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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to subsection 21(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Prince Edward Island.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand, please.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are three motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-29. Motions Nos. 1 to 3 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 3 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Kamal Khera (for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations) moved:

That Bill C-29, in Clause 10, be amended by deleting lines 11 to 13 on page 5.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC) moved:

That Bill C-29, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing line 15 on page 5 with the following:

“in paragraphs (1)(a) to (e), the remaining directors may”

Hon. Kamal Khera (for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations) moved:

That Bill C-29, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing line 9 on page 6 with the following:

(f) Indigenous persons whose first or second language learned

• (1005)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

As we gather to debate Bill C-29, I think that it is important to take a moment to explain the approach that the government took when developing this proposed legislation.

There is a saying, “Nothing about us without us”. The government has tried to fulfill the true meaning of those words as we rebuild a relationship with indigenous people across the country. This is why we used a collaborative approach to develop Bill C-29. Engagement with indigenous leaders and communities was integral to the process every step along the way.

I am going to take a few moments to outline the engagement process we used throughout the development of the bill. The first and foremost has been the incredible indigenous leadership provided by the interim board and the transitional committee. Both independent bodies were made up of first nations, Inuit and Métis, with all providing their best advice and taking into account a wide range of diverse voices and perspectives.

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I also want to acknowledge the monumental work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was the foundation for this bill. The TRC held a series of national and community-focused sessions across the country as part of its work to lay bare the truth and story of this country. The commission has set forth a pathway of reconciliation to begin the healing necessary in relation to the trauma and ongoing impacts caused by the residential school system.

The extensive and historic work of the TRC was pivotal in laying the groundwork for this proposed legislation. By amplifying the voices of survivors, the commissioners included the idea of the national council for reconciliation in calls to action 53 and 54.

In developing the final report, they took an inclusive and indigenous-led approach, and the approach was to listen to the voices of the indigenous people. They heard from survivors of residential schools, as well as their families, and they used the stories not only to tell Canadians the truth about what happened but also as a basis on which to build the calls to action. The government has strived to honour that approach by inviting and supporting indigenous leadership throughout the whole process with the culmination being the development of proposed legislation.

We were inspired and led by the TRC commissioners, the residential school survivors and the indigenous people who participated in the TRC process. This included everyone who envisioned an independent, indigenous-led national oversight body.

The commission envisioned a national council that would prepare an annual report on the state of reconciliation, to which the Government of Canada would respond publicly, outlining its plans to advance reconciliation. In developing this bill, the government has aimed to listen to these diverse voices.

Indigenous leaders and community members had the courage to step forward, to tell the country about their experiences and how this has affected them and their families throughout their lives. More than this, these voices have been guiding the way to help their communities on a journey toward healing.

I would like to speak a little about the interim board. After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had fulfilled its mandate, the federal government responded to the calls to establish a national council for reconciliation by creating an interim board to help transition to the next step by making recommendations on the scope of the mandate of the council. The federal government appointed the interim board of directors in 2018, comprising six indigenous leaders representing first nations, Inuit and Métis, including a former truth and reconciliation commissioner.

This independent board was responsible for providing advice to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations on establishing a national council for reconciliation. The interim board held an engagement event in April 2018. It met with various indigenous organizations and non-indigenous stakeholders to seek their views on the mandate of the council, the legislation, the scope of the council and, more broadly, on long-term reconciliation.

The interim board carefully considered all that it had heard from the engagements with various indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and organizations, as well as engagement events in Ottawa, and developed a final report.

This process included a diverse group of people, community members, academics, business, arts and health professionals and other interested parties. Each member of the interim board reached out to the additional individuals to ask for their views on the establishment of the national council for reconciliation.

● (1010)

The government also reached out to non-indigenous Canadians for their thoughts about creating a council. An online platform was created to capture Canadians' views on the subject. People could share their thoughts on the mandate, on the future of the national council for reconciliation and on what its first steps should be. The responses were positive. They showed that Canadians supported the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Another important step was the engagement that took place directly with national indigenous organizations. The interim board reached out to the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council to seek their input on the mandate of the national council for reconciliation. Including this step in the process meant that indigenous community members, as well as political leaders, had the opportunity to express their perspectives about creating the council.

At every step of the way, establishing an indigenous-led approach was integral to the process. Only after the interim board had heard a wide spectrum of indigenous voices did it prepare its final report incorporating what it had heard.

In June 2018, the interim board presented its final report, which contained recommendations relating to the vision, mission, mandate, structure, membership, funding, reporting and legislation of the national council for reconciliation.

Notably, it echoed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, saying that a council should be established through legislation and that it should address calls to action 53 to 56. It also said that it should be independent, permanent and non-political, and that it should also be a catalyst for innovative thought, dialogue and action.

The interim board also made recommendations about how the government should implement those recommendations. The interim board said the government should create a transitional committee to support next steps. When the government drafted legislation, it should co-draft the legislation with advice and leadership from the transitional committee membership.

Finally, the interim board recommended more outreach and engagement. Building on the work of the interim board, the Department of Justice prepared a draft legislative framework for consultative purposes.

I think it is important to make special note of that fact. The legislative framework was based directly on the work of the interim board, and the interim board based its work on the feedback that it received from indigenous voices across the country. We can really see that indigenous communities are at the very heart of this proposed legislation.

The next step after the interim board was the transitional committee, which was established and launched in December 2021. The members were appointed by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. The committee reviewed the draft legislative framework and considered ways to improve it to ensure a strong and effective council.

Transitional committee engagement was part of this. Building on the interim board's engagement activities in 2018, the transitional committee carried out even more engagement. The committee members met with indigenous and non-indigenous experts, including lawyers, data specialists, and financial and reconciliation experts in March 2022.

The members gathered feedback and advice in areas such as reconciliation, law, data, organizational finances, information sharing, governance and accountability. The committee used this feedback as part of its recommendations.

This brings us to March 2022, when the transitional committee presented its final report. This contained recommendations about the legislation of the national council for reconciliation.

The transitional committee made recommendations on how to strengthen the draft legislative framework while maintaining the vision, purpose and mandate of the council as expressed in the vision put forth by the interim board. It worked to ensure, to the extent possible, that the legislation would address calls to action 53 to 56.

In March 2022, the transitional committee expressed strongly that it preferred this proposed legislation to be brought forward using an expedited approach. It spoke passionately about survivors who see this bill as a cornerstone for reconciliation and want to ensure that it becomes a reality before too long.

• (1015)

Following the recommendation, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations introduced Bill C-29 on June 22. Over the past few months, through second reading, at the INAN committee's dedicated study of the bill and today in the House, we have worked together diversely, but I am confident—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kenora.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by saying I am very concerned with the Liberals' proposal to remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from this legislation. I recently had the opportunity to visit Prince Edward Island, not too far from where the hon. member is. I met with both the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of P.E.I. and the Native Council of P.E.I., which I am sure the hon. member is well acquainted with. The Native Council of P.E.I. specifically works in conjunction with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples quite frequently. In fact, its representatives told me in the meeting I had with them that they felt their voices were

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amplified through that organization. The Native Council of P.E.I. represents over 1,000 off-reserve indigenous peoples across the province.

I want to ask the hon. member why the Liberal government feels those voices should not be heard in this legislation.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, there are three distinct groups that make up aboriginal people under the Constitution of Canada, which are the Métis, the first nations and the Inuit. They are represented by the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council.

We made sure we heard from these voices, but we wanted to make sure this was a non-political group. We did not want parties to come in and say that they really liked an organization and wanted a certain person to have a seat or that they really like what another person had to say. We tried to keep the politics out of it, stick with the constitutional nature that is represented in section 35 and make sure that we were consistent with what we were putting forward with the Constitution of Canada and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That is why we have moved forward with those three groups.

