth and the situation is even more dire for Inuit youth, who have the highest suicide rates in the world, 11 times higher than the Canadian national average. It is unbelievable, actually. In fact, suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for first nations youth and adults up to 44 years old. Shamefully, in Canada, women and girls are twelve times more likely to go missing or be murdered than other Canadian women.

When considering these statistics and many others, it is clear that the policies put forth by centuries of governments have failed indigenous Canadians. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a significant, symbolic and historic effort to move past the "Ottawa knows best" approach, to speak and hear directly from survivors of failed government policies and to learn about their experiences and implement their solutions for building a better Canada for all.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we achieved a historic milestone last month on the road to global peace and security. The 50th nation ratified and tabled its documents for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. With the 50th ratification from the state of Honduras, the treaty will enter into force legally on January 22.

Shamefully, it enters into force without Canada. I so hope that our country will step up as we did on the Ottawa land mines process and stand up against weapons of mass destruction, sign and ratify, so Canada can join New Zealand, Costa Rica and many other countries in standing up for world peace in this 75th anniversary year since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I thank the people at the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. We support their work.

\* \* \*

### ALBERT LEVY

**Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *wela'lin*. It is with great sadness that I rise to mark the peaceful passing of Albert Levy. Albert not only served as chief of Elsipogtog First Nation for 26 years, but was also a loving husband and father, an advocate for education, a successful entrepreneur and an avid sportsman.

In the 1960s, he became a professional wrestler, under the name of Chief Young Eagle, and went on to be a well-known hockey and baseball coach. He was a recipient of the Order of Canada and he received an honorary law degree from Mount Allison University.

Albert advanced his community in many ways, and is responsible for much of the infrastructure that exists there today. I am sure his community will never forget his important legacy.

I want to express my deepest sympathy to Albert's family and the community of Elsipogtog.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### ROULEAUVILLE

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the history book *Rouleauville: The Cradle of Calgary (1899-1907)* is being launched today on the 121st anniversary of the incorporation of the village of Rouleauville.

The book launch is taking place right now at Rouleau Residence. I would like to recognize the hard work put in by Suzanne de Courville Nicol and her team on this book.

A few weeks ago, on September 14, the City of Calgary designated Rouleau Residence a historic resource. The village of Rouleauville is named after Judge Charles-Borromée Rouleau and his brother, Dr. Édouard-Hector Rouleau. Dr. Rouleau's youngest son, Henry Joseph Rouleau, fought at Passchendaele and Vimy in

### Statements by Members

World War I. He was killed in action on September 13, 1917, and is buried in Calais.

Lest we forget.

\* \* \*

[English]

### JAMES CHOI

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that we learned over the weekend of the death of Corporal James Choi in an accident during a training exercise at CFB Wainwright in Alberta.

Corporal Choi served with the Royal Westminster Regiment, part of the 3rd Canadian Division, 39 Canadian Brigade Group based in New Westminster. He joined the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry for the training exercise.

When tragedies like this happen and our armed forces mourn one of their own, we are reminded of the perils always faced by the men and women like Corporal Choi, skilled and dedicated, who serve Canada. In war time and in peace, they put themselves in harm's way and risk the ultimate sacrifice.

Let us all embrace Corporal Choi's family and loved ones in their time of immeasurable loss and grief. On behalf of all Canadians, we will be there for them today and always in care, in support and in gratitude.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FREEDOM OF SPEECH

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this message is for Emmanuel Macron, the President of the French Republic.

Mr. President, by virtue of the privilege entrusted to me by the voters of Quebec, I want to say now that we stand in solidarity with you, and we wish you courage in the face of the attacks that Islamic terrorism continues to inflict on our sister country, France.

I do not claim to speak on behalf of all Quebecers within the Canadian Parliament, but I do speak on behalf of most of my fellow citizens when I encourage you to remain brave and faithful to your values of liberty, fraternity and equality.

The Quebec National Assembly, meanwhile, has voted unanimously to unequivocally support the cause you are defending despite the major conflicts threatening you, while respecting the traditions of generous hospitality that characterize both of our respective nations. The party I represent wants to unequivocally distance itself from the renunciation of our values of freedom and secularism and from the serious lack of courage expressed by the Prime Minister of Canada regarding the scope of free speech.

We wholeheartedly believe that great nations know how to use the voices and bodies of their people as a shield to ensure the equality, liberty and security of every citizen.

*Statements by Members*

The future will prove you right. Quebec will stand by you.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

**DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH**

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this November is the first-ever Diabetes Awareness Month in Canada. Eleven million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes, and many have had a challenging time during COVID-19.

Diabetes has serious consequences and impacts on our health care system. I want to recognize organizations, like Diabetes Canada, JDRF, CNA and CINA, who do the great work for diabetes.

Not only is it Diabetes Awareness Month, but next year marks the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada. We must do better, and we need a national framework. We brought insulin to the world. Why can we not be a global leader in diabetes treatment as well?

In the previous Parliament, I was proud to bring forward a motion to mark November as Diabetes Awareness Month. I hope all members will join me in raising awareness for diabetes. Together we can extinguish the torch at Banting House in London and defeat diabetes.

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**WESTEND SENIORS ACTIVITY CENTRE**

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the incredible work of the Westend Seniors Activity Centre located in my riding. Led by Dr. Haidong Liang, the centre's dedicated staff and volunteers serve over 3,200 seniors across the city. Always a centre of excellence for serving seniors, it has been their work during the pandemic that has placed them head and shoulders above the rest.

Moving quickly from in-house to online and outreach, Haidong himself hosted an eight-week fitness program for seniors among the 40 courses offered online. They obtained bulk PPE and made it available for sale at cost. They made over 7,000 calls to shut-ins to ensure that those in isolation heard a friendly voice. They started a frozen meal program, making healthy low-cost meals for delivery right to seniors' homes.

I have always said the Westend Seniors is the best seniors centre in western Canada. Haidong and his team make it very easy to fact-check that this is true.

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**WILLIAM KEIR CARR**

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with both honour and sadness that I rise in the House today to inform my fellow parliamentarians and all Canadians about the passing of Lieutenant-General William Keir Carr.

With a list of accomplishments and sacrifices far too long to list today, General Carr was a true Canadian hero. In World War II, he

flew Spitfires out of both the United Kingdom and Malta, and ultimately earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

A commander of the Order of Military Merit and a member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, he has been and will remain an inspiration to many, including me.

[Translation]

On behalf of all Canadians, I want to pay tribute to General Carr for his service and outstanding leadership.

[English]

I offer my heartfelt condolences to family and friends. May General Carr rest in peace.

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**CANADIANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's participation in the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement of African people is a stain on our country's history, the effects of which persist today as systemic racism in our society and in our institutions continues to harm Black Canadians.

In 2016, during an official visit to Canada, the United Nations working group of experts on people of African descent recommended that the Government of Canada “recognize African Canadians as a distinct group who have made and continue to make profound economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual contributions to Canada” and “Issue an apology and consider reparations for enslavement and historical injustices”.

Later today, I will be presenting a petition to the House initiated by the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition, calling on the government to act on these recommendations and to recognize August 1 as emancipation day annually. It is my sincere hope that all hon. members will support these important measures.

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● (1410)

**CANADA'S VETERANS**

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 80 years ago, Canada was at war. Canadian soldiers, sailors and air crew fought to guarantee that Canada would remain strong and free.

My grandmother, Helen Jamrozinski, fled Poland with her parents and siblings to seek refuge from Communist Stalin and the Russians. Because Canadians fought, she survived to find freedom and make a home in Canada. She has been telling her story to generations of schoolchildren. In the Netherlands, my dad's family was liberated from Nazi occupation by Canadians. Later, they also made their home here in Canada.

*Statements by Members*

My family owes its very existence to Canadians who fought in World War II. Some 45,000 made the ultimate sacrifice. We remember them as we remember all of those who gave up their lives for our freedoms in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Gulf War, in Afghanistan and across the world keeping the peace.

On behalf of myself, my family and my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex to the legionnaires and all Canadian veterans, we say a very grateful thanks.

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**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has recently come to public attention that the Conservative Party is paying for anti-abortion advertising on Vancouver public transit. Women's History Month ended on Saturday. It is disheartening to see the official opposition actively attempt to limit the reproductive rights of Canadian women.

The Leader of the Opposition claims to be a defender of the rights of Canadians, yet he continues to support the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington and many others in his caucus who deny a woman's right to choose what happens to her body. The opposition leader must remove these ads today and defend the rights of Canadian women.

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**CANADA'S VETERANS**

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, November is a month for veterans and many veterans organizations like the Legions are struggling.

I am reminded of the poem “The Veteran”, which speaks this truth: “It is the veteran, not the preacher who has given us freedom of religion. It is the veteran, not the reporter who has given us freedom of the press. It is the veteran, not the poet who has given us freedom of speech. It is the veteran, not the campus organizer who has given us freedom to assemble. It is the veteran, not the lawyer who has given us the right to a fair trial. It is the veteran, not the politician who has given us the right to vote”.

We owe a debt that can never be repaid to veterans whose sacrifices and courage gave us our freedoms. I encourage Canadians from coast to coast to coast to give what they can to support our veterans and to support our Legions. Please buy and wear a poppy to remember and honour our veterans, and buy a mask from the Legions as well.

Lest we forget.

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**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 93% of Canada's trafficking victims come from right here within our country, and 50% of those are indigenous. Human trafficking is a gendered crime impacting women more than men. The perpetrators, in fact, are often men.

These victims are real people who have had their lives tragically altered. In 2012, the Conservative government launched a four-year national action plan to combat human trafficking. Instead of renewing federal funding to support victims of human trafficking by furthering this program, the so-called feminist Prime Minister, who sits across from me, decided that there are better places to spend money, like, for example, giving \$200 million to a failing casino firm.

The Liberals' failure to adequately combat human trafficking, especially given how the pandemic has made it extremely difficult for these victims to find help, is absolutely disgraceful. These women and girls deserve to be seen. They deserve to have a voice. They deserve action.

My question is simple. When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and renew funding for this anti-trafficking program?

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**COVID-19 AT KEEYASK GENERATING STATION**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is getting serious in Manitoba. Of major concern is the outbreak at the Keeyask work camp. Let us be clear. Manitoba Hydro had ample warning this could happen but ignored first nations, who have been calling for decisive action for months.

Manitoba Hydro has chosen to put its business decisions ahead of the health of their workers and the most vulnerable communities in this country. Manitoba Hydro must accept full responsibility for this outbreak. It must ensure the shutdown is done in full consultation with its partners and with full transparency for workers and their communities. Manitoba Hydro must pick up the costs of self-isolation for the many workers who have nowhere to safely self-isolate as they leave the camp not knowing whether they have COVID-19. Workers must be compensated.

The federal government must support first nations, hold Manitoba Hydro to account and work with first nations to fight this outbreak. There is no time to waste. Lives are at risk.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***ATTACK IN OLD QUEBEC**

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we were all horrified to learn of the tragic events that unfolded in Quebec City on Saturday night. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer my condolences to the loved ones of Suzanne Clermont and François Duchesne, and I wish a speedy recovery to the five people who were injured. I thank the first responders and the port of Quebec guard, whose vigilance and action saved lives. My thoughts go out to Quebec City, which is in shock today.

It is even more appalling when we consider that these acts seem to have been committed for no reason by someone who was unwell. Mental health problems can affect everyone and are exacerbated by the stress brought on by the pandemic. I urge anyone who needs help to reach out by using the resources or organizations that are available, or by dialling 811 in Quebec. Take care.

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**ATTACK IN OLD QUEBEC**

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Quebec City are still in shock after the horrible tragedy that happened on Halloween night this past Saturday. Seven innocent people were attacked with a sword by a man dressed in a medieval outfit.

Two of the victims died. François Duchesne was 56 years old and worked as the director of communications and marketing at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. According to friends, he enjoyed jogging and was a positive man who was active in the community. Suzanne Clermont was 61 years old and worked as a hairdresser. Her friends all described her as a ray of sunshine. These people were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Barbaric acts are unpredictable and can happen anywhere: They are not restricted by city, border, language or belief.

I want to commend first responders for their excellent response: the Quebec City police force, security officers at the Port of Quebec, paramedics and every other medical professional. Quebec City remains one of the safest cities.

Today and always, our thoughts are with the victims, their families and their loved ones. We offer them our sincerest condolences.

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**ATTACK IN OLD QUEBEC**

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and a deep sadness that I rise in the House today. Tragedy has once again struck my city, which awoke on Sunday following one of its saddest nights ever.

On behalf of myself, my friend, the member for Quebec City, and our government, I wish to express our deepest condolences to the family and friends of François Duchesne and Suzanne Clermont. You are in our thoughts and prayers.

To the five wounded, I wish you a full and speedy recovery. Countless Quebeckers send you their best wishes and countless Canadians are thinking of you.

To the police officers, medical staff, neighbours and good Samaritans, I thank you for your protection, your care and your compassion. You do us proud.

**The Speaker:** Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of Saturday evening's attack in Old Quebec. I invite hon. members to rise.

*[A moment of silence observed]***ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

*[English]***TERRORISM**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech is one of the best and most important cardinal rules of our great country, Canada. The Prime Minister should be one of the strongest defenders of this value.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister believes that free speech should be limited. The Prime Minister suggested Friday that speech he finds disrespectful will not be protected, even as the Liberal Party claims day after day that it is the great defender of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Could the Prime Minister tell us why he finds it so easy to put conditions on those freedoms?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were all deeply horrified by the recent attack in France. Not only are members of Parliament horrified; I would say all Canadians are. We stand in solidarity with our French colleagues. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims.

As my colleagues around the world have said, we need to fight together against terror and intolerance. Canada is a strong defender of the liberty of expression around the world, and we will continue to advocate for freedom of expression around the world.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech is one of our country's core values. It is even protected by the Constitution. More than that, the Prime Minister should be this value's greatest defender.

Unfortunately, on Friday, the Prime Minister expressed reservations about and put conditions on freedom of speech. The Prime Minister should be defending freedom of speech but instead he is putting conditions on it.

Why does the Prime Minister want to put conditions on freedom of speech?

*Oral Questions*

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

We should avoid politicizing this issue. All Canadians were horrified by the recent attacks in France. Obviously, we stand in solidarity with our French colleagues. Our thoughts are with the victims' families.

Together we need to fight against terror and intolerance around the world. Canada is one of the greatest defenders of freedom of speech around the world and we will continue to defend that right.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech does not exist only when it suits us. It must exist when it does not suit us. The Prime Minister needs to respect that freedom of speech. Unfortunately, on Friday the Prime Minister set some conditions on what he does and does not consider to be free speech and on when that freedom is limited. That is unacceptable.

Is this why the Prime Minister took 12 days to condemn Mr. Paty's murder?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I have a great deal of respect for him, and he knows that.

The member's statement that we were late to react is false. The day after the attack, I expressed our solidarity with the French people on behalf of the Government of Canada. I said that we needed to combat intolerance around the world and that Canada would remain one of the greatest defenders of freedom of speech.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite the mutual respect I have for my colleague, he is not prime minister yet.

The Prime Minister of Canada was slow to offer condolences and share his thoughts and reaction to the murder of Mr. Paty. It is in times of crisis that real leaders emerge. The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, did not hesitate to categorically and unconditionally defend freedom of speech, and rightly so.

The President of France is a friend and ally and close to the Prime Minister. Why did the Prime Minister of Canada not follow President Macron's lead instead of distancing himself from him?

• (1425)

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

On this side of the House, when we tweet or issue a statement it is on behalf of the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians. The day after the attack I shared my reaction.

The Ambassador of France to Canada even commended Canada's comments in which we stated that we stand with her fellow French citizens. We will always do so, as I was saying. Every country recognizes Canada as one of the greatest defenders of freedom of speech in the world.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. On Friday, when the Prime Minister was directly questioned about freedom of speech, he gave the following example about how freedom of speech is not without condi-

tions and limits. He said, and I quote, "We do not have the right...to shout fire in a movie theatre crowded with people".

Is that the Prime Minister's explanation as to why freedom of expression should be limited? Seriously, what he said does not make any sense and is embarrassing for Canada. Once again, the Prime Minister is embarrassing us on the world stage. In fact, people in France are not very happy today.

Is the Prime Minister able to clearly defend freedom of speech without limitations?

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

As I said, I think that we need to avoid politicizing this issue in the House. We clearly expressed that we stand in solidarity with our French colleagues. Our message was well received by them. The French people understand that Canada is one of the greatest defenders of freedom of speech in the world.

We will continue to defend freedom of speech. We will continue to fight throughout the world to defend the values and principles that Canadians hold dear.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it took the Prime Minister 11 days to condemn the murder of Samuel Paty, a teacher, by an Islamic fundamentalist. Then, on Friday, he made some dangerous statements. In reference to a terrorist who killed a man for showing caricatures, the Prime Minister stated that freedom of speech is not without limits.

Let's be clear: Under no circumstances does the expression of ideas justify murder. When fundamentalists kill people to shut them up, we need to tackle fundamentalism, not attack freedom of speech.

What is the Deputy Prime Minister waiting for to condemn these abhorrent acts?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister, but I can certainly speak on behalf of the government.

Telling Quebecers that we were slow to react is not accurate. The very next day, we responded to our international counterparts, condemning what happened, expressing our steadfast solidarity with the French people, stating that we must work together to fight intolerance and terror and reiterating Canada's commitment to being one of the great defenders of freedom of speech.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that freedom of speech already has limits. For instance, hate speech and defamatory statements are prohibited.

What the Prime Minister is suggesting is that any opinion likely to upset someone should be censored, and that violence would be an acceptable response to comments one does not like.

While France is fighting tooth and nail for freedom of speech, all the French newspapers are pointing out that the Prime Minister is not behaving like an ally.

Does the government realize that the Prime Minister is not only trivializing Islamist terrorism but also harming the special relationship Quebec has with France?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think all parliamentarians have been clear that nothing justifies violence. Members on all sides of the House—I do not wish to politicize this issue—all stand in solidarity with our French friends.

I would remind my hon. colleague that the French embassy welcomed the comments made by the Government of Canada in solidarity with the French people.

On the contrary, I think our allies see Canada as one of the great defenders of freedom of speech in the world, and we will continue to defend it.

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**HEALTH**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to express my condolences to the families of the victims of the attack that took place in Quebec City.

Many people have raised the issue of mental health services. There are not enough mental health services, especially in this pandemic.

Will the Prime Minister increase funding for mental health services?

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government has been investing in mental health services for a number of years, with over \$5 billion going to provinces and territories over the years to improve services to Canadians no matter where they live.

Our hearts are with all the people of Quebec and with the people of Quebec City. I would like to remind everyone that we have additional free resources for all Canadians at [wellnesstogether.ca](http://wellnesstogether.ca). I encourage all Canadians who are struggling, worried and afraid to reach out.

\* \* \*

**COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, we knew that small businesses would be struggling to pay their rent. As necessary lockdowns hap-

pened, small businesses were worried about how they were going to pay their commercial rent. Instead of putting in place a program to help these small businesses, the Liberal government put in place a program that helped Liberal insiders instead.

Moving forward, will the Prime Minister commit that any small business program, and relief program, will actually be focused on helping small businesses and not Liberal insiders?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to field the question.

From the beginning of this pandemic, we heard loud and clear that businesses needed support, and they needed it quickly. That is why we moved ahead with programs like the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which is helping to keep three million workers on the payroll; it is why we moved ahead with the Canada emergency business account, which is helping over 700,000 small businesses in Canada keep the doors open; and, yes, that is why we advanced support programs to help with commercial rent.

I am pleased to share with the hon. member that soon, in the House of Commons, we will be debating a new application-based system to provide direct commercial rent support to tenants across Canada so that more businesses will be here on the back end of—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, time and again we hear the Liberal justice minister use his tired lines about the totally non-partisan nature of judicial appointments under the Liberal government, but we know that is just not true. In fact, the opposite is true: judicial appointments are a very partisan process with the government.

Can the minister tell Canadians why a judge's score on the Liberalist is the determining factor in their career path?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I dispute the presumptions behind that question. We have put into place a process that is transparent. It focuses on quality and diversity. The only people on whom consultations are undertaken are people who have passed through the judicial appointment committee, which is non-partisan and has no access to partisan political information. They go on to the next stage only if they are highly recommended in most cases and occasionally recommended.

We have put into place an outstanding process and I ask Canadians to look at the results, both in terms of quality and diversity.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** There it is, Mr. Speaker. The same minister has the same old lines from the same old story.



*Oral Questions*

The Liberals always put their Liberal friends at the front of the queue. It turns out Mathieu Bouchard, a key PMO player during the SNC-Lavalin scandal, continues to meddle in the affairs of the Minister of Justice. The Liberals want to make sure that, if they do not get the right prosecutor, they at least get the right judge.