As part of the committee and part of the discussion, we heard some great discussion about the need to include indigenous women as part of our calls to justice in the aid of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We believed that because of gender parity, because of the things we wanted to do to show them we were moving forward on the calls to justice, we would move forward with the Native Women's Association of Canada. However, those were the only groups we felt were the appropriate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks and his sensitivity around this issue. I would like him to comment further on the notion of representativeness because that may be the most important part of this. Symbolic gestures are one thing, but representativeness determines who comes to the table.

Effective representativeness is key to achieving real dialogue that will lead to reconciliation, but we know very little about what is in place to ensure that representativeness. Who speaks on behalf of first nations, Inuit and Métis?

In my colleague's opinion, who should be at the table? While it would be nice to hold a grand parliament and give every nation a seat at the table, that seems unrealistic.

I would like my colleague to share some details.

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[English]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, we are looking at 15 seats on the national council for reconciliation. There are over 40 to 60 nations of first nations people across Canada. We have consistently said we are going to stick with the constitutional advocacy groups that are there. We want to make sure it is as independent as possible. With the transitional committee, we want them to have the ability to choose for themselves and not necessarily have our government or political parties fill the seats. We believe it is the indigenous peoples themselves who have the best path forward toward reconciliation and that we should follow their voices.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fundamental issue with the national council for reconciliation is the fact that the government is picking and choosing who gets to sit there. It has been raised several times by my colleagues from the Conservative bench and by my colleague from the Bloc bench, who are all concerned about the reality of cherry-picking the organizations that are going to sit on the board of the national reconciliation council. It is important that indigenous people truly have a breath in order to have space to have this very critical dialogue.

The member opposite, the parliamentary secretary, made mention of making this non-political. It is the most political move to pick and choose exactly who gets to sit there. I held some consultations and spoke directly to Métis organizations across the country, many of which are not represented by the Métis National Council. How does the member expect indigenous communities that are not members of the three national organizations, nor are going to have a seat at the other tables, to be included?

• (1020)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, that is exactly why we kept the number of seats limited to the three constitutional groups. It is important that, when we are talking about organizations, we are not cherry-picking organizations.

There are three constitutional groups in section 35 of the Constitution of Canada. They are represented by AFN, MNC and ITK traditionally in Canada, but we also wanted to make sure the transition committee itself was there to move the path forward and not to have our government or political parties doing that work instead.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to join the debate today on Bill C-29, the truth and reconciliation council. It has been an honour for me as the member for Kenora representing northwestern Ontario, which includes 42 first nations across three treaty territories as well as the Métis homeland, to work on this bill throughout the committee process.

I am pleased that the vast majority of the amendments brought forward by the Conservative Party have been adopted and implemented into Bill C-29. As well, other parties have been able to improve this legislation, so far, moving forward. Generally, we have been working together quite well at committee, notwithstanding a couple of hiccups. I will speak a bit more to those towards the end of my comments.

I first want to take a step back and look at the need for the truth and reconciliation council. I believe it is important that we are turning from nice words of reconciliation to action. I think we have a

government that has said, more or less, all the right things over the last seven years that it has been in power, but that there has not always been the proper follow-up to ensure true reconciliation is being met and is moving forward.

I believe this council could serve as an accountability mechanism for that, to ensure there is that oversight, so to speak, on government, and to ensure that not just this government but future governments would live up to the rhetoric, so to speak, when it comes to advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

This is important because we are in a situation where we have a government that, I would say, very clearly measures its success based on how many dollars it can spend. If we ask a question about almost anything in the chamber, the government tells us how many dollars it spent to address it. It says, "Look at us. We spent more money than anybody else. Clearly we care the most and we are doing the most. Therefore, that is the right approach."

However, on this side of the House, we believe we should be measuring outcomes. We should be measuring the results those dollars are actually achieving. That is where there is a major gap. That is where I believe we need to take more action to ensure that we are actually following through.

I want to look to a report from May of this year, from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It indicated that since 2015 there has been a significant increase in funding to Indigenous Services Canada. I believe there was an over 100% increase. However, the highlights of the Parliamentary Budget Officer report said:

This increase in expenditure did not result in a commensurate increase in the ability of the organizations to achieve the targets that they had set for themselves.

The government is spending more to achieve worse results. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also said that Indigenous Services is having trouble actually matching what it is spending with its own performance targets, essentially throwing money out the window in many cases.

I want to turn to another quote from Ken Coates in *The Globe and Mail*. He said, "Put bluntly, Canada is not getting what it is paying for—and what's worse, the massive spending is not improving lives in Indigenous communities." That is a great cause for concern. I think that should concern everybody in the chamber and everyone across the country.

We have a system where, in many ways, the Liberal government is creating this appearance of progress by announcing all the funds they are funnelling through Indigenous Services, but the lives of indigenous peoples are not actually improving.

We see that across the north as well when it comes to nutrition north Canada. That is, of course, the government's flagship program to address food security across the north, particularly in the territories but also in the northern parts of the provinces, including in my riding of Kenora, where there are many communities that fall within the jurisdiction of nutrition north Canada.

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Every single year the government has increased the spending on this program. It has increased the subsidy. It has put more resources towards it, but every single year it has been in office, the rates of food insecurity across the north have risen. The government is literally spending more, again, to get worse results. We see that especially across the north where in places like Nunavut over half of the population is food insecure. We have heard those concerns from many members on all sides of the House for a number of years now. It cannot just be addressed by more money.

• (1025)

We know that dollars in government investment are often necessary and are often an important part of the solution, but time and again we have seen these reports that show that more money is not going to solve the problem. We need to actually have a structural overhaul to Indigenous Services Canada to ensure we are getting value for those dollars and that indigenous people are seeing that value.

I want to speak a bit about the boil water advisories as well because that is another area where the government has made some progress. I have said that before and I will say it again. The Liberals have made some progress. We have seen in my riding some communities that have had water advisories lifted, that are moving forward and are having much success with that, but that is not universal. There are many other communities where the government, in large part, is getting in the way.

Neskantaga in my riding has been under a boil water advisory for many years. Just a couple of years ago, it actually had to evacuate because the water plant malfunctioned altogether. The government has put \$25 million toward supporting a new water treatment plant in Neskantaga. It is not for lack of money being allocated. Indigenous Services Canada is putting up barriers and making it difficult for those funds to actually reach the community. That is why, in part, we are seeing the boil water advisory persisting to this date. Those are the structural issues I am talking about.

The Auditor General as well has previously stated that there are systemic issues in the Indigenous Services bureaucracy; that longer wait times are leading to higher costs of projects, for example; and that Indigenous Services often tries to dictate to communities how those dollars should be spent, when the communities know best where the dollars should go. One of the most troubling things is that Indigenous Services Canada is not allowing indigenous communities across the country to guide their own destinies. The department is dictating to them and oftentimes getting it wrong.

That brings me to the overarching point of why I was sharing these concerns. Of course these are concerns that would be addressed in part through Bill C-29, which is why I am speaking positively about the legislation. I do think Bill C-29 is necessary and this council would help us achieve better goals for indigenous people. However, I want to talk about the reasons why I feel that is necessary. That is why I was sharing those structural concerns, and it comes back to what the Conservative Party is standing on.

We have currently a Liberal government in office that is, as the reports frequently allude to, spending more and getting less. It is the government itself, through the silos it has created in Indigenous Services with the lack of flexibility to allocate funding where com-

munities see best, that is actually continuing to perpetuate challenges across the north. We are seeing it in northwestern Ontario and across northern Ontario. That is why I want to talk about what the Conservative Party would do.

The Conservative Party would respect the rights of indigenous communities to guide their own destinies. We would empower communities to have self-determination, to have more freedom and to make those decisions for themselves. We stand here ready as a partner and ally to move forward on prosperity, on projects, on infrastructure and on social supports that are necessary to see these communities thrive. For too long, we have had a government that is getting in the way, that is bloating the bureaucracy and that is not meaningfully addressing the needs that will advance reconciliation. Those are the thoughts I wanted to leave on a final note.