Why is the government always tilting the scales of justice in favour of well-connected Liberals?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that the only people upon whom we consult, the only candidates we consider, are those who have gone through the judicial appointments committee and a rigorous process. Over half of them do not get promoted. Only those who are highly recommended and occasionally recommended get promoted.

I can assure the House and Canadians that I make the recommendations to cabinet and that I have not had any interference from the PMO with respect to my decisions, nor have I had a candidate refused.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, documents confirm that, because of “no caucus input”, appointments of at least 15 judges were stifled by the Prime Minister’s Office. The Liberals have their hands on judicial appointments at every single step. Even Liberal MPs who do not show up for a year, like Nicola Di Iorio, had more say in who became a judge than the Attorney General did.

It is a simple question. What does the government think is a more important qualification for being a judge: being a lawyer, or being a Liberal?

• (1435)

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the important qualification is the quality of the candidate. That is determined, in the first instance, by the judicial appointments committee. In the second instance, there is wide consultation among the legal community, again focusing on quality, and only with respect to highly recommended or occasionally recommended candidates.

We are proud of the process that we have put in place. I am proud of the appointments that I have put in place. I repeat, as Minister of Justice, I have not had a single candidate rejected by the PMO, nor have I had a single candidate suggested to me by the PMO.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the media are reporting that ministers, Liberal MPs, the Prime Minister’s senior staff, influential members of the Liberal Party of Canada and riding assistants all have a say on the appointment of judges in Canada.

Are these the people who make up the expert committee for judicial appointments promised by the Prime Minister in 2016?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the hon. member has misrepresented the process.

All candidates are assessed by judicial advisory committees, which are non-partisan. They have no access to partisan informa-

tion. Only highly recommended and recommended candidates move on to the next step of consultation in the legal community.

Our goal is to seek out high-quality and diverse candidates. I am very proud of my appointments and I can assure the hon. member that I have never been pressured by the Prime Minister’s office.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice keeps repeating in the House that there is no political interference in Canada’s judicial appointment process, despite what we are seeing in the media.

Will the minister change his version of the facts, given what we know now about Canada’s corrupt judicial appointment process?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we changed and improved the judicial appointment process precisely because the former Conservative government was making very partisan appointments.

The judicial advisory committees work very hard to assess the candidates who are highly recommended or recommended so that they can move on to the next stage. Yes, we do hold consultations, but they are broad-based, thorough consultations with the entire legal community.

I am very proud of the quality and diversity of the appointments I have made.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will talk more about that.

Staff in the Prime Minister’s office systematically check the political backgrounds of candidates for the judiciary in the Liberalist database. Those who contributed to the Liberal Party’s campaign fund or participated in campaigns are put at the top of the appointment list.

Can the Minister of Justice confirm the use of this unethical scheme in selecting highly recommended candidates for judicial appointments in Canada?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. member described the process incorrectly.

I recommend people of all political stripes. The information available at the end of the process is used only to decide how to proceed with an appointment. I have never had a candidate blocked. I can assure the member that I am the one who makes recommendations to cabinet, and I recommend only candidates who are highly recommended and recommended.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the Liberals vetted judicial appointments using a partisan tool called the “Liberalist” to give their friends an advantage, but it is worse than we thought.

*Oral Questions*

On the weekend, journalist Joël-Denis Bellavance stated that even the Prime Minister's Office was directly interfering by pointing the Department of Justice toward loyal Liberals. Also according to Mr. Bellavance, the Minister of Justice asked other ministers, including the Minister of National Revenue and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, to approve new judges. It goes deep.

Is it still possible for non-Liberals to become judges in Canada?

• (1440)

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, I appoint people from all parties on the political spectrum as well as people who have no party affiliation.

I just described the process. Judicial advisory committees work very hard to evaluate candidates. Highly recommended and recommended candidates move on to the next stage, which is consultation within the legal community. It is all done in a non-partisan manner, and I am proud of the appointments I have made.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying one thing, and a journalist is saying the exact opposite. One of the two is not telling the truth. I am not convinced it is the journalist, because he has nothing to gain from lying.

We know the Liberals consult their pundits to find out who is a good Liberal, but it goes further than that. Former Liberal member Nicolas Di Iorio tried to block the appointment of a judge because she comes from a family of separatists. The Liberals personally intervene not only to favour those who are friends, but also to undermine those who are not.

Is competence still a requirement for becoming a judge in Canada?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can only speak based on my experience as justice minister.

I can assure the hon. member that I make all final cabinet appointments. I have never been pressured by the Prime Minister's Office. No one has ever blocked any of my appointments. I am very proud of my appointments. I have appointed people from several political parties and people with no political affiliation whatsoever. I focus on quality and diversity in my appointments, and I am very proud of them.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what is happening with judges is very serious. Let's not forget what happened in Quebec two years ago when we were forced to release criminals, including biker gang members, because of procedural delays and the Jordan decision. Now we find out that in 2018, five judicial appointments in Quebec were delayed by this government because it was waiting for feedback from caucus. I am not making this up.

It is bad enough that they give preference to their Liberal friends. It is bad enough that they are undermining those who are not Liberal, but do they realize how much they are undermining justice in Quebec?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since being appointed Minister of Justice I have been working to ensure that judicial appointments are made regularly and that they follow the process. As I said, I have recommended several candi-

dates for appointment in Quebec. I am working with my counterparts in Quebec to minimize the impact of the Jordan decision and I am constantly monitoring the situation in the courts.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the government refused to answer questions about how it intends to protect Canadian consumers from gouging by grocery giants. First it decided to talk about other government programs, then it decided to blame the provinces, but the government knows it has a responsibility to protect competition and the agriculture sector, especially after selling out farmers in numerous trade deals.

When is the government going to get serious about protecting consumers and farmers?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course it is absolutely disappointing to see grocers impose these costly fees, which fall on thousands of Canadian food producers who are working hard to feed Canadians and support their communities, among the other challenges they are facing right now.

We share the concerns of Canadians, and we want to make sure there are fair market practices in place. We continue to make sure this issue is addressed, and we are going to make sure we work with the provinces to address these issues.

• (1445)

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the industry minister is responsible for the Competition Act. He knows that.

It is up to the federal government to protect consumers and farmers from the unfair fees being imposed by Walmart, Metro and others. Instead, the government wants to pass the buck to the provinces.

Will the government take its responsibilities under the Competition Act seriously and make sure that Canadians, already suffering enough with the pandemic, are not hit yet again?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. As I said, our government recognizes that the ongoing financial health of independent grocers, food processors and growers is critical to ensuring a robust food supply for Canadians. However, we also recognize that the terms of sale generally fall under areas of provincial jurisdiction.

We encourage our provincial and territorial counterparts to examine the matter. As I said, we will continue to engage with them and work with them because we are here to stand up for Canadians.

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the key word there was "generally". The one industry that did not experience a slowdown during COVID-19 was the grocery sector. Many of these big chains saw record profits as Canadians prepared to lock down during the past spring.

As the Greater Toronto Area, Quebec and now Winnipeg are going through a second wave of lockdowns, more Canadians are worried about their next meal. This is a federal responsibility. Will the industry minister treat it like one and make sure that Canada's competition laws are protecting grocery customers?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, these are important issues, and I have full confidence in the Competition Bureau and its ability to look into these matters. These are issues that Canadians have raised, and I want to thank my hon. colleague for raising this issue as well.

As we have indicated on several occasions, we recognize that the terms of sale we have highlighted, those in respect to the ongoing financial impositions faced by independent grocers, fall under provincial jurisdiction. We encourage our provincial and territorial counterparts to examine this matter. We will continue to keep an eye on this as well.

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#### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada Infrastructure Bank has finally admitted what we have known all along: Publicly funded infrastructure projects will be allowed to charge Canadians to generate private profits. That includes the REM transit system in Montreal, which received over a billion dollars from the bank.

Which big corporation will be generating profits by charging riders? My colleagues can guess. It will be SNC-Lavalin. The bank was even planning on having private investors charge Mapleton residents to access their own municipal drinking water.

Why is the Liberal government giving public money to its corporate friends, and then turning around and charging Canadians for using their own infrastructure?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know it is time to build up, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank is an important piece of that plan. This plan is creating a million jobs. It is building strong communities through investments and infrastructure, such as public transit, clean energy, access to broadband and affordable housing for indigenous peoples in northern communities.

Our government knows that investing in infrastructure for communities, for growth and for Canadians is important. We are continuing to engage with provincial leaders to make sure that we bring benefits to all provinces and territories in this country as we build back better.

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#### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's failure to ensure passengers get their money back is turning into an international embarrassment. Now American passengers are taking Air Canada to court to get their money back.

Instead of standing up for consumers, the government keeps pretending there is nothing they can do. This is not true.

#### Oral Questions

Why is the government dithering? Who in there thinks it is okay for Canadian airlines to rip off their customers?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious of the fact that many Canadians are frustrated and they would prefer to have refunds. I understand that, and we are encouraging airlines to follow up.

At the same time, airlines and the air sector in general are going through a very rough period at the moment. That is why we are working on a package to address the requirements to ensure that Canadians will have a reliable, affordable and safe air sector after this pandemic is over.

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[Translation]

#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I made funding announcements at the Lockerby and Markstay St. Charles legions in Nickel Belt to unveil new commemorative cenotaphs in honour of local heroes. With the annual poppy campaign under way, I encourage everyone to give generously and get a poppy before Remembrance Day.

[English]

More than ever, our legions and veterans need our support. Could the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs share what our government is doing to ensure they have the support they need and deserve during this pandemic?

• (1450)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Nickel Belt, for all the hard work he does for the legions and veterans organizations in his riding. We encourage all Canadians to support the Royal Canadian Legion's annual poppy campaign more than ever this year, as the legion branches deal with the challenges brought on by COVID-19.

Our government is also proud to support our legions and veterans organizations with \$20 million in funding assistance through Bill C-4. We can be proud of the poppy campaign and the incredible work done by our legions and other veterans organizations from coast to coast to coast.

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Kenora, the Neskantaga First Nation has been evacuated because they have no water. The water plant has shut down. This summer the government created many new massive programs to address the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, but somehow ensuring clean water for indigenous communities is something it deemed to be too ambitious.

The government has pledged to end all drinking water advisories by this spring. I am wondering if the Minister of Indigenous Services could recommit to that timeline today?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member's question is exceedingly important. I will reiterate the fact that it is unacceptable that Neskantaga has been without clean water for over 25 years.

This is a government that has invested \$16.5 million into a new plant, in particular in Neskantaga, and in other places across Canada. There is much more work to do, but this is something that has occurred over a quarter of a century. If the member looks at the 10 years of investment of the Conservatives, in Neskantaga in particular, they only put \$300,000 in per year, which is just a tragedy and something that we have committed to fix. We will fix it and we will fix it with financial resources in partnerships with first nations.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Neskantaga First Nation is on day 9,406 of a boil water advisory, the longest in Canada. The minister was there in 2016 and promised that it would be done by 2018. They are not alone.

On Friday, the Chief of the Chippewas of Nawash told CBC that their plant would not be open until 2023. This is one of over 60 communities that still cannot put clean drinking water into a glass. They cannot wash their hands in this time of COVID.

How much longer is the Prime Minister going to make them wait? If it is not 2021, then when is it?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to look down to the bottom of the article, where she got her information, and see the quote from the elder who said that the Prime Minister was the first one to care, to have actually done something and to give him respect for that.

There is a lot more work to be done. This is a product of decades of neglect. We continue to move on. Obviously, it is too early to determine the full impact of COVID-19 on water infrastructure timelines, but we do remain aggressively committed to meeting that goal, and in partnership with first nations well after that.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand why the government continues to act so much like an opposition and blames everybody else when it is the government of the day and it is the one that can address this situation right now.

This pandemic has resulted in people having to wash their hands more frequently, physically distance themselves and has upended northern supply chains. It has made bottled water more difficult to come by in indigenous communities. For far too long, these communities have been put on the back burner.

I would ask the minister this. How quickly would his government have responded if it were Toronto or his downtown Montreal riding that did not have access to clean drinking water?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member rightly points out, this is something that has been the case for over 25 years in some instances, and it does not get fixed overnight. It gets fixed by the consistent partnership, with government after government investing finances and resources in partnership with first nations that too often have been betrayed.

We have eliminated 96 long-term boil water advisories and prevented countless more from becoming long-term boil water advisories. A lot of them, yes, did happen on the watch of his prior government of 10 years, with \$300,000 per year, for example, in Neskantaga, where we have invested \$16.5 million. That is investment for—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, in 2015, stood in the House and solemnly promised to lift all long-term drinking water advisories by March 2021. He has now admitted that this is another broken promise and, quite frankly, it is unforgivable. Fifty-one advisories have been added since then and for one community, its drinking water now has compounds found in oil and coal.

When will the Prime Minister stand up, apologize and tell us his plan?

• (1455)

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member opposite exactly what the plan is. It is to lift all those long-term water advisories with investment, partnership and hard work, 96 to date. The prior government left them all to waste for a decade. This is unconscionable action. This is something our government moved quickly to remedy and, in fact, after 2015, we increased the number of communities that we would lift those long-term water advisories for.

This is something for which first nations communities have been asking for far too long, deserve so as of right. We will continue to commit to them in partnership to work with them to lift all the water advisories well beyond that date, to work in partnership to keep those water advisories from coming back on.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, workers across Quebec who are entitled to employment insurance or the new CERB are unable to apply because their application is being blocked for so-called security reasons. They have spent weeks on the phone, but no one can tell them why their application is blocked or when it will go through. At a time when entire industries are shut down because of the pandemic, the government has no right to leave workers with no income and no answers.

What is happening?

When will the problem be fixed?

[English]

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that we are working very hard to make sure that every worker who is entitled to EI gets it and people who are not get the new recovery benefits. I will look into the specifics of this particular case. I, quite frankly, do not know about the security issue. I will look into it and get back to the member shortly.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, even if they are working hard, it is taking too long.

The government cannot let workers go without income for weeks. In the meantime, people are going into debt. While living on the bare minimum of government assistance, they are making sacrifices and cannot meet their basic needs.

We need to truly reform federal programs to properly protect the identity of Canadians. I will come back to that.

Today, in the middle of the second wave, what is the government doing to unblock these applications so workers can pay for groceries?

[English]

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are taking every effort and I am proud to say that 2.85 million Canadians right now—

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order cannot be raised during this period unless it is about a technical problem.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** This is the second time that there has been no translation of the minister's reply because of the sound quality. I would like this to be fixed.

#### Oral Questions

**The Speaker:** We will check what is happening.

We have determined that the minister's microphone is not working properly. We will get it fixed.

We will continue with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

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#### HEALTH

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are seeing COVID-19 outbreaks in a number of meat-processing plants in Quebec. We learned that these employees in an essential, high-risk sector are tested just once a week because of the lack of access to rapid tests. Canada is months behind other countries.

When will rapid tests become widely available so we can deal with the threat to Canada's food safety?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have delivered over 1.7 million rapid tests since October 24: to Ontario, 531,000; to Quebec, 577,000; to B.C., 153,000; to Alberta, 303,000. The list goes on. In fact, we have been there for provinces and territories to support their role in responding to the pandemic and we will continue to work with them every step of the way.

\* \* \*

#### MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since March, the B.C. motorcoach industry has seen historic drops in gross revenue, in some cases as bad as 95%. Companies like Wilson's Transportation in Victoria and International Stage Lines in Richmond need our help. Restrictions are in place, layoffs are in full swing and COVID numbers are rising.

What, specifically, is the Liberal government doing to support motorcoach businesses that serve B.C.'s youth groups, sports teams, tourism industry and more?

● (1500)

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like the air sector and the rail sector, the motorcoach sector has also been hit by this pandemic, and we are working on this. We stepped in when Greyhound departed a year and a half ago, and we are looking at this. This is also a provincial responsibility.

*Oral Questions*

At the moment, the fact is that not very many people want to travel, and it is difficult for the coach industry.

\* \* \*

**AIRPORT INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago, WestJet announced it was cancelling flights to Atlantic Canada and Quebec City. Officials at airports in Regina, Saskatoon and other mid-size airports across the country are asking themselves whether they are next. We are eight months into the pandemic and the nation's airports remain in the dark about a relief plan.

When is the minister going to stop procrastinating and deliver a real plan to save Canada's airports?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not just the airlines that are having difficulty at the moment because there are very few passengers. That also has a knock-on effect for the airports as well. If there are not people flying, there are not people going to the airports.

We are aware of this. As I have said many times before, we are working on trying to find solutions that will ensure that those air sector services, such as airports and airlines, are there for Canadians to be able to rely on after this pandemic.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the disproportionate economic impact that COVID-19 has had on women and their businesses. We quite simply cannot allow the wealth gap between men and women to grow during this pandemic.

What measures is the federal government taking to ensure that Canadian women will not bear the economic burden of this pandemic?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vimy for her work on behalf of businesswomen in her community.

Our government has taken concrete action to support businesswomen. We recently invested an additional \$15 million to help businesswomen get through the pandemic. I am referring to the women entrepreneurship strategy, which is a \$5-billion investment.

Supporting businesswomen in Quebec and across Canada is a priority for our government.

\* \* \*

[English]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in Oshawa, the Canadian Corps, the navy club, the 420 wing, the Polish Veterans' Association and other military service clubs support our local veterans, our local heroes, every single day. These service clubs play a

critical role in life after service for many of our great veterans and the future of these clubs will remain uncertain without support.

With all that the service clubs do for our service members and veterans, can they expect direct support from the government so they can continue their great work, yes or no?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern. It has always been my priority to provide support for organizations that do so much for veterans, and that is exactly why we included \$20 million in Bill C-4 to do just that.

I have worked for some of these groups over the years, but I also want to encourage Canadians to support the poppy programs, legions and other veterans organizations across the country. They are having difficulty throughout COVID. We all need to help, and our government will too.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week I met virtually with Royal Canadian Legion branches in my riding like Brooks, Strathmore, Taber and Standard. They told me they were in a desperate situation. They have lost their usual sources of funding and they may have to close permanently. They feel like they have been left twisting in the wind by the government's promises.

The minister has mentioned \$20 million. When will it be allocated, when will it be available and when will it be distributed to these desperate legions in Canada and in my riding?

● (1505)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's concern too. Of course that is why it has always been a priority for me personally to make sure the organizations that work hard for veterans are helped. As I indicated previously, that is why we included the \$20 million in Bill C-4.

I have worked with these organizations. All I can do is make sure all my colleagues and Canadians across the country support these vitally important organizations that help the people who stood for our democracy around the world.

## MARIJUANA

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is an issue in my riding, and it is all across the country. Licences are being granted to grow marijuana in places that are not municipally zoned to grow. I have written the Minister of Health six times over the last nine months on this issue, as has the Town of Caledon. As a response, we have heard crickets: absolutely nothing.

There is a reasonable and simple fix for this: Do not approve applicants unless they have the appropriate municipal zoning. It could be a box on the form. When will the minister take this reasonable, simple fix and implement it?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, Health Canada works very closely with applicants and with the jurisdictions in which they apply to make sure that we understand that they will be upholding their responsibilities as applicants. As the member opposite knows, I communicate on a regular basis with many of our colleagues about applicants who are applying to Health Canada, and will continue to do so.

If the member opposite would like to forward me the name of the particular company in question, I would be happy to take a look at it.

\* \* \*

## HOUSING

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for those experiencing homelessness, COVID-19 presents a particular danger. Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update the House about the rapid housing initiative and how it can help cities such as London? Would the minister also give specific examples of the types of projects that can be funded under the RHI?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for London North Centre for his tireless advocacy on behalf of his community.

Last week, we announced the \$1 billion rapid housing initiative, which will create 3,000 new affordable homes across the country. I am pleased to announce that, through the major cities stream, we will be sending \$7.5 million directly to the City of London to create new affordable homes for those in the greatest need. We will also fund excellent projects in communities like London and other parts of our great country for those in need. This is the national housing strategy at work.

\* \* \*

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the government only temporarily suspended student loan payments at the start of the pandemic, all pre-authorized payments were cancelled without any notice. This, in turn, caused thousands of loan payments to be marked as past due when payments resumed in October, resulting in unfair additional charges for interest in an already difficult time for Canadians.

## Oral Questions

How can the government justify taking money from students and graduates as a result of its mistake, causing even more mental and financial stress?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, one of the first approaches our government took was to make sure we were responding to all Canadians, including students. That is why we put forward a \$9 billion program to help students.

When it comes to this specific matter, I will be working closely with my colleague to ensure that we look into it and we will be able to respond to the member directly with any details. We want to ensure that students and youth have the resources and supports they need.