I wrap it up with the fact that Bill C-29, this council for reconciliation, should serve as an accountability mechanism for the government to ensure it is not throwing money into the wind but that it is actually getting meaningful results with the dollars it is spending.

• (1030)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his work on the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

I am really enthused to see the Conservative Party so ambitious on the truth and reconciliation calls to action. I know we will move forward in a really good way collaboratively during this process of moving forward with the TRC calls to action 53 to 56.

For the sake of collaboration and the sake of putting aside partisan back and forth and looking at what we can do for indigenous people, what we can do for the survivors and what we can do to advance the truth and reconciliation calls to action, I wonder if there are any other of the calls to action that my colleague would speak to that the Conservatives are willing to support, so that we can all move faster on our path towards reconciliation.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with my colleague once again on the indigenous and northern affairs committee, as he alluded to.

The short answer is all of them. I support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and I support moving forward on the calls to action, but the point the parliamentary secretary made, and he alluded to it as well in his speech, is talking about calls to action 53 to 56. There are some gaps in Bill C-29 and the government has not actually implemented those calls to action as it was intended to, for example, by not having the Prime Minister respond to this, as was indicated in call to action 56.

There certainly is a long way to go, and I think there is still a long way to go when it comes to Bill C-29 as well.

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[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last week, the Auditor General of Canada tabled a rather scathing report on housing.

My colleague talked about how, five years ago, the government launched the national housing strategy, a major housing initiative to put an end to chronic homelessness in Canada. Five years later, the government has spent a lot of money, but we have no idea what results have been achieved. There is no accountability. That is scandalous and needs to stop. We know that indigenous peoples are overrepresented when it comes to homelessness, particularly in our cities.

My colleague talked a lot about the fact that the government is spending a lot of money without getting any results. That is true, but what is the solution? What do we need to do? There are major housing problems in indigenous communities across the country, particularly in Quebec, northern Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

What do we need to do and how can we put an end to the housing problem in indigenous communities across the country?

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, as I alluded to in my speech, a very important aspect is that the government needs to listen and be responsive to the needs of indigenous communities. When I talk to chiefs and leaders across my riding, they know what their communities need and they know where the gaps are, but too often we have Indigenous Services trying to dictate where those dollars should flow, and that is why I think we see a number of gaps, including when it comes to housing.

I would say as well that I think economic reconciliation is a very important part of this conversation. The Conservatives brought forward an amendment, which unfortunately was rejected at committee, to include economic reconciliation in Bill C-29, but we have heard testimony from a number of people who have said that it is key to prosperity and that it is key to ending poverty and ensuring communities can move forward.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have worked really well with my colleague across the way, but he spoke about more spending, and that certainly is not agreed to by Riley Yesno at the Yellowhead Institute, who said:

What does this underfunding

—this is in regard to indigenous people—

and the budget approach more generally mean for those like Indigenous people, who have been consistently underfunded even when the Canadian government has made its largest investments?

I think, chiefly, it means two things:

1. Indigenous people will continue to be insufficiently invested in—left to try and make do with scraps of what is truly necessary to improve well-being;
2. It solidifies what the government values when it comes to Indigenous futures. In the case of Budget 2022, those values revolve around resource development and economic partnerships rather than Indigenous climate action or Indigenous-led self-determination.

I would like to remind the member that all the resources and riches we benefit from in Canada today have been built on the

backs of indigenous people and our lands and resources. I know he said the Conservative Party will respect the rights of indigenous communities to guide their own destinies, and I am wondering if he respects the rights of indigenous people who choose not to have their destinies be founded and grounded in an oil and gas industry when the Conservatives consistently—

• (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Kenora a few seconds to answer.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg had quite a few questions within that, so I will try to address them in the time I have. To her point around the spending, I alluded to it in my speech. It is not necessarily about more or less, but about spending more efficiently and more effectively. When we have Parliamentary Budget Officer reports saying ISC is throwing money away and not actually achieving results for indigenous people, that is a concern.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to take the floor in the House and, today, I am doing so at the report stage of Bill C-29.

As we all know, the adoption of this bill will allow for the establishment of an apolitical and permanent indigenous-led national council for reconciliation to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples in response to calls to action 53 to 56 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs studied Bill C-29 and produced a report that includes the amendments made to the bill. These do not change the spirit and intent of the bill.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle underlying Bill C-29, and will support its adoption in its current form, since, as I said in a speech here in the House last week, the Bloc Québécois is a vocal advocate for nation-to-nation relations between Quebec, Canada and first nations.

Giving indigenous peoples a stronger voice and allowing them to be heard in the reconciliation process is entirely in line with our position. As members know, the Bloc Québécois has always worked with indigenous nations at the federal level to strengthen and guarantee their inherent rights. It is also working to ensure that the federal government applies the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in its entirety in its own jurisdictions.

The Bloc Québécois has also come out in support of indigenous nations receiving their due, and we will continue to apply pressure on the federal government to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

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Lastly, let us not forget that, on June 21, 2021, the Bloc secured the unanimous passage of a motion to ensure that indigenous communities have all the resources needed to lift the veil on the historical reality of residential schools and to force the churches to open their archives. This bill is a step forward in this regard.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill follows up on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 to 56. As members will recall, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established through a legal agreement between residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives and those responsible for creating and running the schools, in other words, the federal government and church authorities.

It is important for us, here, to remember these calls to action, and that is why I am taking the liberty of reading them, as they are the reason for Bill C-29. Call to action 53 reads:

We call upon the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation.

Call to action 54 reads:

We call upon the Government of Canada to provide multi-year funding for the National Council for Reconciliation to ensure that it has the financial, human, and technical resources required to conduct its work, including the endowment of a National Reconciliation Trust to advance the cause of reconciliation.

Call to action 55 reads:

We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation....

Call to action 56 reads:

We call upon the Prime Minister of Canada to formally respond to the report of the National Council for Reconciliation by issuing an annual "State of Aboriginal Peoples" report, which would outline the government's plans for advancing the cause of reconciliation.

Naturally, the Bloc Québécois is fully and firmly in favour of these calls to action, which is why we support this bill. We also support Bill C-29 because of its major components, including the positive goal to establish a national council for reconciliation to advance efforts towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Members will note one thing that keeps coming up in this bill, specifically all the entities that the national council for reconciliation will monitor and on which it will make recommendations.

We can see that the council's current purpose is to monitor the progress being made towards reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada and to recommend measures to promote, prioritize and coordinate efforts for reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada.

● (1040)

First, we need to understand what "all sectors of Canadian society" means.

I assume that all Canadian Crown corporations will be under the council's scrutiny, but that raises questions. Will the council also monitor and investigate federally regulated private businesses? Would an independent airline be included in the mandate to monitor and make recommendations?

The very broad scope the bill allows the council appears to give it great latitude in its activities, but that could also make it less effective when it could be focusing on government corporations and bodies rather than on private businesses. The government must set an example, so it is important to pay special attention to its entities.

The other element to look at is the monitoring of "all governments in Canada". The intention is to monitor provincial and territorial governments. Although indigenous affairs fall under federal jurisdiction, first nations issues also relate to many areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as health and education. There seems to be a desire to disregard jurisdiction and allow the council to monitor all government activities in Canada.

I would remind members that the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Quebec, known as the Viens commission, was set up to determine the underlying causes of all forms of violence, discrimination and differential treatment towards Indigenous women and men in the delivery of certain public services in Quebec.

In his report, the commissioner issued 135 recommendations to the Government of Quebec. These calls to action apply to all of the services the government delivers to indigenous peoples, such as justice, correctional services, law enforcement, health, social services and youth protection.

In the interest of independent and impartial monitoring, the Quebec ombudsman was mandated to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Viens commission. The ombudsman has established an advisory committee comprising first nations and Inuit members to foster collaboration and ensure that the Viens commission's calls to action are translated into measures that meet the needs of first nations and Inuit representatives.