We are a government that will continue to focus on the health and safety of all Canadians because we know that, when it comes to COVID-19, we are not out of the woods yet. We will continue working hard on behalf of all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that strengthening the bilingual nature of our country depends on the vitality of communities where French is the minority language.

French gives Canada a competitive edge. The immigration strategy provides that 4.4% of French-speaking immigrants will be admitted to Canada outside Quebec as permanent residents by 2023.

Will the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell us whether that target will indeed ensure the vitality of an official language?

Is he confident that his government will meet this target despite the pandemic?

● (1510)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I am very proud of the work that our government has done to attract more immigration and French-speaking immigrants. Last week, I announced that the government would be awarding additional points to French-speaking and bilingual immigration candidates. That is progress, and this is good news not just for us, but for everyone.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—OFFICIAL APOLOGY FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

The House resumed from October 29 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Beloeil—Chambly relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1550)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

*(Division No. 17)***YEAS**

## Members

Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Bérubé	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boudrias
Boulerice	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Chabot
Champoux	Charbonneau
Collins	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Duvall
Fortin	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gill	Green
Harris	Hughes
Johns	Julian
Kwan	Larouche
Lemire	MacGregor
Manly	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McPherson	Michaud
Normandin	Paupé
Perron	Plamondon
Savard-Tremblay	Simard
Singh	Ste-Marie
Thériault	Therrien
Trudel	Vignola— 56

**NAYS**

## Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barlow	Barrett
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bessette
Bezan	Bibeau

Bittle	Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Blois	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Calkins
Carrie	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cormier	Cumming
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gladu
Godin	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Harder
Hardie	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jaczek
Jansen	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelloway	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Martel
May (Cambridge)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miller	Monsef
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Morrissey



Motz  
Nater  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Patzner  
Petitpas Taylor  
Powlowski  
Ratansi  
Redekopp  
Reid  
Richards  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Ruff  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
Sajjan  
Sangha  
Saroya  
Scheer  
Schmale  
Seeback  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Shin  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simms  
Sorbara  
Spengemann  
Steinley  
Stubbs  
Tabbara  
Tochor  
Uppal  
van Koeverden  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Vidal  
Vis  
Webber  
Wilkinson  
Wilson-Raybould  
Yip  
Yurdiga  
Zann  
Zuberi— 263

Murray  
Ng  
Oliphant  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Poilievre  
Qualtrough  
Rayes  
Regan  
Rempel Garner  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Rood  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
Saini  
Samson  
Sara  
Scarpaleggia  
Schieffe  
Schulte  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Shields  
Shipley  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sloan  
Soroka  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Tassi  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Van Popta  
Vandenbeld  
Vecchio  
Virani  
Waugh  
Weiler  
Williamson  
Wong  
Young  
Zahid  
Zimmer

### PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

[English]

### BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed from October 30 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 Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-5.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I think you will find enthusiasm and unanimity to apply the result of the previous vote to this vote with Liberal members voting in favour.

### Business of Supply

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives agree to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will vote in favour of the motion.

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP members agree to apply the vote and will be voting for the motion.

• (1555)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands agrees to apply and will be voting yes.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Mr. Speaker, I vote for the motion.

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply and I will be voting yes.

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould:** Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and I will be voting yes.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I abstained from the last vote, but I am very pleased to vote for this motion.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I similarly abstained on the previous vote, but I vote in favour of this motion.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Mr. Speaker, I abstained from the previous vote, but I will vote in favour of this motion.

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 18)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Besette
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Blois	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe

*Business of Supply*

Calkins	Cannings	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Carrie	Casey	McColeman	McCrimmon
Chabot	Chagger	McDonald	McGuinty
Champagne	Champoux	McKay	McKenna
Charbonneau	Chen	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
Chiu	Chong	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Collins	Cooper	McPherson	Melillo
Cormier	Cumming	Mendès	Medicino
Dabrusin	Dalton	Michaud	Miller
Damoff	Dancho	Monsef	Moore
Davidson	Davies	Morantz	Morrison
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Morrissey	Motz
Desbiens	Desilets	Murray	Nater
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Ng	Normandin
Diotte	Doherty	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dong	Dowdall	O'Regan	O'Toole
Dreeshen	Drouin	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Dubourg	Duclos	Pauzé	Perron
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall	Poilievre	Powlowski
Dzerowicz	Easter	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Rayes	Redekopp
Ellis	Epp	Regan	Reid
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Rempel Garner	Richards
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fergus	Fillmore	Rogers	Romanado
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Rood	Ruff
Finnigan	Fisher	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
Fonseca	Fortier	Saini	Sajjan
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Samson	Sangha
Fraser	Freeland	Sarai	Saroya
Fry	Gallant	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Garneau	Garrison	Scheer	Schiefke
Gaudreau	Gazan	Schmale	Schulte
Généreux	Genuis	Seeback	Serré
Gerretsen	Gill	Sgro	Shanahan
Gladu	Godin	Sheehan	Shields
Gould	Gourde	Shin	Shiplely
Gray	Green	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Simard	Simms
Hallan	Harder	Singh	Sloan
Hardie	Harris	Sorbara	Soroka
Hoback	Holland	Spengemann	Stanton
Housefather	Hughes	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hussen	Hutchings	Strahl	Stubbs
Iacono	Jaczek	Sweet	Tabbara
Jansen	Jeneroux	Tassi	Thériault
Johns	Joly	Therrien	Tochor
Jones	Jordan	Trudel	Turnbull
Jowhari	Julian	Uppal	Van Bynen
Kelloway	Kelly	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Kent	Khalid	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Khera	Kitchen	Vaughan	Vecchio
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Vidal	Vignola
Kram	Kurek	Virani	Vis
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Waugh	Webber
Kwan	Lake	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Lametti	Lamoureux	Wong	Yip
Larouche	Lattanzio	Young	Yurdiga
Lauzon	Lawrence	Zahid	Zann
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Zimmer	Zuberi— 322
Lehoux	Lemire		
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert		
Lloyd	Long	Nil	
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)		
MacGregor	MacKenzie		
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire	Nil	
Maloney	Manly		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
Masse	Mathysen		
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)		

NAYS

PAIRED

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### PETITIONS

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present e-petition 2764, signed by over 1,500 Canadians from all 10 provinces and the north. Initiated by the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition, the petition calls upon the House of Commons to pass a resolution for the Government of Canada to apologize for Canada's role in the enslavement of African people and their descendants; publicly acknowledge Black Canadians as a distinct people; recognize August 1 annually as emancipation day; and renew Canada's commitment to addressing the general effects of enslavement, segregation and systemic anti-Black racism.

The petitioners note that the United Nations has called for nations to acknowledge and apologize for the suffering and evils of the enslavement of African people and, as such, they urge the government, as do I, to take action.

• (1600)

#### OPIOIDS

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to table e-petition 2783, which was brought forward by constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The overdose crisis has been declared a public health emergency in British Columbia. This year, more people in B.C. have died of opioid drug poisoning than from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to declare a public health emergency because of overdose deaths in Canada; reframe the overdose crisis in Canada as a health issue rather than a criminal issue; take a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to the overdose crisis by addressing issues of addiction, poverty, housing, health care, racial discrimination, and economic inequality and instability; listen to and act on recommendations made by social workers, front-line workers, nurses, doctors, drug users and individuals directly involved in the drug-using community; end the wasteful and ineffective war on drugs; and decriminalize personal possession of all drugs in Canada and guarantee a safe supply of drugs in Canada.

#### FIREARMS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be presenting five petitions in the House today.

The first petition is with respect to the rights of law-abiding firearms owners, as well as the need to protect Canadians.

The petitioners highlight that virtually all gun crime in this country involves illegal guns, often guns that have been smuggled across the border. They believe the government's order in council banning firearms that are legally obtained and legally owned does not effectively respond to that concern.

### Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call on the government to reverse the order in council put in place on May 1 and replace it with measures that would effectively target illegal guns and gun smuggling.

#### PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with Bill C-7.

The petitioners are concerned with how Bill C-7 removes a number of safeguards associated with the euthanasia regime that are unrelated to the Truchon decision. They highlight the elimination of the 10-day reflection period, which introduces the possibility of someone requesting and receiving euthanasia on the same day.

The petitioners call for Bill C-7 not to pass or to be amended to remove those changes.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is with respect to the human rights situation of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. The petitioners call attention to the absolutely horrific abuses of Uighurs and call for the use of the Magnitsky act to target and sanction those responsible for these heinous crimes.

#### AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition deals with the circumstances of the Sikh and Hindu minorities in Afghanistan. It calls on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan. It also calls on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to highlight this issue with his Afghan counterpart.

#### HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fifth and final petition deals with Bill S-204. It is in support of this bill, which would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad and receive an organ for which there has been no consent. This petition seeks to respond to the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The bill is currently before the Senate.

I commend all of these petitions for the consideration of the House.

*Government Orders*

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present an electronic petition, e-2734, put together by my constituents and others. It acknowledges, which I think is common knowledge, that the level of police violence against indigenous people and people of colour is disproportionately larger than that against people who are not of colour and non-indigenous people, or, in other words, settler culture Canadians. The petitioners note that it is very hard to keep track of the data on how often police use force and excessive force against indigenous people and people of colour.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to create a disaggregated database that will keep track of the police's use of force, which we do not keep track of. They ask that it be disaggregated by race, ethnic background, culture and in other ways so that we are able to document, track and hopefully reverse the disproportionate use of force by police against indigenous people and people of colour.

\* \* \*

● (1605)

**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 Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CITIZENSHIP ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed, I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 45 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to continue my remarks on Bill C-8.

In the beginning of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's process, on June 11, 2008, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, made a historic and symbolic statement of apology to former students of residential schools, on behalf of the Government of Canada. On that day back in 2008, I would have been in the midst of finishing my grade 12 exams, excitedly preparing to graduate from high school. Little did I know that I would be revisiting the wise words of Canada's former prime minister in my very own speech on the House of Commons floor, albeit virtually, 12 and a half years later.

Given that today's debate centres on call to action number 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, I feel it is prudent to recognize and reaffirm some of the remarks of Canada's 22nd Prime Minister. He said:

Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child".

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

We are sorry

This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

On the apology, Senator Murray Sinclair said, "The apology was a momentous moment in the lives of the survivors...and the Aboriginal community and Canadians as well. It was a recognition of the wrongs of the past. The fact that what was done and intended to be done was unacceptable.... The apology was for [survivors of Residential Schools] finally a recognition that what they had been saying was right, it was finally a sense of validation about it."

The Conservatives believe that the fundamental obligation of the federal government is to improve the living conditions of aboriginal Canadians, including the Inuit, in terms of economic opportunity, health, education and community safety. Within that belief, the Conservative Party fully supports the treaty rights and process of reconciliation with indigenous people, as well as real action to support clean water, safe housing, education, access to health care and equitable economic opportunities. The Conservatives understand the power of treaties among Canada's body of laws, and we support the resolution of unfulfilled treaty obligations in the process of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people.

*Government Orders*

Historically, it was the government of former Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker that was responsible for passing legislation that granted first nations people the right to vote in Canada. Nearly 60 years later, our new Conservative leader made very clear his commitment to indigenous peoples during his campaign for the leadership of our party. Specifically, our leader pledged that should he become Canada's Prime Minister, his government "will contribute to reconciliation based on respect and the recognition that when Indigenous communities rise economically, all of Canada rises." He also said, "Improving the relationship between the government and Indigenous communities must be a top priority. The future of our country depends on successful reconciliation and meaningful trust-building."

Related to the oath of citizenship, the Conservatives have several guiding principles in our party's constitutional framework that support the basis for all of our policy positions. One of these guiding principles is "A belief in our constitutional monarchy, the institutions of Parliament and the democratic process". With that guiding principle, we are pledging our support to the monarch of Canada, Queen Elizabeth II, and the Westminster style of democracy that governs our great country. As a result, we support the words affirming our allegiance to the Queen and her heirs and successors in our country's oath of citizenship.

In the context of our discussion today, it should be noted that there were several attempts in the 1990s by Liberal MPs, including cabinet ministers, to do away with centuries of historical tradition and development of our customs in our oath of citizenship. Thankfully, none of those attempts were successful.

Further, the Liberals' record of reconciliation with indigenous peoples does not match their rhetoric during their time in government. During former prime minister Stephen Harper's tenure, the Liberals voted against legislation to improve divorce and separation rights on reserves for indigenous women. Three and a half years ago, our current Liberal Prime Minister said, "No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples", and that his government was "reviewing all federal laws and policies that concern Indigenous Peoples and making progress on the Calls to Action outlined in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission."

• (1610)

However, in the five years since the Liberals formed government, if Bill C-8 passes into law, it will represent only the sixth call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fulfilled by the Prime Minister, and only the 10th overall in Canada. Although symbolic gestures such as changing the oath of citizenship are important, an argument could be made that with this bill the Liberals are showing Canadians that they are choosing to focus on low-hanging fruit and avoiding the calls to action that may be more challenging to implement.

Moreover, the pandemic aside, 2020 has been a dismal year for the Liberal government's relationship with indigenous peoples. This year, 2020, began with an eruption across the country over the Coastal GasLink pipeline. Canadians experienced obstructive rail blockades that severely disrupted the flow of goods and people across our country. These events revealed cracks in the Liberal gov-

ernment's ability to mediate and support the economic development and success of indigenous peoples.

This weak approach has been witnessed more recently during the fisheries crisis in Nova Scotia, which has seen violent protests erupt between commercial fish harvesters and first nations. The safety of all Canadians must be the government's top priority. It is clear that the Prime Minister and his government have failed to lead and take the necessary action to prevent this eruption, nor have they taken the long-overdue mediation steps or ordered the RCMP to support the community in order to keep all Nova Scotians safe, to the best of their ability, in their communities and to peacefully resolve the situation.

In conclusion, Conservatives strongly and proudly support Canada's traditions and institutions developed over centuries in our Westminster-style democracy. We also recognize the importance of the symbolism that represents our unique Canadian culture, which includes the symbolic gesture of the proposed amendment to the oath of citizenship. If passed into law, the new oath of citizenship would elevate and promote indigenous rights, including treaty rights, as well as the inherent dignity of indigenous peoples, a dignity that for so long was denied.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Kildonan—St. Paul emphasized some of the other concrete actions we need to take to help support indigenous communities and the everyday lives of indigenous people, beyond the scope of this proposal. I am wondering if she could expand more on that and speak about some of the further actions the government must take in order to make true and meaningful reconciliation a reality.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, there is a lot more the government can do. It also involves encouraging Canadians across the spectrum to learn more about indigenous history and the legacy left by residential schools, as per the leadership of former prime minister Stephen Harper. I also think all of the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be studied and implemented accordingly as per the findings of the TRC.

**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.):** Madam Speaker, I am inclined to disagree with the member when she tries to play down the importance this government has placed on truth and reconciliation, as it has, over the last number of years, very progressively moved forward on a number of fronts, whether it is language, talking about the statutory holiday the other day or talking about citizenship today. There are a number of calls to action.

I am very familiar with the apology provided by Prime Minister Harper. It was very much appreciated, but the general consensus today is that it means a whole lot more not only to receive the apology but to see things flow out of the apology, something this government has actually been delivering, such as, for example, the advisories for water.

I am wondering if the member would like to revisit some of her thoughts.

*Government Orders*

• (1615)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, I will remind the member for Winnipeg North that it was, in fact, Prime Minister Harper who commissioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, so in fact Conservatives have a great record of acting on the need to move forward on indigenous rights. I will also bring to the House's attention the five that his government has thus far implemented. They involved, as he mentioned, sports and support for the North American Indigenous Games, which are both very important; federal support for the TRC, which is also very important; the missing and murdered indigenous women inquiry; and the federal acknowledgment of indigenous language rights.

That is five out of 94, and I will bring the member's attention to number one of the calls to action, which is the legacy of child welfare. Since the member is from Manitoba, as I am, he will know that over 10,000 children are in care in Manitoba, more than anywhere else in the world, and 97% are indigenous. I would draw his attention as a governing MP to number one and number two in the calls to action.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I particularly appreciate the fact that the member expressed support on behalf of the Conservatives for the bill.

The member for Thornhill, speaking in the last round about the proposed citizenship oath amendments, said that if indigenous peoples continue the protest of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, they would lose support for such an amendment. This kind of statement is completely ignorant of the rights of indigenous peoples.

If the Conservatives support the recognition of the inherent rights of indigenous people, as is proposed in the bill, would they also support article 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples about free, prior and informed consent?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, the member for Thornhill was referring to the public outcry at the railway blockades, but also referring to the immense support from the Wet'suwet'en elected band council and some of their hereditary chiefs. For example, hereditary chief Helen Michelle mentioned, "A lot of the protestors are not even Wet'suwet'en" and "Our own people said 'go ahead'" with Coastal GasLink. Further, she said that they talked to the elders. They talked and talked, and they kept bringing them back. She said that they walked the very territory where Coastal GasLink was going and they were going to give it the go-ahead.

Further, Chief Larry Nooski of the Nadleh Whut'en said, "Coastal GasLink represents a once in a generation economic development opportunity for Nadleh Whut'en First Nation. We negotiated hard...to guarantee that Nadleh people, including youth, have the opportunity to benefit directly and indirectly from the project, while at the same time, ensuring that the land and the water is protected". I believe my colleague's response in his speech was regarding those comments.

Further, regarding UNDRIP, Conservatives are supportive of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. That path must be studied and furthered across all levels of government. I am eager to see what, if anything, the government puts forward as soon as possible. It has been four years since it said it would adopt it, yet no action has

been brought forward. Again, it is an area that needs study and I look forward to seeing that being studied.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She and I both sit on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. During the previous Parliament, her colleagues voted against the principle of Bill C-6, the previous version of Bill C-8.

Does she have a crystal ball that is telling her there will be some issues with the next stages of the bill, such as the clause-by-clause study in committee and the final vote, or is it telling her the way ahead is clearer for this bill than for the previous bill?

[*English*]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, the member was referring to Bill C-8, and I believe it was Bill C-6 in the last session. I am not sure, but I will speak to Bill C-8.

I am very much looking forward to this going to committee and being studied to ensure the wording is accurate and respectful. I mentioned this when I questioned the Minister of Immigration on his remarks earlier today about the use of the word "aboriginal" instead of "indigenous". I still have not received clarity from the minister as to why specifically the government decided to forgo that word, which was in the TRC recommendations, and use an older term that is no longer as socially acceptable, or at least that is what I was taught, that "indigenous" is more acceptable than "aboriginal".

I am not sure because I heard that from a grand chief in Manitoba and I want more clarity on that. Those are the types of things that need to be studied in committee that I wish to seek greater clarity on. I am very happy to support the bill as it is today, as well.

• (1620)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on similar comments in speaking about how important it is that this is sent to committee. It is important that parliamentarians are able to do the work we were sent here to do, such as examine legislation and make sure it is executed appropriately.

It is interesting that my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul mentioned consultation with chiefs in Manitoba. I have been doing similar things in Kenora. I have been speaking with the grand chiefs in my riding, as well as chiefs of local communities and residents in local communities, to get a sense of their thoughts on this proposal.

Can the member share some of the thoughts chiefs and community leaders in Manitoba have on this legislation?

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, I would like to mention several things. What I have heard from my consultations with indigenous leaders specifically in Manitoba is that when they travel abroad, for example, people do not know that indigenous peoples exist in Canada. Amending the citizenship oath to have mention of indigenous peoples and their treaty rights, as well as the Métis and the Inuit, would mean a lot to the indigenous community symbolically. It would say to newcomers that there are indigenous folks here, they are historical, they have dignity and we have respect for them. It would mean a lot in that symbolic sense.

Beyond that, some of the feedback I did get was what I acknowledged in my speech, that this is really great and important and that symbolic gestures are important for moving forward. However, there are a significant number of issues that first nations are facing. Today, the member for Kenora mentioned a reserve in his riding that does not have running water.

We know this is a rampant problem across Canada. We also know that suicide rates are extraordinarily and devastatingly high for first nations on reserves. I have seen and read about that firsthand in Manitoba. There are much greater issues the federal government is dragging its heels on and should focus on.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that, if the House will allow me, I wish to share my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will ask for only those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement, since unanimous consent is required.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Since there is no opposition, the hon. member has the unanimous consent of the House to share her time.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues. I am sure my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou will be pleased to be able to speak.

Today, I will be speaking to Bill C-8. Although part of my speech will focus on the substance of the bill, I would also like to talk a little bit about how the bill was introduced and debated, both during this Parliament and the previous one.

To begin, I will give a bit of not-so-ancient history about the government's desire to modify the oath of citizenship. This is not the first time that this bill has come before the House.

The changes to the citizenship oath, as set out in Bill C-8, were first introduced in Bill C-99 during the previous Parliament, the 42nd Parliament. That bill was introduced on May 28, 2019, shortly before the House closed down. Since Parliament was not set to come back until after the October 2019 election, it was reasonable to expect the bill to die on the Order Paper, which is exactly what happened.

Subsequently, a second version was introduced as Bill C-6 in the first session of the 43rd Parliament. Since the bill was being tabled at the start of the session this time, there was hope that it would not die on the Order Paper. As the ways of the House of Commons and the government are as impenetrable as prorogation is apparently inevitable, Bill C-6 died a premature death.

However, Bill C-6 did get one hour of debate. To ensure that it did not die in vain, I will provide a summary of the key points of said debate.

First, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship stated that in preparing the bill, his department had consulted the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, an organization that represents indigenous parties in Canada that are signatories to the 24 modern treaties. These consultations had begun in 2016.

Second, to justify the fact that the wording of the oath in the bill was different from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, the minister said that the parties consulted did not agree on wording. The department therefore chose to go with wording that better reflected the experience of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Lastly, the minister clearly stated the intent of the bill, saying:

The purpose of this bill is twofold. First, our goal is to ensure that new Canadians recognize indigenous peoples' significant contributions to Canada. The government is also reaffirming its commitment to reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples.

Based on how the bill has been managed over time, I do not think the government is in much of a rush to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The consultations with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples began in 2016, so it is a little surprising that the government did not introduce the first version of this bill for first reading until May 2019 and that it chose to do so at the end of the Parliament.

Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report was tabled in June 2015, little has been done so far. Just 10 of the 94 calls to action have been implemented. It makes us wonder how willing the government is to take action on this matter. To ensure that the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report is not just a cosmetic exercise, we must remember that even though every call to action is necessary, each individual call is not enough if it is implemented on its own.

*Government Orders*

If this is not due to a lack of haste and willingness on the government's part, we at least have to question the government's efficiency. For instance, why not graft the amendment of the oath of allegiance onto Bill C-5 regarding a national day for truth and reconciliation, the bill we just debated and passed at second reading earlier today?

• (1625)

Why did the government not propose amending the oath of allegiance in the 42nd Parliament, as part of Bill C-6, which also amended the Citizenship Act?

If a separate bill is required to implement each of the remaining calls to action, then we have a long way to go. We have every right to ask ourselves the following question: By addressing each call to action through a separate piece of legislation, in addition to rehashing them, is that also the government's way of trying to cover up the fact that its legislative agenda is pretty meagre, to say the least?

In short, either the government is not being very convincing when it says that first nations issues are a priority, or it is being not terribly effective or deliberately ineffective in order to hide another defect, that is, its legislative laziness.

That concludes the editorial part of my speech, and I will now turn to the substance of the bill.

It should come as no surprise that the Bloc plans to vote in favour of the bill. The Bloc Québécois has already made it very clear that we want to be an ally to first nations. In that regard, it is only natural that we support the implementation of one of the recommendations from the report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

As I already mentioned, even though each individual call is not enough when implemented on its own, every call to action is necessary, and I intend to vote in favour of a bill to implement this one.

Amending the oath of citizenship to include a promise to recognize the rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is a step in the right direction toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples. First nations peoples are absolutely right to ask for a reference to indigenous rights in the oath.

Obviously, the Bloc Québécois supports a nation-to-nation approach. That is the approach that Quebec will take when it declares independence. Indigenous peoples will be equal founding peoples with us when we create the new country of Quebec.

In the meantime, we hope that this new version of the oath will raise newcomers' awareness of the reality of first nations and their history, but also their new country's shameful treatment of first nations in the past. This is an opportunity to open a dialogue between newcomers and first nations. They will be able to speak to each other as equal citizens so newcomers can learn more about not only the history of first nations, but also their contribution to society.

To prevent history from repeating itself, as it sometimes tends to do, we hope this knowledge of the past will better prepare us for the future.

I personally hope the government will ramp up its reconciliation efforts. If it does, it can count on the Bloc Québécois' steadfast support.

• (1630)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that my colleague from the Bloc talked about the government's legislative laziness. Five years after it committed to implementing the 94 calls to action, this bill would add 19 words to a citizenship oath. It is an important bill, but it is a very uncomplicated bill. If it takes six years to implement one reasonably easy call to action, what does she foresee in the future for the remaining 84-plus?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

She echoed the concern I mentioned in my speech. Those actions need to be taken, but I think the actions that the government has chosen to take indicate laziness or a lack of leadership on this issue.

The proposed bill practically copies and pastes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's recommendation. Steps were taken in 2016 to improve it and reach a consensus. Four years on, we finally have a bill made up of a preamble and two clauses. I am concerned that it might be more complicated to implement.

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, putting aside the controversy that the Conservatives tried to manufacture around changing the citizenship oath in the last term, which held things up, my question for the member of the Bloc is very simple.

The member identified the systemic way in which indigenous people have been discriminated against in Canada, which, of course, includes Quebec, yet at the same time the member is part of a party that refuses to acknowledge that there is systemic discrimination and systemic racism at play in Quebec.

How can indigenous people across the country claim that there is systemic discrimination and systemic racism in the way in which they are treated, and yet somehow be exempt from that analysis when in the province of Quebec? Surely they must be subjected to exactly the same sort of racism in that province as they are right across the country. They especially are when you talk to them about it, but some in the Bloc Québécois say that it does not exist in Quebec.



• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the Bloc Québécois was rather clear on the issue of systemic racism well before it became almost popular to talk about it.

During the Wet'suwet'en crisis, we condemned systemic racism. I will never believe that we said that, on this issue, Quebec was unique and systemic racism did not exist.

We said that it does exist. It seems that we must repeat it. Therefore, I will say it again: The Bloc Québécois recognized that systemic racism exists.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague made some observations about the slow pace of the implementation of the 94 calls to action and frustration at that slow pace. It is a frustration that I certainly share. The challenge is that it leaves some of the most significant reforms to systems and services yet to be implemented. I am wondering if she could tell me, of those remaining 84 calls to action, which significant ones she feels should be prioritized by the government.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Speaker, I do not claim to be the government, but one thing that I really feel strongly about is the recognition and integration of indigenous laws in the justice system.

In my life, I have had the pleasure of doing some work in the field of prison law and representing indigenous people who were incarcerated. I also had the opportunity to take training on the prison system, the Gladue reports and the possibility of having mixed courts in Canada, like they do in other countries.

In a mixed court system, the administration of criminal justice would mainly be the federal government's responsibility, but there would also be a sort of hybrid jurisdiction, where, for example, the sentences handed down by decision-making circles, by the communities themselves, would also be recognized. That would prevent the imposition of sentences that are completely out of touch with the reality of first nations. It would also prevent situations where individuals are taken from an Inuit community, for example, imprisoned far from home and then relegated to living on the street because they are not sent back to their community when they are released. That is one thing I would like to see covered.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing her time with me and giving me this opportunity to debate Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act with regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, which was introduced by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

The bill amends the Citizenship Act to include, in the oath or affirmation of citizenship, a solemn promise to respect the aboriginal or treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, in order to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94.

### *Government Orders*

My colleague already said the things I am about to say, but sometimes this government needs to hear things more than once. With respect to this bill, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said that, beginning in 2016, his department consulted the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, which represents indigenous signatories to Canada's 24 modern treaties.

As we can see, the wording of the oath in the bill is different from that suggested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The minister's reason for this is that the stakeholders did not agree on the wording and therefore the minister chose a text that better reflected, from the government's standpoint, the experience of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

This is another good example of the government thinking that it knows better than first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. This has been the approach of successive Liberal and Conservative governments over the years. They give out money. They offer programs to first nations and other groups and then dictate what they should do with it. The federal government always thinks that it knows best, it knows everything and it is the best. It thinks it knows the needs of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples better than they do. It thinks it knows their values and customs, but it is wrong every time. We need only think of residential schools, a sad chapter in Canadian history.

On the other hand, I am not surprised. Does this not remind members of something else? We saw the same sort of thing recently with the health transfers for the provinces. The Liberal government thinks it knows the needs of Quebec better than Quebec itself and is trying to tell Quebec how the money should be spent. I think that is basically a joke.

The Prime Minister did not listen when all the provinces called for an immediate, permanent increase in health transfers with no strings attached. Instead, he is persisting with his harmful obsession to interfere and decide how Quebec should spend its own money and with his idea of Canadian standards in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction.

The federal government needs to give Quebec the health transfers it needs to deal with the worst health crisis of the century without any strings attached. I want to emphasize that. Cuts to health transfers in the midst of a public health crisis make the situation worse and increase needs. Health transfers are essential. It is a matter of good management by the provinces for better quality of care and services.

This is the government's third attempt to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94. The ideas in Bill C-8 first surfaced in Bill C-99, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, in the 42nd Parliament. That bill was introduced on May 28, 2019 but never got past first reading. In the parliamentary session before this one, the Liberal government introduced bill C-6, which got just one hour of debate before dying on the Order Paper when Parliament prorogued.

*Government Orders*

That was done to silence parliamentarians and prevent them from getting to the bottom of the WE Charity scandal, an abuse of power on the part of the government as well as an ethical violation. WE Charity paid the Trudeau family, and the government gave WE Charity the contract for the Canada student service grant. What a way to manage things.

• (1640)

We hope the third time will be the charm, considering how long it is taking the Liberals to implement the recommendations of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

To date, only nine of the 94 calls to action have been acted upon, and this is the 10th. Fortunately, reconciliation with indigenous peoples is a priority for this government. Imagine what would happen if that were not the case.

To prepare to become Canadian citizens, all immigrants to Canada study a guide called “Discover Canada”. The guide ignores the fact that indigenous peoples are a source of law for Canada and states that the Canadian tradition of ordered liberty can be traced back to England, and not at all to the indigenous peoples of Canada who welcomed European explorers, helped them survive in this climate, guided them across the country and signed treaties with them to share their territories with the newcomers from Europe.

Call to action number 94 of the report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states:

We call upon the Government of Canada to replace the Oath of Citizenship with the following:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

As I was saying earlier, the wording we find in the bill we are debating today differs from call to action number 94. The government opted for the following wording:

I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Passage of Bill C-8 would also make a change to the current affirmation and replace the following:

I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

It will be replaced with the following wording:

I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-8 because we pledged to be an ally of first nations. This bill is a step toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples. The established relationship of inequality has stripped indigenous people of the means to control their own destiny and fostered distrust for public services and the government.

What is more, the bill responds to call to action number 94 from the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. It is important to note that, of the 94 calls to action, 10 have been completed since last September.

This bill would make newcomers to Canada aware of the reality of first nations and the constitutional nature of their rights when they become citizens. It would also spark a dialogue between newcomers and indigenous peoples on the history of the first nations.

For those reasons, we will vote in favour of Bill C-8.

• (1645)

[*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.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the Bloc will be supporting this bill. For many reasons, the bill is worthy of support from all members of the House, and I am encouraged to hear the support that is there.

I often hear members talking about the calls to action, with which I am somewhat familiar. I have stood on numerous occasions to talk about them. Members need to realize that, of the 96 calls, not all are for the federal government. The member said there are 96 calls and 10 have been responded to, but only 70-plus are under the federal government’s jurisdiction. Many of those calls involve the federal government working with other levels of government and other stakeholders.

Would the member not agree that it is important that we continue to work with other jurisdictions to respond to some of the calls that we are not solely responsible for and that, in fact, a number of calls to action have been acted upon by the government in good faith?

I appreciate the support that is coming from the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

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

He knows full well that decisions must be made by the government. We can work as hard as we want with the communities and provide support, but it is the government in office that decides what to do with indigenous communities.

The government moves at a snail’s pace. If the process keeps going like this, it will take 38 years to implement the 94 calls to action. We are asking the government to support this bill, which eventually will be a big step forward for indigenous communities.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct to say that it has taken the government five years to get us to this stage in the implementation of this important recommendation from the TRC. The reality remains that the government has been slow, at best, in moving this forward. The missing and murdered indigenous women calls for justice have been shelved indefinitely, and the government claims it is because of COVID-19.

I wonder what the member's thoughts are with respect to that and the delay in moving forward on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

My colleagues will know that the situation my colleague just mentioned occurred in Val-d'Or in my riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, during reconciliation, but nothing was done. I was there and I thought to myself that something was finally happening, that we would do something with our communities and we would help them, but that is all still gathering dust.

After years of testimony about the suffering endured by the witnesses, I find it regrettable that we are not taking action or developing an action plan to address existing needs.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

I would like to know how the indigenous communities in her region see this bill. How is it perceived? Do they see hope in this new version of the legislation?

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Communities in my riding and elsewhere have been waiting for this legislation. I often have conversations with community leaders, and they truly anticipate major progress that will meet their needs. These women need us.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Telecommunications; the hon. member for Regina—Wascana, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Kenora, Economic Development.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak in support of Bill C-8 on behalf of the NDP.

The NDP has consistently called for the full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. In fact, I tabled an amendment to revise the citizenship oath to recognize and affirm the aboriginal and treaty rights of the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in a previous immigration bill, Bill C-6, back in 2016. Sadly, that amendment was not accepted.

### *Government Orders*

Even though this change was in the former minister's 2017 mandate letter, the Liberals failed to act until the dying days of the last Parliament, just before the 2019 election. As a result, the bill did not even make it to second reading.

The Prime Minister has claimed that the new relationship with indigenous peoples is his most important relationship, yet it has taken the minister three years to act on this priority from his mandate letter. I ask the members to think about it. It is astonishing that it has taken this long for the Liberals to act. There is simply no good reason for this not to be accomplished already.

The Liberals have missed the opportunity to ensure that the many new citizens who took their oaths since 2017 began their journey as Canadian citizens with a full understanding of our collective obligation to honour the rights of indigenous peoples. If it takes the Liberals this long to add a line to the citizenship oath, is it any wonder they are failing on their nation-to-nation relationships with indigenous peoples on so many levels?

In 2017, when the Prime Minister declared, “No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples”, all of Canada was hopeful. Perhaps we would finally be able to work on redressing this country's historical wrongs and heal the trauma caused by Canada's colonial history. Perhaps we would finally be on the right side of history and move forward with a new relationship that puts the rights of indigenous peoples front and centre. Sadly, the actions of the Prime Minister indicate otherwise.

All we have to do is take a good hard look at the lived experiences of indigenous peoples to know that Canada has failed and is continuing to fail to meet its obligations to indigenous peoples. Look at what is happening with indigenous children. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found Canada guilty of “wilful and reckless” racial discrimination by knowingly underfunding on-reserve child welfare services.

Why did it take 10 non-compliance orders against the federal government to force it to act? Why did Dr. Cindy Blackstock have to fight for so long and so relentlessly for the government to treat indigenous children fairly and equitably? Why is it that the basic human rights for indigenous peoples are so hard to honour for the Liberal government, and for the Conservative government before it? It is truly hard to comprehend.

Successive governments' foot-dragging in meaningful implementation and in upholding indigenous rights has had devastating impacts on the lives of indigenous communities across the land for generations, from the young to the old and all of those in between. We see the effect of this in our communities every single day. It is in the violence currently being committed against the Mi'kmaq fishers.

*Government Orders*

As stated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they have the right to self-determination. This right was enshrined in the peace and friendship treaties and upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999 by the Marshall decision. The Marshall decision affirmed their treaty rights to hunt, fish and gather in pursuit of a “moderate livelihood” 20 years ago, yet successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have failed to negotiate with indigenous communities to define “moderate livelihood” and pave a path for indigenous fishers to fully exercise their rights, rights which are enshrined in Canada’s Constitution.

• (1655)

How is this possible? Would anyone think, even for a minute, that, if this were a Supreme Court ruling for non-indigenous peoples, it would take more than two decades for the government to act? As a result of the inaction, the Mi’kmaq fishers are faced with violence, intimidation and domestic terrorism. Crimes were committed against them. People were injured, and they have suffered property damage.

Two weeks ago, the Liberal ministers agreed with the NDP that this warranted an emergency debate in the House of Commons, yet during the debate Liberal members voted against the NDP’s unanimous consent motion to affirm the inherent rights of the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet people. The Liberals have refused to confirm their rights, which are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and by the Supreme Court of Canada. They refuse to recognize that the Mi’kmaq nation deserves full and equal protection under the law from violence, intimidation and domestic terrorism.

Now, according to media reports, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq Chiefs is alleging that the DFO is planning to seize the gear and traps of the Mi’kmaq fishers. Do the Liberals really think this is reconciliation? It is utterly shameful.

The Liberal government must stop making a mockery of the meaning behind this bill and act with integrity by taking real action to affirm the rights of all indigenous peoples. The Prime Minister must also pause and reflect on the message he is sending to young indigenous peoples when they witness the blatant inaction of the RCMP when it comes to ensuring the Mi’kmaq nation is afforded the same protection as everyone else.

This situation is more disturbing when compared to the situation of the Wet’suwet’en land defenders, where an ample number of heavily armed RCMP officers surrounded them as they attempted to assert their rights against the Coastal GasLink pipeline. It was truly shocking to learn that the RCMP officers were instructed to “use as much violence toward the gate as you want.”

It is as though the 1997 landmark decision, in which the Supreme Court of Canada found that the rights of the Wet’suwet’en nation had not been extinguished, did not exist. The Liberals are pushing ahead with the Trans Mountain pipeline extension. The voices of the land defenders are being ignored. There is a total disregard for article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which explicitly outlines the need for the government to fully respect the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples when it comes to resource development on their land, including and especially when the answer is “no”.

When the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples are so blatant, how can the Liberals go on pretending that they are affirming the rights of indigenous peoples? Sadly, this kind of injustice is not new, nor is this kind of doublespeak.

My questions for the Prime Minister are these: What will it take to stop the human rights violations against indigenous peoples? What will it take for him to internalize the fact that the trauma of such human rights abuses is intergenerational?

My colleague, the member for North Island—Powell River, shared the very real lived experiences of her children as indigenous peoples. No parent should have to see their children suffer under the weight of such systemic racism. No parent should have to fear for the safety of their children because they are indigenous, yet this is their everyday reality.

My constituents, who continue to witness this ongoing abuse by the government, are saying that reconciliation is dead. They see an unprecedented number of indigenous children being taken away from their families through the child welfare system. They see police brutality being levied against indigenous peoples. They see racism permeating the health care system. They continue to see indigenous women and girls go missing.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls determined that colonial structures and policies, which persist in Canada, constitute a root cause of the violence experienced by indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ2IA people. This violence, the report concludes, amounts to a race-based genocide against indigenous peoples, especially women, girls and 2SLGBTQ2IA people.

• (1700)

To remedy this and put an end to this Canadian genocide, the final report of the national inquiry put forth 231 calls for justice. When the final report on the national inquiry was released, the federal government promised that a national action plan would be in place on the anniversary of the annual release.

Families, survivors and indigenous organizations have emphasized the need for an indigenous women-led national action plan to implement the 231 calls for justice. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse, the national action plan has been delayed indefinitely. The longer the government stalls, the longer people suffer.

For example, many of the calls for justice include addressing racism in health care settings and hospitals. The disturbing death of Joyce Echaquan, an indigenous mother of seven children, after experiencing racist and derogatory treatment from health care staff in a hospital, is a sharp reminder that it is inexcusable for the Liberal government to delay the implementation of the calls for justice.

*Government Orders*

While the government is using the pandemic as an excuse for inaction and delays, the community has been advocating for real concrete actions to improve the safety and well-being of indigenous women and girls on the ground for decades. These include access to safe and affordable housing, reforms to the child welfare system, reforms to the justice system and policing, improving health care access for indigenous people as well as providing core funding support for providers of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support in community services.

The pandemic is not an excuse to delay what should be a top priority for Canada. On the contrary, the pandemic is the reason to accelerate action. In fact, the pandemic has exposed many issues. Imagine what it is like to not have access to clean drinking water in a pandemic, yet the Liberal government has recently backtracked on its promise to end all drinking water advisories in indigenous communities by March 2021, which is only five months away.

Just last month, the Neskantaga First Nation's community was evacuated amidst a global pandemic after high levels of hydrocarbons were discovered in the water supply. While the government is using the pandemic as an excuse for the delays in fulfilling its promise, this situation was not caused by the pandemic. The community of the Neskantaga has been under a boil water advisory for 25 years. With the COVID-19 pandemic, access to safe water to meet hygiene needs is more important than ever. The pandemic should be a catalyst for urgent action rather than an excuse for delays. The health and safety of indigenous peoples matter. The lives of indigenous peoples matter.

Tied to the issue of clean drinking water is access to safe, secure affordable housing. Canada is struggling with a preventable affordable housing and homelessness crisis. The crisis impacts indigenous communities much more acutely due to the historic and ongoing displacement and systemic racism experienced by indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are 10 times more likely to become homeless than non-indigenous Canadians.