Another committee, made up mainly of university researchers and representatives of civil society, was also set up to independently document the implementation of these calls to action. The committee, which was based out of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, released its first report in 2021.

The national council for reconciliation is another body tasked with monitoring progress and making recommendations, in addition to the two similar bodies already at work in Quebec. It is worth asking whether there will again be overlap between their mandates or whether the council will focus on federal issues in Quebec, analyzing only issues that fall under federal jurisdiction. I certainly hope there will be no overlap.

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Lastly, we know that the national council for reconciliation will have to conduct investigations, since its mandate is to monitor and make recommendations. That means it will need investigators and analysts. I would be curious to see the current forecasts concerning the number of employees the council will need in order to carry out its mission properly.

• (1045)

[English]

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we look at the truth and reconciliation calls to action, there are several that touch on multiple jurisdictions, such as the need for us to do more around systemic racism within our justice systems, but also in systems that are largely provincial in jurisdiction, like education and health.

I wonder if the member opposite believes it is important for this independent committee to be able to look at some of the progress being made in education, especially by including indigenous nations regarding what happened in the residential schools and during some of the dark chapters in the history of this country.

Is it important that the national council of reconciliation not only look at the federal mandates under the calls to action, but also give assistance to the provinces in saying that these are some of the things that we would like to see from them as well?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

This bill was drafted as part of a legal agreement between residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives and those responsible for establishing and overseeing the schools, as I mentioned earlier. It is very important that the council have all the freedom it needs to demand that the needs of indigenous communities be met.

I agree with the hon. member's question, and I think the council will have to resolve this whole issue and look at what is happening in each province.

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of working with my colleague from the Bloc previously on the indigenous and northern affairs committee. To that end, I want to talk a bit about the amendment that was put forward by the Liberal Party to remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from having a seat on this council. The Conservatives proposed that initiative at committee and we had support from the NDP and the Bloc to include the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

How does the Bloc Québécois feel about the inclusion of the congress?

[Translation]

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

I do believe that all indigenous communities must have representation on this council, including the Inuit and the Cree. It is very

important because there must be stability. This council will finally address certain issues that have been known for years and even centuries.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to ask the member about something she did not really talk about in her presentation and give her the time to tell the House what the 14 Inuit communities in her riding have said about Bill C-29.

[Translation]

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

There are indeed Inuit communities in my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. In fact, I recently went to Aupaluk in Nunavik. It is very important to the Inuit that this bill receive our support and be passed.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for her work on this bill.

I would like her to clarify something for me. Often, in indigenous matters, we speak about communities and on behalf of communities, but they are not allowed to participate and to speak.

I would like her to reassure me that for the bill in question, we will not be “talking about” but “talking with” these communities.

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

I am very aware that far too often we do not listen to the communities enough. It is therefore important that this council listens to all the communities. It is not for us to make suggestions to them. They are the ones who need to suggest to us which avenues to take or decisions to make regarding the communities. I think this is an important aspect and it was mentioned at every stage of the Viens commission.

• (1050)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I thank my constituents in Nunavut who continue to reach out and give me encouragement in this work. The faith they give me drives my work and continued commitment to ensure that their voices are amplified in this place.

I speak passionately as an Inuk, and I am guided by the voices shared with me by first nations and Métis. I thank the many indigenous peoples in Canada to whom I dedicate this speech.

Inuit and first nations thrived on these lands we now call Canada for generations before the arrival of settlers. Métis have thrived in Canada. Much to the chagrin of settlers, Inuit, first nations and Métis still use our cultures, languages and practices.

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Unfortunately, there are still far too many indigenous peoples whose experiences show the constant disparity between Canadians and indigenous peoples. In support of the need to pass Bill C-29, I share some of these disparities and some basic words that have such disparate treatments between most Canadians and indigenous peoples in Canada.

On reproductive care, most Canadian women get proper guidance, they easily talk about birth control and do not have to worry about their pregnancies. Indigenous women still experience unconsented sterilization, do not get proper birth control guidance and most worry about nutrition due to a lack of accessible nutritious food.

Most Canadian women give birth in places with which they are completely familiar, with doctors and nurses they recognize, and the comfort in knowing that the system will be ready for any urgent issue that may arise while giving birth. Some indigenous women must leave their home communities and travel thousands of kilometres to give birth a month in advance. The doctors and nurses are not indigenous, may not necessarily speak their language and they may worry that their newborn baby may be taken by social services.

Love for most Canadians can be unconditional. The love between generations provides the financial stability, educational goals and freedom to choose to transfer a property from one generation to the next. For too many indigenous peoples, love is short lived, tainted by intergenerational trauma and little to no guarantees about the financial security needed for the next generation.

Education for most Canadians is having one teacher preside over many children and youth. It is a system rooted in colonial history, with Canada's successes. While there have been improvements, it is still largely without the history of how indigenous peoples were treated by assimilationist policies, which are still plaguing indigenous peoples. For indigenous peoples, it was a process of genocide and indoctrination. Indigenous children were emotionally, physically and sexually abused by so-called teachers. Some children never returned to their indigenous parents. Instead, they were buried next to the school that was supposed to take the Indian out of the child.

The RCMP for most Canadians is an institution whose members they can recognize and call upon to be protected. For indigenous peoples, it is a current and ongoing enforcer of systemic racism. It is still very fresh in my mind when RCMP officers, who were equipped with assault weapons, helicopters, dogs and a chainsaw, were breaking down the doors of indigenous women who were seeking to defend their lands against the unconsented project to cross their ancestral lands. There is also a lack of presence in other places where gang violence and squatters are allowed on indigenous lands.

• (1055)

Violence, for most Canadians, are the things they watch on TV screens, in movie theatres or some far away social media. For most indigenous peoples, it is a common experience. From childhood to the dying days of elders, violence is surrounding our lives.

Justice, for most Canadians, occurs quite quickly. For indigenous peoples, it takes generations, if any. Justice has tests to meet to de-

termine if it is justifiably infringed. Justice for indigenous peoples will continue in jails and in gravesites.

Missing and murdered, for most Canadians, are terms they hear in the media about indigenous women. For indigenous families, it is a far too common experience. Reports after reports are not making the systemic changes to stop this genocide. There are far too many basic emotions to express all the heartache experienced by indigenous peoples.

Crisis is another word we hear all too often in the House. First nations, Métis and Inuit have been experiencing crisis for generations. Let us choose to be more careful when we use the word crisis in the House.

Suicide is something that has been a reality for far too long in Canada. For most Canadians, it is a debate on legislation that allows people who are suffering medical conditions to choose. Suicide, for indigenous communities, is something chosen by youth because they have no hope left. I am still hurt, and it is still very fresh in my mind, about the young pregnant woman who committed suicide because she was given the news that she would not have a home.

Reconciliation, for most Canadians, is a term on which the federal government needs to act. There is no sense of obligation for regular Canadians. It is a term used by politicians to make promises during campaigns. It is a term that costs too much, so the piecemeal approach is often taken.

I have not even mentioned the environment, housing, culture, languages and so much more. These disparities demand that the national council for reconciliation finally be established. I thank the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which heard and voiced such important calls to action. The national council on reconciliation must take a rights-based approach to monitoring the work of the government, whose side of reconciliation has failed for generations to date.

I conclude by sharing names of some indigenous role models who have proven indigenous peoples are vibrant, strong and vital to the continued success of indigenous peoples. These people are leaders and voices we must continue to amplify as they are the ones who have advanced reconciliation, whether they tried to or not.

This is an incomplete list and I challenge members to name more: Governor General Mary Simon, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Okalik Eegeesiak, Dalee Sambo Dorough, Cindy Blackstock, the member for Winnipeg Centre, Justice Murray Sinclair, John Amagoalik, Tagak Curley, former member of Parliament Romeo Saganash, John Borrows, Tracey Lindberg, Duncan McCue, Pam Palmeter and James Eetoolook. I know this is not an exhaustive list in any way.