Indigenous communities in rural, urban and northern communities face some of the worst housing conditions in all of Canada. My colleague, the MP for Nunavut, went on a housing tour in her region. All the families she visited were living in overcrowded situations and all had serious problems with mould. Some homes were in such poor condition that beds were frozen to the wall.

Overcrowded homes and lack of housing means that many people are often forced to remain with abusers. Children are removed from their homes and families because there is no safe habitable housing available to families. As my colleague states, "Putting Inuit in situations where they are dying, getting sick or losing their kids because of inadequate housing is modern-day colonization."

• (1705)

Urban and rural indigenous communities also face unique and drastic housing challenges. My riding of Vancouver East is one of the hardest hit by Canada's ongoing homelessness crisis, a crisis that disproportionately affects indigenous peoples.

Of all the community members currently living in the Strathcona Park tents right now, it is estimated that 40% of the residents are of

indigenous ancestry, despite indigenous people only comprising 2.5% of the population of Metro Vancouver.

The lack of access to housing, a basic human right, is a root cause to the disproportionate number of indigenous children in care and removed from their families. It is a root cause of the violence experienced by indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people. It is stressful, trauma-inducing and injurious.

It is simply incredulous that the housing needs for urban, rural and northern indigenous peoples were completely ignored in the national housing strategy. Despite all the talk over the years, there is still no plan for a rural, urban and northern indigenous housing strategy led by indigenous people for indigenous people.

The amended citizenship oath affirms what should have been true all along; that recognizing and affirming indigenous and treaty rights is at the core of fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen. The government must act now to fulfill its own obligations to recognize and affirm indigenous and treaty rights.

While the amended Citizenship Act helps new Canadians better understand, we, at the same time, also have a crucial role to play in ensuring that Canada meets its obligation to indigenous peoples. It is treaties that give settler Canadians the privilege of living on indigenous lands and with that privilege comes the collective responsibility to commit ourselves to recognizing and affirming indigenous and treaty rights.

Justice Murray Sinclair summarized this obligation best, "Reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem—it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us." It is incumbent on the federal government to show that leadership every single step of the way. It is incumbent on the Liberal government to do better than what it has done so far.

Having only completed 10 calls for action is not good enough. Indigenous people should not have to continually wait for their rights to be honoured and for their basic human rights to be respected. Incremental reconciliation should not be the path forward. We need to see action and we need to see it now. We cannot allow for the pandemic to be that excuse. We need to accelerate the program and to move forward. Generations have been waiting for it. Indigenous peoples deserve better.

• (1710)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on the points that the government needs to do more in the days ahead. We know reconciliation is a pathway and we need to continue that work.

*Government Orders*

She highlighted the moderate livelihood in Nova Scotia. I am the member of Parliament from Nova Scotia and my colleague is from British Columbia. She mentioned the history of the moderate livelihood. She failed to mention the fact that governments have worked to try to ensure that commercial access is available to Mi'kmaq communities. She really zeroed in on the Marshall decision and the definition of a moderate livelihood.

In the member's mind, what is the definition of a moderate livelihood and should the minister responsible have any role in partnering to determine what that is?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, it is not for me to determine what is a moderate livelihood. It is for the government to negotiate with indigenous people and come to that resolution.

How has it possible that it has been 20 years in the making and we still have not honoured the Supreme Court's decision with respect to this? Surely, the government would realize that it has dropped the ball, not just the Liberals but the Conservatives as well.

We cannot say in the same breath that we honour the rights of indigenous people and support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but still allow for an outstanding Supreme Court decision to hang out without a path forward. This is not good enough.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her inspiring speech.

I would like her thoughts on the fact that the bill would include the existence of indigenous rights in the citizenship oath when we still have not implemented the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

What message does she think it sends to recognize these rights in the oath when we are still not on track to implement UNDRIP?

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, it is absolutely dismaying to me that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has not become law. It should be the blueprint for the Canadian government going forward with all our policies and laws, yet that is not the case.

Given the action of the Liberal government, it has demonstrated time and again that it has not put the basic human rights of indigenous peoples at the forefront. Why else would the Liberal government continue to challenge indigenous children in the courts? Why did it take Dr. Cindy Blackstock decades to get the governments to move forward on that? Why did the government not abide by the 10 compliance orders from the Human Rights Tribunal?

All of this tells us that the Liberals have not been focused on doing this work and they are not sincere with what they say to match up with what they actually do.

Going forward, it is essential for all of us to push the government to get the job done. Indigenous peoples, the first peoples of this

land, deserve to be recognized, honoured and respected, and their basic human rights must be honoured.

• (1715)

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague's comments were moving. I thank her for the advocacy she does to help those who are experiencing homelessness. I think all my colleagues in the House would recognize that the member for Vancouver East is the pre-eminent advocate and voice for those experiencing homelessness. I do really appreciate what she does.

The member was a sitting member in the last Parliament when NDP MP Romeo Saganash introduced a bill to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP. The work has been done, the bill has been written, yet the Liberals still have not gotten around to tabling it.

Like my colleague from the Bloc Québécois mentioned, we still have not seen UNDRIP become part of our legislation. Does the member feel that the Liberals are deliberately delaying the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her kind words.

The Liberals have been slow-walking in moving forward with UNDRIP. We saw that in the last Parliament. The government could have moved the bill on UNDRIP forward with a much quicker pace than was done. However, that did not happen and the bill died on the Order Paper. Now, in the new Parliament, we have yet to see the bill introduced. I do not know what the holdup is other than to there is a lack of political will from the government to move forward, to charge ahead so it can finally honour indigenous peoples with respect to their basic rights.

UNDRIP should be the blueprint for the government and for everyone going forward. There is simply no excuse why UNDRIP has not become law already.

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I am on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq, the People of the Dawn, in Nova Scotia.

I want to thank the hon. member for her impassioned speech, and I would agree with most of what she said. However, we have already said several times that, as a government, we plan to introduce UNDRIP before Christmas. I hope the member would support it when we do.

When we introduce the legislation, will the member support it?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, of course the NDP will support UNDRIP. In fact, it was a former NDP member, MP Romeo Saganash, who tabled that bill. He worked and dedicated his life in bringing it forward to the House.

*Government Orders*

The real question is this. Why is the Liberal government waiting until December or sometime before December to introduce it? Why not introduce now? Why not introduce it yesterday? How much longer do indigenous people have to wait for their rights to be honoured? How much longer do they have to wait to see the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples become law in Canada?

**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.):** Madam Speaker, I can appreciate some of the comments that the member has put on the record, but where I often have difficulty with some members of the New Democratic Party is that they often believe that we can click our heels, wave a wand and make things happen, just like that, overnight.

I think that we can take a look at the calls for action. There are 94 of them, of which 74 are of a federal nature. Many of those 74 require consultation with other levels of government, for example. I am wondering if the member believes that the Government of Canada has any obligation to work with others, in particular indigenous leaders, to try to resolve some of the other calls for action and that it is not solely the responsibility of the federal government.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, this is the problem, exactly, with the Liberals. They always think they can delay action. They always think that there is a reason and excuse why they cannot move forward. I think the member has to ask himself why the Liberal government continues to make indigenous people wait for their rights to be respected. Why does the Liberal government have to take indigenous children to court, when the government has to know it is wrong to treat them inequitably?

The government can move forward right now, with respect to article 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by absolutely acknowledging their right to free, prior and informed consent. It could, in fact, call off the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline to honour the rights of indigenous people right now, if it wanted to move forward.

• (1720)

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the Wet'suwet'en and the police action there. Was she aware that it was the B.C. NDP government that gave the RCMP their orders? Would she like to see that pipeline cancelled as well and put an end to the fracking and the LNG projects the NDP are pushing through Wet'suwet'en territory?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Speaker, I support the indigenous people and their rights. That is why I am here, and that is what I am fighting for. It is time for us to honour their rights.

**Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Labrador.

I would like to first acknowledge that the House of Commons where this debate is taking place today is on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

I am pleased to discuss the amendments to Canada's citizenship oath that our government is proposing to Parliament.

The history of first nations, Inuit and Métis is the very history of our country. Indigenous people in Canada are the descendants of

the original inhabitants of this land. There are three distinct groups that are recognized in Canada's Constitution: first nations, Inuit and Métis. Indigenous people in Canada are critical in our country's development and our future. Indigenous peoples are very diverse, with many distinct heritages, languages, cultures, practices and spiritual beliefs. Reconciliation with indigenous people remains a central priority of this government, and we will continue to move forward as a committed partner in renewing our relationship with indigenous peoples.

It is important to acknowledge the contributions that indigenous people have continued to make in building a stronger and more inclusive Canada. With strong indigenous institutions, we will begin the important work of closing the socio-economic gap and fostering strong indigenous communities for future generations. All Canadians are responsible for participating in the ongoing process of reconciliation. This brings us to the changes the government has proposed, to change the current wording of the oath of citizenship.

Through these proposals, our government is addressing one of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action that pertains to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's mandate. Call to action 94 calls on the government to amend the oath of citizenship and to add reference to include treaties with indigenous peoples. Our consultation with national indigenous organizations clearly indicated that the phrase "treaties with indigenous peoples", as recommended by the commission, is not relevant to all indigenous peoples and therefore not inclusive of varied indigenous experiences.

The amendment of the oath in this bill expands the commission's wording to be more inclusive of varied indigenous experiences. This responds to what we heard in the consultations and reflects the spirit of this particular call to action. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has consulted with other government departments and national indigenous organizations on the wording of the oath of citizenship. Therefore, to address the commission's calls to action as well as the commitment made in the 2019 Speech from the Throne, the bill would modify the wording of the oath of citizenship as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

*Government Orders*

The revised text of the oath uses wording that reflects the broad range of rights held by diverse indigenous people. Any change to the oath of citizenship requires amendments to the Citizenship Act and is subject to the parliamentary process. As the minister has often noted, the government is committed to completing legislative work on the changes that reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. This explains the changes we proposed today.

Let me close with these thoughts for my hon. colleagues to consider. The histories of the indigenous peoples in Canada are rich and diverse. They stretch far into the past since time immemorial, before oral and written history. I would impress on my hon. colleagues that we need to take this opportunity to both acknowledge our country's past and to move toward a renewed relationship with the indigenous peoples based on the inherent rights, respect and partnership.

• (1725)

The changes to the citizenship oath would be an important step in this pursuit. Through this and other actions, all Canadians can continue to move forward together on the road to reconciliation so we can leave a proper legacy for our future generations.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when we are talking about reconciliation, it is important to talk about all aspects of it and mention some of the things the Liberal government has failed to do. The government has taken some positive steps, which I will acknowledge. All parties have taken some positive steps, and they have all had some missteps and frankly some failures on this file.

Today, earlier in the House, I brought up an issue from my riding with regard to the Neskantaga First Nation. The community is being evacuated because it has no access to water right now and has been on a drinking water advisory for decades. Instead of addressing the situation, the government is choosing to play politics, point fingers and talk about past governments and how much better it believes it is than Stephen Harper, Mulroney, Diefenbaker and Macdonald. The government is doing this instead of taking action right now and recognizing it is the one in power that can address a lot of these concerns.

I am wondering if the member can speak to that and tell us when the government is going to stop playing politics with these issues and is going to take meaningful action in reconciliation.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Madam Speaker, I heard many times during question period and other occasions where, for example, the Minister of Indigenous Services responded by saying that the government is looking into this problem or that it is working to make sure the advisory ends as quickly as possible.

We are putting all the resources in place to support Canada's indigenous communities. I welcome the question, will certainly bring this up, and I look forward to more action from this side.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, one of the issues we heard about today and that is certainly talked about from this side of the House is the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The government, again, has talked about its relationship-to-relationship im-

portance but has shelved this report. It has taken no action. It has provided no action plan.

I would like to hear from the hon. member when we can expect to hear about a missing and murdered indigenous women and girls action plan.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Madam Speaker, as a parent, I can only imagine what a horrific experience it would be for anyone who was affected in this situation. As a former member of the provincial legislature, it was an issue I participated in debates on, as well as pushed more action on.

I agree with the member. This is an important issue facing Canadians, and we have to pull together all the resources and work together to come to a good solution.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech.

When it comes to the indigenous file, I have the impression that the Liberal government tends to take symbolic rather than concrete action. It often drags its feet when it is time to take concrete action. Examples that come to mind are the Wet'suwet'en crisis and the drinking water crisis that is still affecting so many indigenous communities in this country. Apologizing is not always easy, but it is not difficult as long as it does not tarnish the history of the Liberal Party too much.

Does my colleague think it might be time to act faster and dedicate more time to all the recommendations, rather than dealing with them one by one and choosing only those that are more symbolic than concrete?

[*English*]

**Mr. Han Dong:** Madam Speaker, what we are discussing today is a proposed amendment to the oath of citizenship. I was just reading the proposed oath of citizenship, and it still gives me the chills, just as it did 20-plus years ago when I first became a new Canadian.

It is very important for new Canadians to not just understand but also remember what they read, to do so under the witness of fellow new Canadians and judges, and to recognize what it means to them as new Canadians. This is an essential step we have to take so that new Canadians can appreciate the contributions of indigenous peoples.

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today. I would like to acknowledge that the House of Commons, where this debate is based today, is on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation. I am speaking today from my riding of Labrador, which is the traditional homeland of Inuit and Innu. We are very proud of the culture that we share together in this big land.



*Government Orders*

The story of indigenous peoples in Canada is a history that stretches far into the past, before the arrival of the European newcomers to Canada. Indigenous peoples have a fundamental role in Canada's past and are a strong pillar of our society. Those are words people hear at many citizenship ceremonies across Canada. Taking the oath of citizenship is a vital step in the process of becoming a Canadian citizen, and it is recited as the final legal step to becoming a Canadian citizen, which is important to note.

During the ceremony, participants accept the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by taking the oath of citizenship, after which they become Canadian citizens and receive a certificate to mark that particular designation. It is important for both new Canadians and those who are born here to learn about indigenous people and the rich history of indigenous culture. This legislation, an act to amend the citizenship act, proposes to change Canada's oath of citizenship to include clear reference to the constitution, which recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

The proposed amendment to the oath reflects the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. It is part of the government's ongoing response to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Of the 96 calls to action, 70 are within the Government of Canada's purview. We are working very hard to deliver on those recommendations because we believe that it is the right path and it is the true path to reconciliation.

The changes are an important and necessary step to advance Canada's broader agenda for reconciliation and to strengthen the country's valued relationship with indigenous peoples. The government's proposed amendment to the Citizenship Act would allow new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect how indigenous peoples are a critical part of our country's history and our country's identity. The new citizenship oath will also reflect our expectations that new Canadians demonstrate an understanding of indigenous peoples and their constitutional rights.

Canada must continue to stand up for the values that define this country, whether that is welcoming newcomers, celebrating our LGBTQ2 communities or embracing our two official languages.

Put simply, the walk toward reconciliation includes the need to address systemic racism in Canada. No relationship is more important to our government than the one with indigenous peoples, and we continue to forge a renewed relationship with them based on the recognition of rights, trust, respect and a true spirit of co-operation. That is why across the country we have worked together to close the quality of life gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people. We have made important progress on this. The last three budgets alone provided \$16.8 billion in new funding for indigenous peoples, an increase in planned spending for 2021 of 34% over what was budgeted in 2015.

All children in Canada deserve a real and fair chance to reach their full potential, no matter where they live. By continuing to collaborate with first nations and with Inuit partners, the government is working to eliminate barriers to quality health care and to foster the culturally relevant, social supports that children need in order to

succeed. Bill C-92 helped reform the indigenous child care and child welfare in this country. We know from our co-operation with indigenous governments, from learning from them and taking their advice that we can lead in a better direction for all indigenous people.

• (1735)

When we look at distinctions-based funding for post-secondary education, we know it is helping first nations, Inuit and Métis students access better education and succeed in their studies. We have seen it over and over again.

In addition, the government has taken action to help communities reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen indigenous languages and to sustain their important cultural traditions and histories. By promoting indigenous entrepreneurship and business, the government will help first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It will help them fully contribute to and share in Canada's economic success. This is a critical part of advancing reconciliation and self-determination.

While the path to reconciliation is long and we know it is challenging and will often be met with difficulty in different aspects, as a government, we will continue to walk that path with all first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and with all Canadians. We will do so in our actions and interactions.

As I mentioned earlier, the proposed changes to the oath that we are talking about today are an important and necessary step to advance Canada's broader agenda for reconciliation with indigenous people in this country. These changes demonstrate to new Canadians and, in fact, all Canadians a deep respect for indigenous peoples, and they recognize that the histories of first nations, Inuit and Métis people are a vital part of Canada's fabric and identity.

Since Liberals became government in 2015, we have invested more money historically than any government before us to address the significant challenges that have faced indigenous peoples in Canada. We are very proud of the reform that we have done around the child welfare act. We are very happy with the progress that we have been able to make in so many different indigenous communities across Canada.

We were the first government to commit to addressing the issues of clean water, housing and so many other pieces of important infrastructure, where we knew there were huge gaps. However, we did not do it alone. We did it with the support, guidance and input of indigenous governments through the Crown-Inuit partnership table and through the partnership tables with first nations and Métis. We heard first-hand from national leaders, band councils and heads of governments in indigenous communities what was important to them, what they wanted from government and how we should move forward in partnership with them.

*Government Orders*

Out of that, we have seen a lot of investments that were directly needed, important and critical at the time, along with longer-term strategies: strategies to eradicate tuberculosis over a 10-year period, strategies to deal with mental health and addictions in indigenous regions, strategies that looked at their own education systems and how they could play a more critical role in the delivery of health care and social welfare programs on reserve.

We have continued to work with leadership because we know that they know it better. As the Government of Canada, we are here as a true and full partner at the table not only to listen and learn but also to walk the path of reconciliation and make the tough choices that have to be made on that path to reconciliation. The Government of Canada and the Prime Minister have stood up and apologized for the past wrongs that have been done to indigenous peoples in this country, to make amends. It is all part of our walking together in reconciliation as a country.

• (1740)

Reconciliation is not just with indigenous people; it is with all Canadians. I have heard that statement many times. I have heard many members in the House of Commons make that statement, and no words could be truer.

We all have a job to do and a role to play. What members are seeing today with the calls to action under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is just one other way the Government of Canada is stepping up to do what is right and what should have been done for a long time—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately the hon. member's time is up. I know there is a bit of a delay in the reception at this point.

Obviously, this is an issue that I hear a lot in my riding, the access and reliability of the Internet. I do not know if it is the cold where the member is, but it is freezing quite a bit at this end. The screen is freezing, not the weather. Well, the weather is cold out there today as well, but I know that there is a delay. I just want to ensure that when members are asking their questions they are patient with the answers, because it may come up a little slower than usual.

We will go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île has the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in its report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada appeared to lament the fact that the guide for aspiring Canadian citizens does not mention indigenous peoples and their role as a source of law. The guide, entitled *Discover Canada*, talks about British laws and the civil code of France, but there is no mention whatsoever of the treaties with indigenous peoples and their inherent rights.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on this. Does she think this should be included in the next guide for new citizens?

• (1745)

[*English*]

**Ms. Yvonne Jones:** Madam Speaker, hopefully members can hear me. I think I got most of the question. Unfortunately I do have some Internet issues here in Labrador. In fact, right across the riding we have Internet issues, which are not uncommon in the north, so it is always much more challenging to participate in the parliamentary process.

The proposed amendment to this oath really demonstrates the government's commitment to advancing the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It reflects the commitment to reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous people in Canada, which is a path that we started as a government and one we will continue on.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. Last year the Yellowhead Institute released a report estimating that, at the current rate of implementation, it will be 2057 before all 94 calls to action are completed. I know that the parliamentary secretary represents a part of our country with a high percentage of indigenous people, as do I in the northwest of B.C., where about a third of constituents are indigenous.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary could explain to the House how she explains to her constituents the shockingly, devastatingly slow pace of implementation.

**Ms. Yvonne Jones:** Madam Speaker, as members know, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission does call upon the Government of Canada to make changes in terms of its relationship with indigenous people, but it also calls upon other stakeholders, including provinces and territories, religious entities and many, many others across this country. However, as the Government of Canada, what falls within our purview are the issues that we have continued to focus on, but we have also reached out to those external to government to ask them to respect and take responsibility to implement those recommendations of the TRC.

We will continue to do that and, as the government, we will continue to work harder to ensure that the recommendations that fall within the purview of the federal government continue to be implemented.

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my thanks to the member for the work she does each and every day. Reconciliation is the responsibility of everyone in Canada. We all need to recognize the harm, the atrocities of residential schools, and the impact they had on first nations, Inuit and Métis people. We have been given a plan, with the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We cannot ignore what indigenous people have told us. We have to listen. We need to understand in our hearts and understand viscerally what this has done.

What does my colleague think each of us can do in our communities to advance reconciliation?

**Ms. Yvonne Jones:** Madam Speaker, I think every day in our lives we should practise working at understanding the cultures and the values of all Canadians, including indigenous Canadians. The more we learn of the cultural values of people who make up this country, the stronger we become as a nation and the farther we can walk together on the path toward reconciliation.

• (1750)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

I will start by talking about citizenship and the citizenship process, then I will get into what the bill would do and what it is intended to do.

We have heard a lot about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but it is also important to reflect on becoming a citizen of Canada, what it is and what it means.

As everyone knows, there are only two ways to become a citizen: by birth or by naturalization. In Canada, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship released his new numbers a few days ago for those coming into Canada. Typically, it is in the 300,000 range, plus or minus. Each year, 100,000-plus, or 100,000 to 200,000, of the people who have chosen to come to Canada as permanent residents will decide to take that next step to become Canadian citizens.

There are some criteria in terms of wanting citizenship in our wonderful country. Out of those 350,000 who might come next year with permanent residency, some may choose to return home, as Canada is not where they really want to be, and some will be permanent residents forever. However, to become a citizen one has to be a permanent resident, has to have lived here for three to five years, have filed taxes when necessary and have taken a citizenship test. It would be interesting for Canadians who were born here to take that citizenship test and see how they do. I believe there are about 20 questions, and one has to get 15 out of 20 to pass the test. One also needs to have a degree of proficiency in one of our official languages but, of course, there are some exceptions in terms of older residents and some of our youth.

For those who choose to go through the process to become a Canadian citizen and take the test, the culmination of that process is the citizenship ceremony. Most members of Parliament who have been in the House for a while have had an opportunity to participate in these citizenship ceremonies. There is nothing more profoundly moving than going to these ceremonies. Often large groups of people from around the world go to these citizenship ceremonies, and it is their final step in terms of becoming citizens.

I have been to some ceremonies that were held in schools. These were really fun, because all the students would get to come and watch the process. In one case, students from grades one to six decorated the auditorium and watched the process. I have been to one on Canada Day. What better can a person do than to be outside in a park on Canada Day? In this case, 80 or 90 people from my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo who chose to become citizens of Canada there in the park. They were not only celebrating Canada Day, but also the commitment they had made.

### *Government Orders*

Unfortunately, with COVID, now there are virtual ceremonies. I have not participated in a virtual ceremony, but I would think that it would probably not be as moving as some of the in-person experiences. I remember families: moms, dads and children taking the oath. I remember one lady who had been in Canada for 40 years before she made that decision. For her, it was such a leap that it took her 40 years to decide that she wanted to become a citizen of Canada.

• (1755)

There are people who come to Canada as permanent residents, and their goal is to get their Canadian citizenship as soon as possible. The people who choose to become citizens of Canada, who are not privileged by birth, are perhaps the ones who most appreciate the citizenship they have.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission indicated in its calls to action that, first of all, in the test, there needed to be more work in terms of people understanding Canada's history, understanding Canada's history with indigenous peoples, understanding treaties and, quite frankly, in the case of British Columbia, understanding the lack of treaties. That was a call for action.

It is interesting to see that the oath has not changed in over 40 years. I was looking through the history of our oath. People have often looked at changing it over the years, and there were some very interesting oaths proposed in the early 1990s and 2000s. However, we have had the same oath for 40 years.

The oath is, as members know, the final legal requirement to become a citizen of Canada. I want to say quickly what the oath is currently, and then I will say what the proposed oath is. It is very simple. I was surprised at how short it was.

The current oath is:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

There was a modification that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposed. I understand that what we have in the legislation is not actually what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposed, but is a modification made after consultation with indigenous groups and also immigration groups across the country. It will be interesting when this bill gets to committee.

The proposed oath is:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Again, there has been some question as to some of the changes. The TRC just talked about the treaties. I have already noted that in British Columbia there are no treaties; however, there are certainly aboriginal rights, and there is a need to respect those rights.

From listening to the debate today, it sounds like there is general agreement in the House that the bill should move forward to committee and be further reflected upon. I think that is important.

*Government Orders*

With the time I have left, I want to talk a little more about the report. It was tabled almost six years ago. There were calls to action, and it has been six years. The day the report was tabled, the Prime Minister stood up in the House. At that time, he was the leader of the third party. He said that he would commit to implementing all the calls to action. As we know, in 2015, he became the Prime Minister. He again said that he would commit to implementing all the calls to action.

What we have here is 19 words added to an oath. There are many calls to action, and many are complex. If it has taken the Liberal government six years to add 19 words and, quite frankly, to get a relatively simple piece of legislation through the House, I really have to question the government's commitment to moving forward in the way that the Prime Minister stood up and promised to do.

I am unfortunately out of time, but I could share so many things in terms of how the Liberals have disappointed over the years.

**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.):** Madam Speaker, I want to touch on how important Canadian citizenship is to a person who receives it. I really enjoy the opportunity, whenever it is afforded to me, to attend citizenship swearing-in ceremonies. It is indeed a very special moment in time to witness new Canadians being sworn in. A few images have stayed with me. I can remember a young lady of Filipino heritage wrapping the Canadian flag around herself, in tears while being sworn in as a Canadian citizen. I remember family units doing likewise. It is nice to encourage members to participate, and I know it is always welcome when members do that.

The member raised this during the debate, and I would like to pose a quick question about it. I know there have been concerns with regard to calls to action. There are 76 calls to action, and the federal government has to play a role in them. Could the member provide her thoughts about how important it is that we work with other stakeholders, indigenous leaders—

• (1800)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I have to allow time for other questions.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, I again want to reflect on the enormous privilege it is for a member of Parliament to attend citizenship ceremonies. I have not been to one where I have not been incredibly moved. I feel quite emotional as I look at the people who are participating.

More specifically to the member's point, this was a very simple call to action. The government did not even introduce it in the last Parliament until a week before Parliament dissolved. The government knew it was not going to move forward.

We have water systems that we need to deal with. We need an action plan for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. If it takes the Liberals 6 years to put 19 words in a citizenship oath, I really fear for the things that are going to make a huge impact, such as an action plan for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for her comments on today's debate.

When I was young, we did a field trip every year to the Huron village, near Quebec City, where we were exposed to indigenous culture. It was a picturesque place, but it is not a reflection of the history of indigenous peoples and first nations in Canada and Quebec. I understand that the citizenship oath is very important. Members would all agree that after a newcomer takes the oath and repeats a few lines about the ancestral rights of indigenous peoples, there will not be much left for them.

Would my colleague not agree that, instead of contenting itself with symbolic gestures, the government should be adding indigenous languages and more in-depth learning about indigenous culture into elementary and high school curricula?

What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, we talked about being a Canadian by birth or through naturalization. I know the curriculum has changed since I was a young girl and did not know very much about our history.

I think it was very clear in the feedback received on calls to action numbers 93 and 94 that as new citizens swear the oath, they really need to understand the history. That is now part of the process. We talked about the booklet and the examination.

Do we have more to do? Absolutely. However, hopefully we have a better process for new citizens and those who are here from birth.

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinipi—Churchill River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to begin today by stating it is an honour to speak to Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

The oath of citizenship sworn by all new citizens of our great country is relatively short, compact and simple, but at the same time it is a profound promise to faithfully observe all the laws of Canada. It is an affirmation of patriotism and loyalty.

As we consider Bill C-8 today, the bill itself is quite easy to support in principle. As my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul said earlier, our party was pleased to support this bill at second reading. It is one of the 94 recommended actions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that Prime Minister Harper initiated. In fact, it was Prime Minister Harper's leadership in this area that was directly responsible for all of us having the opportunity to discuss Bill C-8 today and the potential implementation of that bill.

*Government Orders*

When discussing the merits of this bill it would be easy to digress and get caught up in some of the finer details. For example, the wording in the oath proposed is slightly different from that suggested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This change in the oath could be considered redundant, as new citizens are already required to swear or affirm that they will observe all of the laws of Canada, which include aboriginal rights already enshrined in our Constitution.

As well, people do not become Canadian citizens overnight. The ceremonial event of declaring an oath includes the accumulation of years of required residency, learning one or both of Canada's official languages and studying the many documents and data contained in the Discover Canada handbook. It contains a detailed look at the history of indigenous people, which are essential learnings before the citizenship test. However, instead of focusing in these details, I would like to speak for a few minutes about some of the more important issues on the ground during these tumultuous times.

The government has expressed in words, many times in the last few weeks, that it does not have time to deal with trivial matters such as ethics, studying its response and learning from the first wave of COVID-19, or even tabling a budget, because its sole focus has to be on helping people through the pandemic. However, it has expressed in its actions in the last few weeks its priorities by tabling bills that have no link to the pandemic.

What we do hear from this Prime Minister is self-righteous indignation, as if his party is the only one that cares about indigenous people in Canada. This leads me to speak for a few moments about the frustration regarding the timing of this bill. At a time when indigenous leaders are asking for actions, we are asked to sit in this House, or attend virtually, and debate a bill that will not resolve anything for indigenous people in Canada in the short term. If it is frustrating to me, imagine the signal it sends to indigenous people and their leaders.

Since being elected a year ago, I have had the privilege of working closely with Chief Ron Mitsuing of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation. I do not know if the House remembers, but it was his community that declared a state of emergency as it dealt with a suicide crisis late last fall. Under his leadership and his sincere concern for his people, he led them through some very difficult situations, and many since. His leadership and care for his people is a source of inspiration for anybody who has been able to watch that journey.

Very recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with the chief again. He brought with him Elder Morningchild. They came to my office about a month ago. Between the time of his declaration of emergency a year ago and the beginning of the pandemic in March, Chief Mitsuing advised me there were around 40 young people on his suicide watch list. Since COVID-19 and the consequences the pandemic has placed on his community, he is now dealing with over 100 young people on his watch list. This is in a community of about 1,000 people. Imagine being a leader like Chief Mitsuing, having to hear politicians in Ottawa debate the wording of an oath and then pack their bags, turn off Zoom and go home for the evening feeling satisfied they accomplished something significant on behalf of indigenous people. Imagine their frustration or the frustration of the members of Neskantaga, who had to evacuate their community during a pandemic due to a 25-year-long boil water advisory. At a time

when federal health officials are asking people to limit their contact by staying home as much as possible, this community was loaded onto airplanes and sent to live in a hotel many miles from home.

• (1805)

One only has to watch the video of the children of Neskantaga put out by their chief, Chris Moonias, where the children are asking questions like “When is the water going to get fixed?”, “Are we going to get help?” and “When are we going home?”. It is heartbreaking. It is devastating. It is shameful.

The committee welcomed the then minister of indigenous and northern affairs in 2016, who made these people a promise that the issue would be fixed by 2018. Now they find themselves sitting in a hotel far away from their community, having to witness the irony of this minister's government putting forward a bill that asks new Canadians to make a promise. The current government cannot even keep its own promises. It is more “do as I say, not as I do”. I can imagine their frustration.

Speaking of water, there is a small community in my riding that provides healthy, clean drinking water and other services to a neighbouring first nations community. Due to an ongoing jurisdictional issue with respect to payment, this small community is owed money and has been carrying the debt of the federal government for years. I am sorry, but a small municipality should never be put in a position where a decision has to be made about turning off water to its neighbours to finally bring attention to the fact that it is owed a very significant amount of money, which, quite honestly, should be allocated to other services its residents need at this difficult time.

Seven months ago, I raised this issue directly with the Minister of Indigenous Services, his chief of staff and the department's western-desk representative. As of last week, the promised meeting between the department, the first nation and the community has yet to take place or even to be scheduled. At a time when neighbours need to work together, the government's inability to act in a reasonable amount of time is divisive and damaging to these communities. I can imagine their frustration.

*Government Orders*

The leaders of first nations and Métis communities in my riding did an outstanding job managing the first wave of COVID in the spring. They took the required actions to keep their people safe. Their tireless work on the ground allowed for a potential health crisis to be averted in many of these communities. Now, as cases begin to rise again, so does the anxiety of what is ahead for them as leaders. Do they have enough PPE for their communities? How do they acquire the much-needed rapid testing? How are they going to manage checkpoints in winter conditions? Who is going to ensure the safety and health of the elderly and the vulnerable in their communities? When a vaccine is approved, how will they gain access and distribute it among their people?

The leaders of these communities need the government focused on providing the essential supports that they badly need to keep their people safe. They are tired. They are anxious. They deserve more than a symbolic gesture in this trying time. We would have to spend a lot of time searching for a leader in these communities who would suggest to me that changing the wording of the oath of citizenship is a top priority the government should be focusing on right now. It is time to move beyond words. It is time for concrete actions.

This begins with taking responsibility: responsibility for acting slowly to close down borders in Canada; taking responsibility for sending mixed messages to Canadians regarding masks; taking responsibility for ignoring the need for rapid tests across Canada; taking responsibility for poorly created relief programs that shut out indigenous businesses and many others; and, generationally, taking responsibility for not living up to the promise to end drinking water advisories by the spring.

The government must act. It must act to end drinking water advisories with the same intensity it did when creating and passing the CERB and, dare I say, when covering up its corruption in the WE Charity scandal. The government must support first nations dealing with high rates of youth suicide. It must act to address the issues outlined in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report. It must act to show real leadership rather than crisis management in situations such as the Mi'kmaq lobster fishery or land claim disputes in Caledonia.

• (1810)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to try to link together the former speaker's comments with my hon. colleague's comments just now. One of the things the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo mentioned was how moving citizenship ceremonies are, and my hon. colleague just mentioned the record of Stephen Harper.

When I was the mayor of Smithers, I only got to attend one citizenship ceremony because the next year Stephen Harper's government cut small town citizenship ceremonies across the country. I wonder if my hon. colleague would join me in calling for the reinstatement of those citizenship ceremonies so that the change we are debating today, and will hopefully be passed into law, can be made even more significant for people living in rural Canada.

• (1815)

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Madam Speaker, we hear a lot of talk about going back to Harper and the Conservative days and what they did or

did not do. I would remind the member that it was Mr. Harper who issued the original apology for the harm done by residential schools. It was Mr. Harper who initiated the whole process that led to the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I do not think we should undermine the work that was done under the Conservative government on many things. We need to continue to work toward that.

In my comments, I am not undermining the importance of the citizenship oath. What I am saying is that we need to go to the place where we are fixing real problems for real people on the ground in these northern communities.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member from northern Saskatchewan has a very similar riding to mine in northern Ontario and many similar issues. One that he mentioned was the COVID-19 response in northern and indigenous communities.

Could he speak a bit more to that and about where some of the gaps existed and what the government needs to do to ensure that northern communities are prepared for any subsequent wave of the pandemic?

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Kenora for the work he is doing. He is right that his riding is extremely similar to mine and we face many similar issues. I am sure he would speak to the same things that I might. We dealt with some of the leadership from the first nation communities, Métis communities and the tribal council leaderships when it came to ensuring there was appropriate personal protective equipment for these communities.

As we advanced further through the pandemic and moved on to the need for testing, the awareness of the importance of rapid testing and how we could get it into these remote and northern communities, there were so many things. We had an example in my riding of La Loche and the neighbouring first nation there. The provincial government and leaders came together to institute an incredible testing regime that shut the crisis down very quickly.

I would agree with the member that we need to be aware of all these things in ridings that are similar to his and mine and ensure we keep advocating on behalf of those people.

**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.):** Madam Speaker, I want to point out the importance and significance of the legislation as one of the calls to action. It goes a long way in demonstrating very clearly that as a government we want to continue to move forward on the issue of reconciliation.

*Government Orders*

Could the member provide some thoughts with respect to that issue?

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Madam Speaker, I challenge my colleague to ensure that we understand there are some very important components to some of the symbolic gestures by ensuring we work with our indigenous friends and their leadership. I would challenge him to look in the mirror and ask if the government has done enough when it comes to boiled water advisories, or when it comes to the suicide crisis or when it comes to housing and some of the challenges that these communities face.

Instead of the government patting itself on the back for getting some things done, why does it not get on the ground and get working on many things that are more important in these communities?

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend, the member of Parliament for Northwest Territories.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak in support of the government's bill that would revise the oath and affirmation of citizenship. I wish to acknowledge that I am speaking to members from Surrey, B.C., on the traditional territory of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen first nations.

This bill continues our government's important work to walk the shared path of reconciliation. It responds to call to action number 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report. We know that newcomers to Canada are eager to take on the responsibility of citizenship. In doing so, with the passage of this bill, newcomers would state their commitment to respect the rights and treaties of indigenous peoples. They would recognize the significant contributions of first nations, Inuit and Métis to Canada.

In short, this bill would reaffirm to our newest citizens our shared history with indigenous peoples, and the integral role indigenous peoples have played, and will continue to play, in Canada. This is especially important as we continue to address issues such as systemic racism, which sadly exists even today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report lists 94 calls to action. The 94th call to action calls on the government to amend the Oath of Citizenship to specifically add a reference to treaties with indigenous peoples.

I want to recognize the comprehensive and thoughtful consultations my colleague has conducted in order to bring this bill here today. The proposed changes to the oath come from the government's consultations with national indigenous organizations on the precise wording of the Oath of Citizenship.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada included the following organizations in its consultations: the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and members of the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, which represents indigenous modern treaty organizations and governments in Canada.

There was support for the intent of the call to action, but through engagement, the need for a more precise and inclusive oath became

clear. A key point raised in this engagement was the term "indigenous", which does not reflect all preferences of self-identification.

I understand this point deeply because of my many conversations held over the years. I know that many people identify by their home community, homeland or territory, and there are many other ways to identify. The Oath of Citizenship, as well as all Crown-indigenous relations, needs to be based on an understanding and respect for self-identity preferences and, at a broader level, reflect many experiences and histories.

We also heard that the call to specifically include treaties in the Oath of Citizenship was deeply important. Treaties are foundational to the creation and future of Canada; however, through consultations, it became clear that this reference needed to be expanded. We were reminded that the wording "treaties with indigenous peoples" was not relevant to all indigenous peoples, and therefore not inclusive of all indigenous experiences. For example, Inuit peoples generally are not party to existing pre-1975 treaties, or their agreements with the Crown are not characterized as such.

As a result of these consultations, as well as our pre-existing understandings and commitment to respectful relationships, the new oath will read, "I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen."

I am proud to support this bill for the revised Oath of Citizenship. This oath is much more than words. It is a public declaration of joining the Canadian family and is a commitment to Canadian values and traditions such as equality, diversity and respect: all things that are vitally important today, tomorrow and always.

The changes to the oath are also an important step in advancing reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people, in Canada continuing to build Crown-indigenous relations, and in fulfilling the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. It is one step among many.

- (1820)

Over the last five years, significant progress has been made to establish a whole-of-government approach, involving 13 lead federal departments and agencies, with the support of another 25 federal departments and agencies, to implement and advance the 76 calls to action under federal or shared responsibility. To date, nearly 80% of these actions under federal or shared responsibility are complete or well under way. I want to note that the implementation of these calls to action require long-term, ongoing and sustained action, to which we are committed.

This bill is another step toward full implementation of call to action 94, and I am pleased to speak in support of it.

*Government Orders*

• (1825)

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when we talk about reconciliation and some of the issues that indigenous and northern communities face, housing is a very big issue. There is overcrowding, and there are structural problems with many housing units across the north.

When the government brought forward its latest housing initiative, I was a bit concerned to see that most of the funding was primarily identified for certain large urban centres, and not for communities across the north and indigenous communities, which have been left to fight for the rest of the funds. I am wondering if the member could speak to that, because I know it is concerning for many people in my riding and across northern Canada.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Madam Speaker, housing is a fundamental right. It is a human right, and it is a right this government feels very profoundly about.

We are the first government to make a national housing strategy. We have been committed to building and rebuilding more indigenous housing, and I think the House will hear from my colleague later about the efforts we have made in that regard and the continued efforts. I know here in the Lower Mainland there have been many housing initiatives that have been done, specifically for indigenous communities and specifically designed for them, but there is more work to be done.

Definitely, in the colder northern climate, building is much harder and construction is much harder. However, our duty is to those communities, and I am committed to doing whatever we can as a government, and whatever my colleagues support, to make sure that adequate housing is made available to all indigenous communities in the north.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know there has also been a lot of talk today about boil water advisories. Oneida Nation of the Thames, which is not exactly in my riding, but is very close to it and is certainly an incredible member of our overall community, has been under a boil water advisory since September 2019.

The government talks a lot about how it is making really great strides in terms of removing first nations from boil water advisories, but there are clearly still first nations that are going onto that advisory. I am wondering if the member could talk about what he, specifically, and his government will do for Oneida Nation of the Thames.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Madam Speaker, one of our biggest commitments has been to end boil water advisories. I think 91 have been done, and 63 or so are still out there. Work is being done on them as we speak, or it will be done. There is a strong commitment.