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We must all do what we can to ensure the national council on reconciliation is established. Through the great work of the interim board, we will see the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights, the advancement of self-determination and the expectation that the federal government does better to support the work of indigenous peoples in Canada.

• (1100)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her work on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, or INAN. Her insights have been tremendously helpful for me and the rest of the committee.

I thought there was really good collaboration happening there between all parties to strengthen this bill. In fact, there are two specific sections I would like her to speak to.

A lot of the testimony that we heard at INAN was to make sure that we ensured gender parity and that we made sure that we were not only looking to the calls to action as part of the national council for reconciliation but also had our eye on the calls to justice for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. There was also an amendment to ensure that there is effective representation from northern indigenous communities.

I am wondering if the member opposite could speak to what she heard and what the important parts were in amending this to reflect not only looking at the calls to justice for missing and murdered indigenous women but also representation for indigenous people from the north.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaaqtittiji, indeed, the bulk of our conversations at INAN on this work was very much about representation and making sure that we do ensure indigenous women are better represented in the board, given that a lot of the issues indigenous peoples experience should centre around solutions and the need for reconciliation to better meet the needs of indigenous peoples.

I was absolutely happy to support the motion to make sure that northern territories are represented on this board as well. Given our fewer populations in the north, we do need to ensure that our northern territories' voices are amplified.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Nunavut touched on a number of very important issues. I really appreciate the passion she brings to this place. She really speaks from the heart on a lot of these issues. I have had the pleasure of working with her on the indigenous and northern affairs committee, as the parliamentary secretary has as well.

A lot of the issues that are experienced in the northern part of my riding of Kenora are experienced similarly and, in many ways, are exacerbated and quite more severe in the hon. member's riding. I want to ask particularly about food security. The government has spent more on the nutrition north subsidy every single year it has been in office, but we have seen rates of food insecurity continuing to increase.

I am wondering if the member has any thoughts on how to improve the nutrition north program, or perhaps bring in other meth-

ods, to ensure that everyone across the north can have access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaaqtittiji, it is an important question. While off topic, it is still quite important.

The biggest change that needs to happen in the nutrition north program is that the government needs to do better in monitoring what is going on with the program. Currently, the way it is operated is that the government allows the for-profit corporations to monitor their own program. There is no external review of what is going on. The for-profit corporations are allowed to continue to profit off of these subsidies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. She is a unique voice in the House. I always like to hear her talk. What she said is particularly relevant this morning, as we study this bill.

I feel very helpless faced with all the truth and reconciliation issues in this country. An article in yesterday's *Le Soleil* reported that indigenous women and girls are still undergoing forced sterilization in northern Quebec. That is appalling.

In the last budget, the government announced a \$300-million investment in indigenous housing. We know that nothing has been done yet. Things are moving very slowly.

This morning we will be voting on this bill, and we agree with its purpose, which is to establish a committee.

However, beyond this bill, what would my colleague recommend as a way to make everything move faster, to ensure that this discussion between Canadians and indigenous peoples leads to real solutions so that we can get out of this cycle of discussing the same thing over and over?

• (1105)

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaaqtittiji, the member's question is important. I am very glad that the federal government has acknowledged that there is systemic racism. We now need to make sure that all provinces and territories acknowledge the existence of systemic racism because continuing to deny the existence of systemic racism will not allow solutions to emerge.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to add a couple thoughts. When the member makes reference to names, I think of individuals such as Diane Redsky, Sharon Redsky, Cindy Woodhouse and Amy Chartrand.

These individuals have committed so much of their lives and efforts toward indigenous people on the issue of reconciliation in a real way. There are obviously many others. I am referring just to Winnipeg North, and it is a relatively small number of individuals that I could recognize.

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I would like to pay a compliment to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations on how effective he has been as an indigenous caucus chair. He has provided advice to the Prime Minister and to members of Parliament, such as myself. He has provided us very valuable information to ensure we continue to be on the right track.

Back in 2015, when the Prime Minister was the leader of the Liberal Party in third-party status, the 94 calls to action were tabled here. The then leader of the Liberal Party made a solemn commitment to indigenous people from coast to coast to coast, and beyond, to implement and work toward getting all 94 calls to action moving in a positive direction.

Upon the election results later that year, we made it very clear that our priority was indigenous reconciliation. That was something that was not optional. If one were to check the mandate letters provided to ministers, they would see a very clear indication on indigenous people. This is something that is of a strong personal nature for our Prime Minister. It has been a priority for our entire caucus, with the guidance of individuals like our Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

If we look at budgetary measures or legislative measures, virtually from day one to today, we will see calls to action being responded to in a tangible way. We hear some members of Parliament say we are spending too much, implying there is too much waste. Others will say we are not spending enough.

What is clear is that we have never before seen a government invest so much in financial resources, and other resources, to deal with truth and reconciliation and justice for indigenous people in Canada. There should be no doubt about that.

When I was in opposition, I on occasion made reference to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls from indigenous communities. That is an issue I recall asking for a public inquiry on. That was before the calls to action.

I would like to read call to action 41. It states:

We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls. The inquiry's mandate would include:

- (i) Investigation into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- (ii) Links to the intergenerational legacy of residential schools.

I raise that because one of the very first actions of this government was to call for the public inquiry. We have many actions being requested of the government that have come out of that public inquiry.

● (1110)

Fast-forward to today, and we are talking about Bill C-29. If we look at what Bill C-29 is all about, let there be no doubt that it is specifically in response to calls to action 53, 54, 55 and 56. Call to action 53 states:

We call upon the Parliament of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, to enact legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation. The legislation would establish the council as an independent, national, oversight body with membership jointly appointed by the Government of Canada and national Aboriginal organizations, and consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. Its mandate would include, but not be limited to, the following....

Call to action 53 then goes on to list five points.

Call to action 54 states:

We call upon the Government of Canada to provide multi-year funding for the National Council for Reconciliation to ensure that it has the financial, human, and technical resources required to conduct its work, including the endowment of a National Reconciliation Trust to advance the cause of reconciliation.

Call to action 55 states, in part:

We call upon all levels of government to provide annual reports or any current data requested by the National Council for Reconciliation so that it can report on the progress towards reconciliation. The reports or data would include, but not be limited to....

It then lists two items.

Finally, call to action 56 states:

We call upon the prime minister of Canada to formally respond to the report of the National Council for Reconciliation by issuing an annual "State of Aboriginal Peoples" report, which would outline the government's plans for advancing the cause of reconciliation.

Those four calls to action are in this legislation, in the amendments that were brought forward. I highlighted call to action 41, which we took action on immediately after we became government back in 2015, and today we are debating those four calls to action.

It is not only budgetary and legislative measures that the government makes on a daily basis. If we focus our attention strictly on truth and reconciliation, we can talk about not millions, but billions of dollars that the government has allocated in working in partnership with indigenous people, whether it is on issues such as systemic racism, health care, housing and so much more.

In terms of legislation, we can talk about enactments to support indigenous child welfare. We can talk about legislation to support indigenous language. We can talk about Bill C-15, the UNDRIP legislation that was brought forward. What about the statutory holiday that was brought forward in legislation? There is legislation dealing with the oath of citizenship. When we hear that every child matters, calls to action 72 to 76 are ongoing. We can talk about the lobbying that took place and call to action 58, which was the formal apology from the Pope here in Canada.

If we look at the 94 calls to action in total, well over 80% of them have been acted on in one form or another, and many of them have been completed. It is important to recognize that, as a national government, where we have responsibility, we act on it. That is a commitment that the Prime Minister and Liberal Party made before we formed government, and now that we have the reins of government, we are implementing these calls to action because it is the right thing to do.