I can look out my window and see the Semiahmoo nation. It is right next door to one of the wealthiest ridings, South Surrey, and for years and years they were under boil water advisories and not allowed to connect to the neighbouring system. I am proud to say that within less than two years of coming into government in 2015, that boil water advisory was eliminated. They were connected to proper water systems and sanitation systems.

We are committed to making sure that every single community in this country has access to adequate drinking water, and we are committed to getting that done.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague.

The government has been in power for more than a year. How is it possible that the government has yet to introduce a bill on implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in that year?

[*English*]

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Madam Speaker, as members can tell, we are on bill number eight of this Parliament. Shortly after we were elected to government, the world's greatest pandemic hit this country and the globe. This impeded a lot of bills that should have been brought out early and quickly, as we had to make sure that Canadians had food on their table, they were secure, and their mortgages and bills were being paid.

I think that took priority right away. However, that does not diminish the importance of making sure that UNDRIP and other measures that are part of our commitment are addressed. We will continue to get going on that and have that done.

• (1830)

**Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking from the traditional homeland of the Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit of the Northwest Territories.

I am of Métis descent. I am a member of the Dehcho First Nations. We are known as the “big river” people. I believe I am the only sitting member who attended the residential school program, or the hostel program as we knew it.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in support of the government's bill that would revise the oath of citizenship. It continues our government's important work to walk the shared path of reconciliation and the implementation of the TRC's calls to action.

I would like to point to a number of key legislative initiatives that address calls to action and advance reconciliation.

Bill C-91, the Indigenous Languages Act, received royal assent in June 2019. This act supports the Government of Canada's efforts to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen and maintain indigenous languages in Canada. The act was developed to address calls to action numbers 13, 14 and 15; elements of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP; and the Government of Canada's commitment to a renewed relationship with indigenous people based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.



That same month, in June 2019, royal assent was given to Bill C-92, an act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. It came into force on January 1, 2020. This act was co-developed as part of Canada's efforts to reform indigenous child and family services, which included implementing call to action number 4. It affirms the rights of first nations, Inuit, and Métis to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and establishes national principles such as the best interests of the child, cultural continuity and substantive equality, which help guide the provision of indigenous child and family services.

The act was the result of extensive engagement with first nations, Inuit and Métis, treaty nations, self-governing first nations, provincial and territorial governments, and those with lived experience, including elders, youth and women. It reaffirms the government's commitment to advancing self-determination and eliminating existing disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous children and youth.

The act also lays out flexible pathways for indigenous governing bodies to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services at a pace they choose. Through the act's legislative framework, they can move forward with their own service delivery models and laws and choose their own solutions for their children and families. It ensures indigenous children are cared for in the right way, with connections to their communities, cultures and languages. Furthermore, since January 1, 2020, every service provider, province or territory delivering child and family services to indigenous children and families will need to follow the minimum standards found in the act.

Bill C-5, 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, was introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on September 29, 2020. If passed, this bill will be an important step in responding to call to action number 80 by establishing the national day for truth and reconciliation on September 30 as a statutory holiday for federally regulated workers. This national day would honour survivors, their families and communities. It would also remind the public of the tragic and painful history and legacy of residential schools that remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

The Government of Canada continues to work closely with partners to address the remaining calls to action.

In June 2019, the government received the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, entitled "Reclaiming Power and Place". It responded to call to action number 41, which called for the launch of a public inquiry into the disproportionate victimization of indigenous women and girls.

• (1835)

Furthermore, the Government of Canada is committed to gender equality and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and has eliminated all the remaining sex-based inequalities in the Indian Act registration provisions, which go back to its inception 150 years ago. We committed to eliminating all sex-based discrimination in the Indian Act registration, and we delivered on that promise.

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Bringing Bill S-3 into force also responds to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls to justice and provides justice to women and their descendants, who fought for these changes for decades. We will continue with partners and other levels of government to respond to the findings of the national inquiry and to this national tragedy.

In closing, I reiterate that the government is determined to address the historical, colonial racism and injustice of yesterday, just as we are determined to root out and expose the racism of today. As Canadians have seen all too clearly during this difficult time, racism, both systemic and social, continues to be all too prevalent in our country. It must not and cannot be tolerated, for that, too, is part of the healing process, just as this bill is part of the healing process.

This bill represents progress on the shared path to healing and reconciliation. It responds to concerns expressed in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It points the way to a more inclusive Canada. Moreover, by amending the oath of citizenship, it represents greater awareness and answers call to action 94.

I am pleased to offer my full support of the bill before us.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and to the excellent speeches by my colleagues from Saint-Jean and Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. I also listened to a question from the deputy government House leader. He said that few of the 94 calls to action are for the federal government and that they also involve other jurisdictions. The government always downloads its own responsibilities onto others. We saw it during the Wet'suwet'en crisis and at the start of the pandemic, when the government did not close the border promptly. However, it is prompt to interfere in the affairs of other levels of government, including Quebec and the provinces. In those cases, it thinks it is valid and expedient to interfere.

My question is very simple. The federal government has constitutional obligations towards first nations. Why are there still first nations that do not have access to clean drinking water?

The government believes it can lecture others on health care even though it does not run any hospitals or long-term care homes. How can it lecture others when it is incapable of providing certain first nations with clean drinking water?

*Government Orders*

Maybe it should do a good job of handling matters under its own jurisdiction before trying to lecture others.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Madam Speaker, for 10 years, when the Conservatives were in power, there was very little hope among the indigenous population of this country. We saw many attempts to muzzle indigenous people. We are now making progress. We are on the right path. Progress is not as fast as we expected it to be, not as fast as we want it to be, but we are heading in the right direction.

It took 150 years to get to this point, and it may take just as long to see reconciliation take place. I am hoping that things will happen more quickly, but I am convinced that it will be many generations before we see true reconciliation, and that means everyone has to do their part.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was endorsed by our government in May 2016, which was after many years of the previous Conservative government not being willing to do so. When we did move forward on this piece of legislation, we did not see strong support from a number of parties, and that included people in the Senate.

● (1840)

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from the Northwest Territories mentioned reconciliation and rooting out racism across Canada. I appreciate his comments on that.

I want to speak about northern Canada. Obviously there are many gaps for indigenous peoples and all people living in northern Canada. I hear a lot from people across the Northwest Territories about transportation and infrastructure. These investments are very important for the north and the government has failed in many aspects to support those projects, which could be a catalyst to development and provide a better way of life for many people across the north.

I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Madam Speaker, infrastructure is very important to us, especially in the area of transportation. We have very few roads and most of the airports in our communities are very small. However, there have been some very important investments made by the Liberal government. Over the last five years, I have made many announcements on behalf of the government and some of them have really taken hold. We are going to see some very good results. We have seen investments in airports, which are now under construction. Within the next year, we will be cutting the ribbon on a road to Whati, a very important road to that community but also to a mine development project that will probably take off once the road is completed.

We could do more, but we have a pretty good track record up until now.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be able to rise today as the member of Parliament for the Kenora riding, rejoin this debate and speak to Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 94.

I must mention that I am very glad to be sharing my time today with the great member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley. I will add that I appreciate that Elections Canada gave me such an easy riding name compared to that.

This legislation we are debating today will add a new line to the Canadian citizenship oath, where new Canadians will be explicitly noting and making mention of indigenous and treaty rights. I must say this is something I am very happy to see moving forward. It is a topic I have been having many conversations about in my riding. I have spoken with chiefs, community leaders and residents of first nations in my riding to get their thoughts on this. More specifically, I have been asking a lot about what true and meaningful reconciliation should look like and I have been doing a lot of listening.

The Kenora riding is home to many indigenous peoples. There are 42 first nations in my riding. There are many Métis and indigenous people living within the nine municipalities or the rural unincorporated areas of my riding. My riding also encompasses three distinct treaty territories, so reconciliation is definitely an issue that is top of mind for many in my riding, but over and over I hear the same things. People are not looking for platitudes and empty gestures; they are looking for real action. There are obviously a lot of different opinions on what that looks like, but I think it is important to note that each and every one of us in this House all know and should recognize that every party, every government has taken some very positive steps to address the gaps that exist between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. Likewise, every party has had some missteps and frankly some failures on this file.

Under the last Conservative government, the official residential school apology was issued and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched. All these years later, I believe it is time that we can all work together to deliver on the intent of that commission. Too often reconciliation is used as a buzzword by politicians for political purposes. Many very serious issues that need to be addressed fall by the wayside in exchange for these platitudes and empty gestures that have no meaningful impact on the everyday lives of indigenous peoples. I note this because it is important we make sure the intent of this bill, which I believe wholeheartedly is positive, is not lost and that we continue to make tangible differences in the lives of indigenous people across the north and across Canada.

As I have noted, I have spoken with many chiefs in my riding about this bill. They are supportive of the bill and of the government fulfilling this aspect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, they have noted to me that if we just simply change the citizenship oath without taking action to improve the social and economic well-being of indigenous peoples it will lose its power and in many ways lose its meaning. That is why we must support economic growth in northern communities, equitable health care options, improved infrastructure and education, and of course we must ensure that clean drinking water is available to each and every person living in Canada.

Right now in my riding the community of Neskantaga has had to evacuate after its water system shut down completely leaving the community without any water. It has been under a drinking water advisory for 25 years. There are people living in that community who have lived their entire lives without any access to clean drinking water. It is something that is unimaginable to most Canadians, yet it is a reality for far too many in the north and across Canada, particularly many in my riding who have been living under drinking water advisories for far too long. I want to note something. I was having a conversation with someone in my riding about the stark differences between some of the communities I represent and being here in this magnificent place.

• (1845)

All we have to do is wave our hands and someone brings us water, or we can go to the lobby behind me and we have our choice between flat or bubbly, a little lime or lemon, and jazz it up however we want, but there are people in the communities I represent who have never had access to clean drinking water. It is important that we all take time to acknowledge that and reflect on the two faces of Canada, if I can use that term.

That is why I was incredibly disappointed that the government walked back from its promise to end all long-term drinking water advisories on reserve by next year. There are recent reports from CBC saying that the government may miss this mark by years. It is unacceptable that people in our country do not have access to clean drinking water and it is unacceptable for the government to push this down the road.

There is a broader lack of infrastructure in many northern communities across my riding, across the territories and across Canada, whether it is housing, road improvements or the Internet. As we have experienced in the debate today, there are problems with the Internet. I make note of all of these because these tremendous gaps exist in my riding and in many others. In communities like Cat Lake, there is a housing shortage, there is overcrowding and many of the homes that are available have structural problems, mould or other long-standing issues.

On the Internet aspect of it, many communities do not have access to the Internet. These residents are not able to potentially attend school or access government services. This pandemic has shown us that Internet access is not a luxury but a necessity. Unfortunately, many indigenous peoples in many indigenous communities have some of the worst Internet connections or lack of connection of anyone else across Canada. These are important things that we must work on as well.

I already mentioned health care gaps. Given the remoteness of many communities in my riding, which are accessible only by flying in or by winter road, there has been chronic underfunding or poorly prioritized funding and mismanagement by the federal government, which has left many with poor health care service options. We must do more to ensure that each and every person living in Canada has access to equitable health care and, of course, that must include the north.

I believe in the importance of economic support as well and the role that economic development and economic diversification of the north can play in providing many opportunities to northern and

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indigenous communities. By working together to create good jobs and ensuring that revenues stay in the north, everyone can benefit from this responsible development. It is something I have seen in my riding with Grand Council Treaty #3, which signed a historic resource revenue-sharing agreement with the Province of Ontario. We must do more of that collaboration and ensure that economic growth is part of our reconciliation discussion and the process, as I believe it can help us reach many of our other aspirations.

All that being said, I do believe in the spirit of this proposal and that this is a very positive step, so long as concrete actions on the many issues that I have outlined can be addressed. It is important for new Canadians to understand the value of treaty rights and indigenous rights. Perhaps, as many community leaders in my riding have pointed out, this could be an opportunity for further education on the history of Canada, the good and the bad, so that every Canadian, whether new to our country or with a family that has been here for generations, can understand why reconciliation and upholding treaty rights are so vital.

I definitely want to acknowledge that this is one of the most important things. It cannot get lost in this discussion. I urge my colleagues, especially those in government, to work with the opposition and all parties to ensure we do not let politics get in the way of taking true, meaningful actions and bringing forward tangible items that will improve the lives of indigenous peoples across Canada.

• (1850)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I picked up a bit on the member for Kenora's comment about reconciliation being used as a buzzword and the rhetoric of what "reconciliation" is really supposed to mean for a nation-to-nation relationship.

While I agree this bill is important, we have discussed today that this is slow progress. It has taken six years for us to get to a relatively simple recommendation from the TRC. There are huge issues at play. The member talked about water as a human right being an issue that is not being addressed quickly enough. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is lagging behind. The murdered and missing indigenous women and girls action plan is lagging behind.

I would like to hear from the member if he agrees that these are ultimately the actions of a paternalistic government under a highly colonial system.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from London touched on many different aspects. I will try my best to touch on all of them in the time I am permitted.

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She noted the buzzwords and the politics around it. While the issue we are debating today is a positive step and a positive symbol, as I am sure she agrees, it is relatively easy and it is definitely not high on the priority list for many communities and many indigenous people in my riding. As I noted in my speech, a community in my riding is evacuating right now because of the lack of clean drinking water.

When I speak to chiefs and indigenous people in my riding, they often tell me that this is a great proposal and a positive step. However, they want to know why we are wasting our time debating this in the House right now when there are much more pressing issues that can be addressed. I hope to see the government take more solid action on many of those areas as well.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague said that the Liberal government is not doing enough, and I think many people would agree. The government seems to be focusing more on symbolic gestures than on actions. Of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 calls to action, only 10 have been implemented.

I wonder why my colleague's party voted against this bill during the previous parliamentary session. Would we not have made a little more progress had his party voted in favour?

• (1855)

[*English*]

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the Bloc Québécois holding the opposition to account. Meanwhile, on this side of the House, closer to the Speaker, we are focused on working with the government and, yes, holding the government to account when we need to.

As I have mentioned many times, I do not think we should be making these issues political. We recognize that every government, every party and every one of us, I am sure, has made some mistakes and some missteps on the path to reconciliation. I am focused on what is happening right now, looking to the future and to how we can support all people and all indigenous people across Canada.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when my colleague from Kenora started his speech, he made a comment about the name of his riding. As members know, I come from Oshawa, which in Ojibwa means the crossing place. It comes from the term *aazhaway*. That fact that the bill moves forward so new Canadians understand the importance of our history is extremely important, and I think everybody agrees on that.

My colleague has a great perspective. He comes from the north, with many indigenous people in his community. I wonder if he could comment on what he hears are the greatest priorities of indigenous people in his community; and, specifically, if he could comment on resource development and how the current government's policies affect that. It is important for our future as Canada.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, there are so many things we could touch on. As I mentioned in my speech, my riding has the historic resource revenue sharing agreement between Grand Council Treaty No. 3 and the Province of Ontario. I know that resource development is very important to many first nations communities

across my riding and across the north. It is a catalyst for us to be able to improve the way of life for many people across the north.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Madam Speaker, every day I think about how lucky I am to be a Canadian. There is simply no better country in the world. Our nation is seen as a beacon of hope by so many. Whether it is the natural beauty of our environment, the kindness of Canadians, our robust free market economy or the right to live in a free society that seeks to honour and protect the rights of its citizens, we are truly among the most fortunate.

However, Canada has not always been as just as we would like it to be. Certain groups have faced more challenges than others. Indigenous Canadians are one of those groups. The treatment of indigenous peoples is a stain on our history, and we cannot forget about the injustices of the past; we must learn from them.

As a Jewish Canadian, the term “never again” always comes to mind. The commitment of never again is a solemn pledge to never let hatred and injustice take control of our society, to never let genocide take place, to never stand idly by while bad actors motivated by something sinister wipe out those who seem to be getting in their way.

As scholar and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said:

I swore to never be silent.

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.

We are all here as elected officials, 338 out of 38 million Canadians. These 38 million Canadians expect us to get it right. We have no option but to be successful in these efforts.

The process of reconciliation is vital and fundamental to the future of our society. As Canadians, we need to have the difficult conversations necessary to ensure indigenous Canadians can live in a more equitable society for all.

As Senator Murray Sinclair said:

The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek....When it comes to truth and reconciliation we are forced to go the distance.

It is hard to believe the enormous challenges that still exist today for indigenous communities. How is it possible that we live in a country where boil water advisories still exist? It is 2020, and we are witnessing technology development like we have never seen before. We have cellphones that possess 100,000 times more of the computing power than it took to land Neil Armstrong on the moon, and yet we still cannot find a way to get clean running water to indigenous communities.

Before having the honour of serving my community in this place, I was an elected member of Winnipeg City Council. In my time there, we made great progress in advancing initiatives for our city to come together and explore what reconciliation truly means. Just after I was elected to council on January 22, 2015, Maclean's magazine published a story calling my city a place where racism was at its worst.

We could have protested Maclean's assertion, but instead we embraced our own call to action and did what we could do, as Senator Sinclair said, "to go the distance." That call was to take immediate and proactive steps to make reconciliation more than just a word on a page.

I remember the day vividly. I was driving to city hall when the story came out. Mayor Brian Bowman called an emergency meeting of community stakeholders in both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. I remember partaking in a traditional smudging ceremony that morning in the mayor's office, where we came together with indigenous leaders to express our desire to do better.

As Winnipeggers, we did do better. I want to tell members what we did. In 2015, the year of that article, we held the ONE: The Mayor's National Summit on Racial Inclusion at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, bringing together many leaders and community members into a think tank of compassion to tackle racism in all its forms.

The following year, the mayor declared 2016 to be the year of reconciliation, and we instituted mandatory indigenous awareness training for all employees and councillors in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 57. I attended those sessions.

That same year, we invested \$10 million towards the building of the Freedom Road project, which built an all-weather road, not in Winnipeg, but to Shoal Lake 40 first nation on the Manitoba-Ontario border. It was completed just over one year ago.

- (1900)

This community has supplied fresh water to Winnipeg for over 100 years and yet has spent decades under a boil-water advisory. I was proud to share a small role as the chair of finance in correcting this tragic irony and historic injustice. We took action, Freedom Road was built and a new water treatment plant is well under construction.

In 2017, we unanimously adopted Winnipeg's first indigenous accord and I was proud to be among its first signatories. This accord marked the beginning of new conversations about the future, as well as a commitment to make our community more inclusive. It provided the framework for indigenous and non-indigenous citizens from across Winnipeg to keep moving forward in our reconciliation journey. I worked alongside my council colleagues to look inward and talk about what we could do to be better as a city. We chose unity over division and worked to amend the wrongs of the past. We worked to foster a positive public dialogue about reconciliation with indigenous groups across our communities to ask them how we could do better. I have no doubt that each of my colleagues from here and across Canada share these goals.

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If we could do all those things in Winnipeg, we in this place can do so much more. Canada is a nation of immigrants that stands on the traditional territories of and shoulder to shoulder with first nations, Inuit and Métis people. In fact, as many people have acknowledged today, we are gathered right now on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world where indigenous and treaty rights are constitutionally entrenched. I firmly believe that educating all Canadians about these rights is an important step on the path to reconciliation. I am pleased to join my Conservative colleagues in supporting treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples and in supporting this bill. In fact, our party's policy declaration acknowledges this fact where it says that it is a fundamental obligation of the federal government to improve the living conditions of indigenous Canadians, including Inuit, in terms of economic opportunities, health, education and community safety.

I have spoken to countless new Canadians who have become citizens of our great country. The day they get to stand and pledge their allegiance to Canada is the affirmation of many years of hard work and struggle. The oath represents opening the door to new opportunities and new beginnings for many who have escaped war-torn countries, genocide, human rights abuses or were simply looking for a better life for them and their families. As a part of this proposed bill, new Canadians must swear or affirm that they will observe the laws of Canada, including indigenous rights. Becoming a new Canadian involves learning about our constitutional rights and understanding the history of Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples and the need for reconciliation.

The changes proposed by this bill to the oath of citizenship, namely the addition of recognizing constitutionally entrenched rights for indigenous Canadians, will be an important lesson for all those looking to make Canada their home. This will signal that reconciliation with indigenous Canadians is among our highest priorities and we welcome new Canadians to become part of this journey.

Our society is plagued by voices who continue to call for hatred and discrimination. As Canadians, we must be better than this. We cannot succumb to these calls. We must respect the truly important work that was done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and work together to ensure that reconciliation is a part of Canada's present and future.

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In closing, we have lots of work to do, not only as legislators but as Canadians. We need to ensure that we do our part in building a better future for all Canadians. We need to build an inclusive society where Canadians from all walks of life can feel safe, secure and be afforded the fundamental rights and freedoms granted to them as citizens of our great nation. We need to continue to have those uncomfortable conversations and remember the dark chapters of our past as we move forward on the path toward reconciliation.

• (1905)

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I liked hearing my colleague's words about how important it is that we deal with things like boil-water advisories, and how important it is that we deal with the calls for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the calls for justice from the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls tribunal. My problem is that sometimes I feel like the Conservatives pick and choose when they want to support indigenous rights and when they do not.

The former leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, said that his primary concern with the bill was that recognizing indigenous rights to free, prior and informed consent would hurt the economy. I wonder if the member could speak about the need to not pick and choose which indigenous rights we fight for and when we stand up for indigenous peoples in our country.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Madam Speaker, the reality is that while members of the NDP want to take partisan political shots at us and want to focus on us, we are focused on Canadians. The things I described that we did in Winnipeg, we did in a year. The government has been in power for six years and only today are we discussing changing the oath.

There is so much more we can do, and I really understand the frustration in indigenous communities about how long things take, because I know we can do things faster.

**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.):** Madam Speaker, it was literally weeks after the 2015 election that the government, under the Prime Minister, took actions, whether it was the public inquiry or a series of responses to the calls to action, some of which were brought to the House. Others are still ongoing and in discussion because the federal government has an obligation. However, not all the calls to action are purely for the federal government. Seventy-four are directly for us, but some of them require working with other jurisdictions.

Would the member agree that it is important for us to focus not only on the calls to action, but also on the monetary aspect, Freedom Road, systemic racism and so forth? There are other issues, and as a government, as an elected body, we have to deal with a number of fronts to hopefully move the issue of reconciliation forward.

• (1910)

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member: I do not think that this is or should be a partisan issue. This should be an issue where we can reach across the aisle and work together.

However, the changing of the oath should have been done six years ago. I was just elected a year ago, and I am not sure why, six years after the government was elected, we are finally debating this legislation. As I said, in Winnipeg we did all of the things I described in a year.

As far as the hon. member's question is concerned, I do agree that some calls to action are within the jurisdiction of the federal government and some are within the jurisdiction of other levels of government. As Canadians and legislators, we all need to work together to try to move this file forward.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it seems to me that in the government's approach to indigenous rights, it tries to pick some of the easier-to-solve problems. Maybe it changes the wording of the oath or something like that. However, there are many larger, deeper systemic issues, including creating opportunities for economic development for indigenous Canadians, that the government has not really been moving forward on. It seems to want to identify symbolic issues, but there are many big issues that are top of mind for indigenous Canadians that it has been totally absent on.

I wonder if the member could speak more about the notion that the government needs to focus on large issues, challenging issues, that will concretely, substantially improve the lives of indigenous Canadians.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Madam Speaker, I think it would have been far better to spend this entire day talking about how to bring clean and usable drinking water to indigenous communities or how to bring economic development projects to indigenous communities. As I said, we should have passed this change to the oath years ago. The progress on this file has been very slow, and we can only really lay the blame for that at the feet of the current government.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today we are talking about truth and reconciliation. While there are many clauses within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, one of the biggest things is a commitment to education and a commitment to finding out ways in which we as a country can move forward.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission points out that many of the education systems in Canada have not had the same education as those on reserve. They learned about their rights, their history and the legacy of the residential schools. It is important that we look at and focus on ways we can move the bar further on this long journey of reconciliation.

We are talking about immigration and new immigrants to this country. There have been new immigrants welcomed by indigenous people for more than 400 years. For 400 years, we have shared resources, our values and our ways of surviving, and that is an important part of this. We hope that with the passage of the bill, we will be able to look at new ways for new immigrants to hear from indigenous people about how we have kept the country and our resources plentiful for the past seven generations and how we plan to do it for seven more generations.

• (1915)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Is the hon. member going to have a full 20-minute speech or a 10-minute speech? You will have either 18 minutes or eight minutes to finish your speech.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Madam Speaker, my speech will be 10 minutes. I will be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last week, I had the opportunity to ask a question of the minister on rural broadband. I asked her specifically to not give an answer about who installed more or invested more money in broadband, whether it was the Liberal government, former Prime Minister Harper or Sir John A. Macdonald. The minister proceeded to tell me that the government had invested more money than former prime minister Stephen Harper did and did not provide an answer to the question.

I put that answer out to my constituents and asked if this was an answer they felt addressed their issues and concerns. Unsurprisingly, the result was a resounding no. Residents in my riding are fed up with the lack of affordable and reliable Internet, and they got back to me in droves. I am going to share a couple comments I received.

I received a comment from Jim, who said, “We use Rogers Rock-et hub and as now with COVID, I work from home and my daughter has come to live with us from the city. Our monthly bills have topped \$700 a month. It is completely unacceptable.”

Marion writes, “We also have a Rogers hub. It gobbles up the data and at this point we actually had a bill of \$400 in one month. This is when our grandchildren came to stay with us and they were trying to do school work from home.”

Leanne writes that she chose to send her children back to school because she knew they did not have reliable and affordable Internet at home. Her concern is, “I have sent my children back to school where they could be exposed to COVID because we do not have reliable Internet at home and the cost is astronomical.”

Charles talks about how for years he contended with a \$300 monthly bill. He asked why the government could not invest to fix

### Adjournment Proceedings

this. He has children in Ottawa who pay less than one-third of that price and get high-speed Internet.

Lai says in her email, “Pardon my language,” so I am going to pardon her language as I read this. She says, “Internet in Mansfield sucks. I cannot get any providers that give me more than 5 Mbps or sometimes 6 Mbps with a DSL connection. Are we living in the stone age in Mansfield?”

This is what is going on in my riding every day. The Internet is unreliable and unaffordable. My constituents are tired of glib answers like, “Well, we invested more than the previous government did” and “Wait, maybe something exciting is coming down the pike.”

They need answers now. They need affordable Internet now. When are they actually going to be connected to reliable, affordable broadband?

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am very happy to respond to the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon about the need for Canadians in rural communities to have access to reliable and affordable telecommunications services.

Our government recognizes the importance of broadband and mobile services for all Canadians to fully participate in the digital economy. We know the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced how critical these services are to our economy, our communities and our society as a whole. Our government does have a plan to connect all Canadians, no matter where they live, to the high-speed Internet services everyone needs to work, to learn and to keep in touch with loved ones. We are committed to connecting all Canadians, even the hardest to reach, by 2030.

Through several coordinated initiatives, we have made billions of dollars available, and we are already seeing progress. Under the connect to innovate program, the government is investing over \$585 million to improve high-speed Internet. Partners in the private sector, the provinces and the territories have provided significant co-funding, and the investments total more than \$1.2 billion. Connect to innovate is delivering real results.

We anticipate bringing improved Internet connectivity to over 975 communities, 190 of which are indigenous communities. This will improve access for approximately 390,000 households and 1,200 anchor institutions, such as schools, libraries and medical facilities across the country from coast to coast to coast.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, is also taking action to expand Internet and sell access through its \$750-million fund. The first five projects announced under the CRTC's fund will connect over 10,000 households in 51 communities, the significant majority of which are indigenous communities.

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Building on these efforts in budget 2019, the government announced historic investments of \$1.7 billion in broadband, our country's single largest investment to advance these goals.

As indicated in the recent 2020 Speech from the Throne, the government will accelerate the connectivity timelines and ambitions of the universal broadband fund to ensure that all Canadians have access to high-speed Internet. The government has been engaging with stakeholders to ensure the fund responds to rural needs, and we look forward to a program launch very shortly.

We will also take advantage of other measures to promote rural access. This includes investments in low-earth orbit satellites to ensure that even the most challenging northern and beautiful remote areas have access to increased investments for broadband from the Canadian Infrastructure Bank, as well as spectrum policy tools and accelerated investment incentives.

Finally, the government is working with the telecommunications industry to ensure that Canadians stay connected and Canada's networks remain resilient in these challenging times.

In conclusion, the government is committed to ensuring all Canadians have universal access and is rolling out a number of important initiatives to realize that objective. I look forward to working with my colleague across the House to make sure we connect all Canadians.

• (1920)

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Madam Speaker, by that answer, 2030 is when the Liberals are saying everyone will be connected. They are already behind, so I do not believe they are going to meet that deadline. That is 10 years from now, so I guess the answer I get to tell Jim, who is paying \$800 a month for Internet, which is \$9,600 a year, is that it is only going to cost him another \$96,000 to continue with his slow, unaffordable Internet.

I got a partial answer: 2030. Great, that is awful for my constituents.

There was no answer on affordability. What is going to happen with affordability? Could the member please tell me that I do not have to tell Jim he is going to pay \$96,000 for his Internet over the next 10 years, while the government does nothing?

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Madam Speaker, I have some words for Jim through the hon. member across the way.

Just this September, the member opposite's own community benefited from our investments in the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology project, which ensured that construction of up to \$16.6 million in broadband infrastructure in Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon is now moving forward.

We have a strong track record of delivering results and we are going to build on that success as we add a brighter future for rural, remote and indigenous communities. Our government is going to continue to be a champion for robust and affordable access and an enabler of economic growth, innovation and social inclusion.

I am from a really rural riding and I understand the importance of connectivity. I am proud to be part of a government that has a plan to connect all Canadians. Work is under way every day, and in the

next 18 months we will connect an additional 250,000 households to high-speed Internet.

• (1925)

INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow up on a very exciting issue that I first raised in the House last month: the Alaska to Alberta railway.

I was glad to see in the news last month the announcement by the Alaska - Alberta Railway Development Corporation that it had secured the necessary American permit to move that project forward. This railway will be tremendously beneficial to Canadians for a number of reasons. First, the costs of this railway are all being paid for by the private sector. The Alaska - Alberta Railway Development Corporation is a private-sector business that is willing to put up \$17 billion of investors' money to move that project forward. The only ask of the federal government is to rubber-stamp that permit so that the project can move ahead.

Second, this project will create lots of jobs: 28,000 good, high-paying jobs for both indigenous and non-indigenous people in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and the rest of western Canada. As we come out of the pandemic, unemployed Canadians are going to need jobs to go back to, and the Alaska to Alberta railway can help create these jobs.

Third, this railway presents an exciting opportunity to connect Yukon and the Northwest Territories with the rest of Canada and to open up Canada's north. Residents in Yukon and the Northwest Territories pay some of the highest grocery bills in the country because foodstuffs have to be flown in to remote northern communities by airplane or trucked in during the winter across ice roads over frozen lakes and rivers.

According to a recent study by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the living wage rate in Whitehorse was \$19.07 per hour in 2019. That places Whitehorse among the highest costs of living anywhere in the country. If the people in the Yukon and Northwest Territories had regular, reliable rail service, then grocery bills and the cost of living would go down and the people in the north would have more money left over in their pockets at the end of the month.

Finally, the Alaska to Alberta railway will help the landlocked provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta to get western Canadian resources to international markets. Saskatchewan and Alberta produce more wheat, barley, canola, lentils, oil, natural gas and potash than we can possibly consume domestically. Anything that we can do to get those goods to tidewater and on to international markets will be beneficial to everyone.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

I realize that the government has not yet received an initial project description for the Alaska to Alberta railway, but I would like to know if the government can at least see the potential benefits that this project presents to both indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and the rest of western Canada. Will the government commit to working in good faith and in co-operation with the Alaska to Alberta Railway Development Corporation so this project is given every consideration to move forward to the benefit of everyone involved?

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this government is committed to the sustainable and responsible developments of major resource projects in support of a healthy economy for all Canadians. We are working to ensure our energy and natural resource sectors remain a source of good middle-class jobs, prosperity and of course opportunity across the country. We are committed to supporting and promoting the competitiveness of our Canadian companies in order to attract investments, open international markets and get resources to markets.

Should the Alaska to Alberta Railway Development Corporation choose to advance its project through the regulatory system in Canada, our government will work to ensure a timely and predictable review. To help Canada achieve its commitment to a cleaner environment and sustainable economy, we are delivering high-quality environmental and impact assessments openly and effectively. These assessments include contributions from the public and indigenous groups, and all in the goal of enabling the government to make evidence-based decisions about major projects.

The Impact Assessment Act put in place better rules to protect our environment, to rebuild public trust in how decisions about resource development are being made and to ensure Canada remains competitive in the global marketplace. It ensures broad factors are considered in project reviews, including all facets of a project: economic, environmental, social and of course health aspects.

The Impact Assessment Act ensures greater transparency in federal decisions on major projects. The new impact assessment regime means that both science and indigenous knowledge inform decision-making. These changes will increase public confidence that major project assessments can move forward in a timely and responsible way. The Impact Assessment Act streamlines the assessment process and improves coordination with the provinces and territories to reduce red tape for companies and avoid duplicating efforts in reviewing proposed projects.

Under the Impact Assessment Act, all assessments will occur in partnership with indigenous peoples as well as provinces and territories. Canadians will have the opportunity to express their views early and frequently in the process and industry will have more clarity about requirements. Project reviews will be more rigorous and efficient and timelines will be made more predictable.

Our government that knows a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. We will continue supporting good resource projects in Canada in a responsible, transparent and timely fashion, while also ensuring a sustainable future is there for future generations to come.

• (1930)

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear at least some qualified support from the government for the Alaska to Alberta railway, but I have to admit I am concerned this may be a case of déjà vu.

About a year and a half ago, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency recommended the approval of the Teck Frontier mine. Teck Frontier represented a \$20-billion private sector investment that would have created 9,500 jobs. Unfortunately, Teck Frontier's application sat on the Prime Minister's desk for six months.

I ask that the government not turn the Alaska to Alberta railway into another train wreck the way it did Teck Frontier. Could the government promise it will not let the Alaska to Alberta railway application sit on the Prime Minister's desk for six months and instead move that project forward quickly?

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Madam Speaker, our government is committed to growing our economy while protecting our environment, and we will continue to ensure all good projects move forward in a timely manner.

With Canada's new Impact Assessment Act, our government is increasing regulatory certainty and clarity and encouraging investment in Canada's natural resource and related sectors. We are going to continue to work with Alberta and all provinces and territories to provide good jobs and clean, sustainable growth for people in all of Canada's regions.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in June 2019, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, the parliamentary secretary responsible for the economic development initiative for northern Ontario, announced \$800,000 of FedNor funding for the tech company Skritswap. It is nearly a year and a half later and Sault Ste. Marie has seen very little, if any, benefit to its economy as a result of that.

When this company applied for FedNor funding, the applicants listed the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre as their corporate address, but the director of the innovation centre has said publicly that Skritswap does not use their facilities; perhaps they use it for forwarding their mail to their more permanent address and occasionally they will borrow a desk, from time to time.

The director actually contacted FedNor after Skritswap's funding was announced and was concerned that the company was not actively trying to hire local workers. We know that the vast majority of this company's labour force is based out of southern Ontario and it has job listings and job postings across B.C. and in California as well, so there really is no sign that Skritswap managers have used their FedNor funding to create a single job in Sault Ste. Marie, or in northern Ontario for that matter.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As our party's shadow minister for the FedNor file, I was contacted by constituents from Sault Ste. Marie who were wondering how economic development funding that has been earmarked for northern Ontario can possibly end up going to a company that operates largely, if not entirely, out of the south. The purpose of FedNor, if I am not mistaken, is to help support the economy and create opportunities for businesses and workers in northern Ontario.

My constituents raised this issue with me after I raised it in question period. There are many deserving businesses in Sault Ste. Marie, but also in Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay and across my riding of Kenora and potentially in Dryden or Sioux Lookout or many of the communities I represent. I wonder how many of these companies were passed over for funding in favour of this company, which appears to have nothing more than a PO box in the region. It does not seem fair to many people across northern Ontario.

As I mentioned, I raised this question for the minister in question period. Unfortunately she avoided the question and went on to talk about the government's pandemic relief, seemingly unaware of what question I was asking. Therefore, I would like to give the opportunity for the government to address this once again.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell me, tell members of this House and tell all Canadians, particularly those in his riding, how many jobs were created in Sault Ste. Marie as a result of this FedNor funding?

• (1935)

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedNor), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond to comments made earlier by the member for Kenora regarding repayable funding provided to Skritswap in 2019 by the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario.

Right from the get-go, let me make one thing very clear to set the mind of the member opposite at ease.

This federal contribution is a loan, not a “no strings attached” grant. Whatever money has gone to Skritswap, it has been with the very clear condition that if a company fails to meet its goal of growing business in northern Ontario, it will need to pay back the funds in full.

We invested in Skritswap because our government understands the importance of investing in northern Ontario to create good jobs and grow the economy. FedNor has long been a key partner for entrepreneurs in northern Ontario, and they work with businesses and entrepreneurs to build stronger communities.

We have seen this, loud and clear, throughout the COVID pandemic. Through our regional recovery and relief fund, RRF, FedNor has supported more than 130 organizations with more than \$23 million. Through this funding, we have directly supported more than 1,800 jobs. Further, these grants have gone to organizations that show the diversity of our region.

As of October 15, 33 RRF recipients are women-owned or -operated, 16 are indigenous businesses, 43 are tourism businesses and 112 are located in rural areas. The same goes for FedNor-funded Community Futures organizations. To date, we have provided more

than \$22 million to nearly 650 organizations, and directly supported more than 1,500 jobs here. Of these Community Futures clients, 247 are women-owned and -operated, 44 are indigenous business, 224 are tourism businesses and all 645 are in rural areas.

These are important numbers, because they show, time and again, that our government is there for businesses in northern Ontario, in all these ridings, when those businesses have needed help.

I will also note that it is strange that the Conservative Party is focused on this in particular. For whatever reason, Conservatives have decided to dust off a story that was initially reported in the summer of 2019 and to which we have consistently said that the money will be repaid if the company fails to meet its goal of creating jobs in northern Ontario. They may not be proud of the work that FedNor does and they may want to discourage other women entrepreneurs from entering the tech field in northern Ontario, but we are proud to be helping entrepreneurs create jobs in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie and across northern Ontario.

I would also like to take a moment to talk about the company, Skritswap, because it is clear the Conservatives would like to muddy the waters. Since 2015, the company has received attention for its work on artificial intelligence. It has attracted venture capital, not just from FedNor but from angel investors in Canada and the United States. It has done this while headquartering in Sault Ste. Marie.

Contrary to what the Conservatives claim, Skritswap reports having no employees located outside of Canada, let alone in California. It has four permanent employees, two in northern Ontario and two located in southern Ontario. On top of that, it has created 16 temporary skilled contract jobs across Canada since the pandemic began. The company understands that any jobs created from the FedNor funding need to be created in northern Ontario, or else the company will have to repay it all in full.

Of course, Skritswap faces the challenges of how to recruit and retain talent in northern Ontario. We understand that many entrepreneurs across northern Canada face the same challenges. That is why our government is supporting immigration to rural Canada through programs like the rural and northern immigration pilot, which is helping entrepreneurs and employers find the talent they need to compete and which will help our rural communities prosper.

The reality is that these companies are exactly the type of business that northern Ontario and Canada need. These are the jobs of the future. To support these job creators, we must continue to work to address the skills gap in the region and to invest in entrepreneurs. We are proud of how FedNor is working with the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, Algoma University and Sault College to identify good opportunities. We are proud to be a government—

• (1940)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):**  
The hon. member for Kenora.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, to address the comments of the parliamentary secretary, the reason I am bringing this forward in the House of Commons now is because the constituents in his riding asked me to, because he was refusing to listen to them.

For good reason, they asked me to investigate this. The answer of how many jobs this company has created in northern Ontario seems to be zero. I asked the minister a direct question, and throughout the five minutes that the parliamentary secretary had to respond, he was not able to address it.

I would advise the parliamentary secretary that if the government wants to grow the economy in northwestern Ontario, it could provide support to businesses in northern Ontario.

I would like to know, under what criteria was the company deemed eligible to receive FedNor funding, and in what ways is FedNor going to monitor the success or lack thereof of this funding, particularly as it pertains to Skritswap?

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Madam Speaker, again, we thank the member opposite for his concern.

However, we need to remember the facts. As we have said consistently, this money came with the condition that if the promised jobs are not created in northern Ontario, then the loan needs to be repaid. We have made that clear to the company, and the company has informed FedNor on several occasions that it understands this condition.

We made this money available because we are committed to supporting entrepreneurs in northern Ontario. We do that by continuing to invest in Canadian entrepreneurs and business to ensure they have the funding they need to benefit from cutting-edge opportunities and to help them provide opportunities in northern Ontario, to forge rewarding, high-paying careers in emerging high-tech fields.

This funding was available even before COVID-19, and we have continued to support these vital sectors of the economy since the pandemic began.

I can assure the member that we will continue to be there, to grow northern Ontario's economy and create good jobs in the region after the pandemic is over.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):**  
The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:43 p.m.)



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