● (1115)

I recognize there is a lot more that needs to be done. I suspect if we were to check with the Prime Minister, cabinet or any individual member of the Liberal caucus, we would find the same sentiment.

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Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member intently as he literally read calls to action 53 to 56.

My question for the member would simply be as follows. He did refer to the legislation with amendments, so that is fair, but my challenge would be as follows. If we look at the calls to action 53, 55 and 56, the spirit and intent of those calls to action were not met in the original draft of this legislation. Without Conservative amendments proposed at committee, the spirit of those calls to action would have been failed.

I will give an example. Call to action 53 was supposed to be an independent body, and if we read the draft legislation, independence was not met in the sense of governance. The minister had total control over how the board was structured and how the organization was set up. He had total control over the information that was going to be set up in a protocol.

Finally, call to action 55 was about measurables. There were no measurables in this bill until we proposed an amendment. The member referred to call to action 56, where the Prime Minister was to respond, and in the legislation it was the minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary the opportunity to comment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is one of the nice things we have as parliamentarians, in terms of a process. We have the second reading stage followed by the committee stage.

There is a lot of fine work done at the committee stage. That is why members will often find I am anxious to get bills into the committee stage. Where we have a sense of openness, we will see amendments brought forward that would make the legislation even better in terms of, as the member puts it, reflecting the actual intent of the calls for action.

I suspect that is why we are going to see the amendments pass.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North.

The Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of Bill C-29 and is a strong supporter of nation-to-nation relations with the first peoples.

My colleague from Winnipeg North mentioned that there is still a lot to do. Yes, there is still a lot to do for there to be true reconciliation with first nations. I am referring to the Indian Act, a racist, colonial and discriminatory piece of legislation. The Minister of Indigenous Services has said that it is unacceptable legislation, that it needs to be eliminated. For that to happen, we will need to replace it.

I would like my colleague from Winnipeg North to tell us when his government will take concrete action to change the Indian Act to ensure that we can have true reconciliation with first nations.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that is one of the reasons we saw such unanimous support in regard to Bill C-15, which passed not that long ago, dealing with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

That is something all of us could take a great of credit for, sharing, promoting and encouraging what UNDRIP is all about.

I represent an area in Winnipeg North that has one of the higher per capita populations of indigenous people. I have a very good understanding of many different related issues. Like many others in this House, I want to make a positive difference on reconciliation. That is why I often comment on the issue of reconciliation and just how important it is for us as a nation.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, in addition to having one of the largest indigenous populations of our relatives in Winnipeg North, the member's riding is also home to one of the largest apprehension rates from Child and Family Services in Canada. In addition, this is a member of the government.

However, do not take it from me, take it from a previous auditor general, who said in 2011, at the end of her mandate, that she was not impressed. After 10 years of audits, it was simply unacceptable. The auditor general after that said it was more unacceptable.

The current Auditor General's report, which was just recently published, says that the government is failing to put the interests of first nations at the heart of its mandate.

When will the government truly take indigenous issues seriously? The government has had seven years. We cannot wait. When?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in my final days as an MLA, before I became a member of Parliament, I released in the Manitoba legislature a condemnation from a child advocate, saying that Manitoba had a child care crisis.

The NDP failed the children of the province of Manitoba in the managing of children, foster children. That is one of the reasons I was in wholehearted support of the legislation we came up with to deal with indigenous-led child welfare. I believe that will make a positive difference because, in good part, of the failure of the Gary Doer regime back a number of years ago.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously this is a very important debate that we are having today as we see the in-the-chamber debates taking place.

It is truly an honour to stand here and speak to Bill C-29, an act to establish a national council for reconciliation, at third reading. I would really like to thank the committee that worked on this and adopted many amendments to ensure that we have a good piece of legislation, although we know we can still do more.

In the preamble of this legislation, the goals are very clear. I want to start, for anyone watching today, with what the goals of this reconciliation council are and why we need to have it.

I quote from the preamble:

[T]he Government of Canada recognizes the need for the establishment of an independent, non-political, permanent and Indigenous-led organization to monitor, evaluate, conduct research and report on the progress being made towards reconciliation, including in relation to respect for and the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples, in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada, in order to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action number 53

Like many parliamentarians, we are talking about reconciliation and we are all working toward it. I can say that from going to the second annual truth and reconciliation day in Elgin—Middlesex—London, Canadians, indigenous communities and indigenous people are coming together because we recognize that work must be done, and reconciliation is part of that.

However, I want to quote my friend Chris Patriquin. Chris is a member of the St. Thomas Chamber of Commerce, has a great business and does tons of work. He is a leader in our community. Coming from the Oneida Nation, he said to me, "There cannot be reconciliation unless we have clean water. To me, that is very important."

He says that because on the reserve of Oneida, just 20 kilometres from the city of London, there has been a boil water advisory for over two years. This community is probably about 50 metres from a water line. There are so many options, and I know it takes all levels of government, including indigenous people and communities, municipalities, provinces and territories, to work together. That is why I am saying we must work together if we are actually looking for reconciliation. These solutions occur when everybody is onside.

When we look at this piece of legislation, I recognize that there must be good governance; there must be accountability and there must be transparency, but most of all there must be trust. This trust has not been broken; it was never there. Therefore, it is important that we recognize that when government comes with its hands wide open, we have to understand why there is push-back and that everybody needs to be part of that. It is why this reconciliation council is very important. If the government is truly committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we need to ensure that indigenous peoples and indigenous communities are at the table. Reconciliation is about collective efforts from all people from all generations.

Today, there was an amendment tabled during this third reading, removing the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, known as CAP. Its seat would be removed from the board of directors by this amendment. I am sorry to hear that we have one of the other opposition parties now choosing to side with the government on this, but it concerns me, because I am looking at the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. When we are talking about inclusion and talking about representation of different ideas, different ideas need to be at that table. Removing this for reasons unknown, and I do not know why they would want to remove this, would take a voice away from that table. This is a voice that represents thousands of indigenous people living in urban and rural centres. Therefore, I would ask the Liberal government and the NDP why they would change this, why they

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are accepting this amendment today and why we would take CAP off the table. Our mandate is to improve the socio-economic conditions of our constituents, and that is exactly what having CAP at this table would do. It is another organization.

It is really interesting, because I sit on the status of women committee and I am bringing the work I do on that committee here. On the subject of missing and murdered indigenous women, we have finished and are putting forward a report that we should be very proud of, in which we talk about calls for justice 13.1 and 13.5 from the national inquiry. We got this work done, and I am going to be very excited when we can table it. It is when we bring different voices and different opinions together, when we can actually work together and are able to get a report done, that very strong recommendations are brought forward about safety for women.

• (1125)

That is why it is important that we have everybody at the table. We have four political parties at the status of women committee and we must work together if we are trying to move an amendment, option or recommendation. However, when people are not at the table, it makes it much easier if we do not want chaos. Once again, I question why the government is not only removing CAP, but not allowing other groups. I am talking about the indigenous economic national organization, for example.

When we are talking about reconciliation, we also need to talk about economic reconciliation. If we are trying to create vibrant communities where there is safety and opportunities for indigenous people, that also comes with economic engines. That is why it is very important that we have organizations representing different views at the table. Perhaps that would have been the indigenous economic national organization, but unfortunately we will never know.

I would like to quote Karen Restoule, who was at the committee. She stated:

Adequate funding and support for education, child welfare programs and health investments is at the core of how we are going to be able to succeed to achieve what I've just referenced...in terms of robust challenges and objectives for ourselves.

She also stated:

Economic reconciliation is the vehicle forward in terms of setting our peoples or communities back on a path to prosperity—not only our nation, but the country as a whole. It really does lead to a strong social fabric.

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When I arrived here in 2015, and probably like every other member who arrived here, I received two books of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Yes, these two books are massive, but they have really good and insightful information in them. I would like to know why it has taken the government seven years to finally start taking action on some of these very simple things. To me, this is a very simple process of what we can do. The government started some processes back in 2018-19, but it is now 2022 and we are finally about to appoint our first council, and that is a concern.

I also look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established in 2008, and it is really important. I came here as a new parliamentarian with very little knowledge of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I have sat in Parliament and listened to other parliamentarians, to people with lived experience and to my colleagues who have represented northern and indigenous communities. We need to be working on this. If we are looking for a journey of truth and healing, we need to create these relationships on a basis of inclusion, understanding and respect.

I would like to quote also from the final report. As a parent, this really knocks me off my feet. As any parent would recognize, it would be so hard. This is a quote from the very first page of the summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report. It states:

It can start with a knock on the door one morning. It is the local Indian agent, or the parish priest, or, perhaps, a Mounted Police officer. The bus for residential school leaves that morning. It is a day the parents have long been dreading. Even if the children have been warned in advance, the morning's events are still a shock. The officials have arrived and the children must go.

This is the truth, and we have to recognize this truth, of indigenous people who have gone through this for many decades. Let us move together, let us work together and let us ensure we have a council that it is appropriately appointed, not by the Prime Minister, not by the minister but by organizations that will be working together. There needs to be proper oversight, but if we are putting in an appointed council that is going to be representing the wants and needs of the Prime Minister and the minister, that is not appropriate. We need to ensure that all are at the table, that it is inclusionary, because the path, the journey, is the truth.

• (1130)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I look at the number of things in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report in calls to action 1 to 94, I can frame them in three ways. They are about closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people, addressing the harm and creating pathways to prosperity.

Calls to action 30 to 33 talk about the high incarceration rates and the need to fix the justice system. Section 32 actually talks about eliminating mandatory minimums for indigenous people. Our government is moving forward on that important work, but I often hear members on the other side questioning our government as we move forward on ensuring we eliminate those mandatory minimums.

I wonder if the member opposite could comment on the work that we need to do to address the justice system and to ensure we take steps moving forward to eliminate mandatory minimums.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I come to this issue from a very different side. I come here from the point of the victim. When we talk about indigenous and racialized people, we also have to look at who the victims are. In many cases, we may find that they are from the same groups, and that is very concerning.

When it comes to mandatory minimum sentences, I have some very strong beliefs on them. When someone has impacted somebody else, murder, trafficking, sexual abuse or things like that, we should go for it. That person has taken the dignity away from another person. I do not believe we owe somebody more. I will always stand for victims. That is who I am.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege of working with my hon. colleague on the status of women committee, where we are just completing a study, as was mentioned, on the connection between resource extraction and increased violence against indigenous women and girls. We managed to sit down and talk about some of the hard truths about the history of our country and the ongoing genocide of indigenous women.

She noted the importance of truth telling, and I have always appreciated her openness to hearing truths, even hard truths, in such a respectful way. The committee is all women. One of the things we have spoken about is the importance of representation. The committee should not lose sight of the important voices of women as well as those of our grandmothers. We are speaking a lot about organization and we cannot lose sight of why we are even having this discussion. It is because of the survivors and the sacrifices they made in telling their stories.

Could my hon. colleague reflect on that?

• (1135)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, it has truly been an honour to work on that committee. When we are talking about people working together, it is at committee when we ask the member for Winnipeg Centre to explain things to us. Those are the types of things we talk about. It is that interconnection where the member's stories are helping us learn. When it is my turn, maybe I can teach her something as well.

However, when it comes to this, it is exactly about having the truth and having those stories from the elders and from people who are representing organizations. The truth can only come out when people are willing to tell it and when they are invited to the table.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London mentioned Oneida, which is in my riding. I had the opportunity to visit another one of my first nations, Chippewas of the Thames, a couple of weeks ago. We were talking about the boil water advisories that have been in place in these first nations for years.

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Could the member comment on how she would like to see the government work together with these first nations, because a lot of the issue around the boil water advisory is infrastructure? What can the government do to help our first nations ensure they do have clean water, especially when they are 20 kilometres from a major city centre?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, it truly is about working in co-operation and reaching out to these indigenous communities to see if they have solutions as well. In the case of Oneida, its people do want to work with their community partners and have opportunities. We need to ensure the federal government is not in the way, if we want to do things on the ground with local infrastructure, but that it is there to support those efforts.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I mean this respectfully, but I just want to remind members in the House not to use possessive terms like “our indigenous people”, when referring to indigenous people. We are our own people with our own independent rights.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *kwe, kwe. Ullukkut. Tansi. Hello. Bonjour.*

I would like to begin by acknowledging that our Parliament, this very building, is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples.

We are on a collective journey that is framed by what we believe very fervently we need to accomplish, and the debate is all about how we do that. We have to acknowledge and understand at the beginning the devastating impacts of colonization on first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, and we know there is a lot to do.

Since the first identification of unmarked graves in May 2021, communities have been leading the work to locate and commemorate the children who died at residential schools. The residential school system and colonization has had an impact on every indigenous community, from health to culture and tradition, self-sufficiency, displacement, housing, land, environment and more. These are truths that we have to remember and we have to carry them forward. We cannot undo the past, but we can use what we know of the truth to do better.

As my hon. colleagues have shared so far, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action represents a pathway forward. The calls to action are a road map for all levels of government, education, health, religious institutions, civil society and the private sector to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the progression of Canadian reconciliation. In this sense, living up to the calls to action presents Canada with one of the greatest challenges and opportunities in our country's history, and that is what makes Bill C-29 so significant.

This proposed legislation is a concrete step toward implementing the calls to action. It will contribute to societal changes through education, dialogue and other functions that the council will lead. It will keep all levels of government accountable for progress on reconciliation.

Over the course of the past two months, we have taken important steps to strengthen this bill, and we have heard many recommendations from many indigenous groups and individuals and, indeed,

from the House. We have worked collaboratively with all members of the House through the INAN committee. Through this collaborative process, we have implemented their feedback in the amendments to the proposed legislation.

Let me be clear that the version of the bill that is before Parliament today was developed in a truly collaborative fashion and strengthened by the feedback we received.

I would like to share the bill's proposed next steps for establishing the national council for reconciliation. How it is chosen and its composition has already been the focus of some debate here.

Following royal assent, the first step would be to establish the council's first board of directors. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the transitional committee for the national council for reconciliation would jointly select its first board of directors. Inclusion of the transitional committee in the process supports the independence of the council as a foundational principle.

Having a diverse and inclusive board is critically important, and there may be various opinions and ideas on how that is to be achieved.

The Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Native Women's Association of Canada would each have an opportunity to nominate one board member. Through the amendment process, and on the advisement of partners, we are also ensuring we include additional voices on the board, such as the directors from the territories as well as representatives of survivors or their descendants, elders and indigenous peoples who speak French.

The council's board would also include first nations, Inuit, Métis, indigenous organizations, youth, women, men and gender-diverse persons representing various regions of Canada, including urban, rural and remote areas. The board will contribute its expertise and knowledge to drive the council's work.

Through the board's establishment and subsequent work, the protection and promotion of indigenous languages will be a crucial part of the process. This means supporting board members in their usage of traditional languages.

The board will take steps to incorporate the national council for reconciliation under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act for not-for-profit status. Doing this is essential as it would give the council legal status. This would allow it, for example, to enter into contracts and have bank accounts under its own name.

Bill C-29 would also establish that the council be recognized as a qualified donee that can accept donations and issue official donation receipts.

• (1140)

Once incorporated, the board would then set up the council through steps that include developing bylaws, hiring an executive director and other staff, making financial and banking arrangements and developing operational and strategic plans.

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Moreover, budget 2019 provided a total of \$126.5 million to support the establishment of the council. This includes \$1.5 million to support the council's first year of operations and, importantly, a \$125-million endowment for the council's initial operating capital.

A key responsibility of the council would be to monitor and report on the progress. In this respect, the council would have to, within three months after the end of each financial year, submit to the minister an annual report on the state of reconciliation and the council's recommendations.

Within 60 days of the release of this report, the Prime Minister would be required, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to respond to the report by publishing an annual report on the state of indigenous peoples that outlines the Government of Canada's plans for advancing reconciliation.

These timelines would ensure that the momentum on reconciliation could continue. All of these steps would position the council as a non-political body, and that is the objective, led by strong indigenous leadership. It would require that the council be an independent voice that promotes and monitors progress toward reconciliation, including Canada's implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Together, the council's mandate would be to monitor, evaluate, conduct research and report on the progress being made toward reconciliation, including in relation to, and respect for, the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada.

There would be an opportunity for different representatives to sit on the council. The expertise and experience they bring would contribute to the council's priorities and goals. Their voices would come from many diverse groups across Canada, to ensure that the council would reflect the lived realities of indigenous peoples.

I know these voices may share some pretty hard truths with us. That would be part of their mandate. As we have heard already, some of their feedback is constructive and informed. It is highly valued. We know this because we need a council that will be truly able to make a difference. We need all levels of government, including our own, to be held to account.

The hon. former senator Murray Sinclair once said that "if we agree on the objective of reconciliation, and agree to work together, the work we do today will immeasurably strengthen the social fabric of Canada tomorrow."

I think we can all agree that we need to act swiftly and decisively to achieve the goal. It is clear that we have worked together, in a true partnership, to develop this proposed legislation to achieve that goal.

I encourage all hon. members to support the bill and the objective.

As we all know, reconciliation is not an indigenous issue. It is a Canadian one. Every Canadian has a part to play in renewing the relationship with indigenous peoples and bringing about the transformative changes needed to ensure inclusive growth for indigenous peoples.

If not now, when? If not us, who?

Today, we have the opportunity to make good on our promise of reconciliation. Let us get to work and pass this bill without delay.

Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.

• (1145)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my Liberal colleague's speech. He talked specifically about the need for diverse voices around the table, including voices of those who would share hard truths.

I hope that member is familiar with the Daniels accord and the Daniels decision related to the legal battle between the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Government of Canada and the associated issues surrounding ensuring that both status and non-status indigenous peoples are recognized by the government.

Specifically, I am very disappointed. I am wondering if the hon. member is going to support his government's amendment put forward today, an amendment passed at committee and brought forward in the House at report stage, that would remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from this council.

I am very concerned. Although the hon. member talks about hard truths being shared from voices around the table, I am wondering if he supports his government's agenda to remove those voices.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question because, if anything, it really lays out the challenges of including the wide universe of voices that are present. I would have very similar concerns about how we accommodate band councils, which was kind of a construct of the government back in the day, versus hereditary leadership.

To specifically answer the question as to where we start, I would have to refer to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, who identified the three groups that are constitutionally recognized. I think it is a start. Will it forever be a situation where the group that the hon. member mentioned is not directly included? Who knows?

This will always be a work in progress. I think we have that opportunity in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will ask a clear question.

This morning, we are talking about indigenous peoples. When the federal government tabled its budget in April, it announced that it would be investing \$300 million through CMHC to co-develop and launch an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

A few weeks ago, I met with representatives of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association here in Ottawa. They are very concerned, because it has been six months and nothing has been done.

When the government made that announcement, people were happy. They thought that the government was investing money and was aware of the housing problem on Indigenous reserves, but nothing has been done. Does my colleague have any information he can share with us this morning? Can he tell us when things will start happening?

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I lived up north. I have travelled the Highway of Tears. I lived in Kenora and saw the abject misery on the White Dog and Grassy Narrows reserves. I have seen over the years, particularly my years in media, various attempts to improve housing and many other services. Housing is an ongoing issue.

If I can digress just a little bit, to me there is an opportunity here. As we look at the transition in our petrochemical industry, there is an opportunity to maybe move to a pilot program to 3D-print houses, which we can do using some of the very compounds we extract from the ground right now. We do not burn them for fuel. Instead, we can build far more dependable and durable houses for people in areas where getting supplies is very difficult.

That is part of the answer, I believe.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member opposite just mentioned a very critical part of this act that I hope will benefit the dialogue of all members of Parliament on this incredibly important topic.

The Constitution of Canada was mentioned several times in defence of the government, as to why it chose three national organizations. The Constitution under section 35 is explicit. It says that we will protect and affirm the existing aboriginal inherent treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis. Not once does it make mention of the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council or the ITK. These three national organizations were, in many cases, incorporated after the Constitution in 1982 was ratified.

The question really is about why the government chose those three national organizations. It cannot use the Constitution, because that is not what it says.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend's question does a far deeper dive into the issue than I am capable of making. I will defer to our scholar on this issue, the parliamentary secretary.

I can say that we are challenged here. Even the process we are going through today and even the government funding still represent the vestiges of a colonial approach to these communities across the country. We need to take steps to break with that and really start treating these people with the dignity and the independence they deserve.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, guess who said to get the gatekeepers out of the way and put first nations in charge of their own destinies. Who said that? It was our very own Conservative leader who said that this November in Kitimat, B.C. I was there.

We spoke with local leaders like Ellis Ross, a former Haisla chief and current MLA, and the current Haisla chief, Cris Smith. They

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are asking for economic reconciliation. That is what the speech was about. It was about economic reconciliation. We thought it was important it be included in the bill.

The title of Bill C-29, as many members have already heard, is an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

We heard many witnesses at the indigenous and northern affairs committee. I was surprised that we heard about economic reconciliation over and over again. With a bill that deals with reconciliation, we would think it would be an easy inclusion, especially if witness testimony said we really need to include it.

I am going to read some leader testimony in committee. I thought Manny Jules, chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission, did a great job of explaining what economic reconciliation is. He said:

I believe it will help you understand why there can be no real reconciliation without economic reconciliation.

When I say economic reconciliation, I am talking about two fundamental components. One is that first nation governments must have jurisdictions and unassailable revenue authorities that help fund the exercise of those jurisdictions. The second is that first nations need to implement their jurisdiction and fiscal powers in a way that attracts investment from their members, and others, to participate in the economy on equal terms with everyone else.

He continued by saying, "I recommend that Bill C-29 be amended so that the council's first board of directors also includes a member of the First Nations Fiscal Management Act institutions to ensure economic reconciliation is addressed as a foundation for reconciliation." It does not get more clear than that. Prosperity is the foundation of what Manny was requesting for first nation peoples.

I will refer to another quote too. I already mentioned the current MLA for Skeena, Ellis Ross, former Haisla chief. Here is some of his testimony from the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

He said:

A number of aboriginal leaders feel strongly that economic reconciliation not only lifts up first nations but also obviously lifts up the provinces and the country. The proof is out there.

In my community, for example, the economic reconciliation that we participated in not only made us one of the wealthiest bands in B.C., but it also, for some reason, got rid of [other ills in the community].

I will continue the quote where he says, "we have young aboriginals getting mortgages in their own right without depending on Indian Affairs or their band council. They're going on vacation. They're planning futures for their children."

I have another quote from another indigenous leader, Karla Bufalo, chief executive officer of Athabasca Tribal Council:

In our traditional territory in Treaty No. 8, the first nations are leaders in the advancement of economic reconciliation at a remarkable pace. Our focus is not just on fiscal sovereignty, but also on cultural revitalization and fostering strong and thriving communities and indigenous peoples.

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I have more quotes, but we would think that, with all these quotes of indigenous leaders saying they want economic reconciliation, it would be obvious to see this amendment pass.

I will back up a bit. In hearing that testimony, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River put forward the following amendment under representativeness, “That Bill C-29, in clause 12, be amended by adding after line 16 on page 5 the following: ‘Indigenous organizations that focus on economic reconciliation and prosperity as the path to self-determination.’”

That was pretty clear. Members across the way in committee were all listening to the testimony like I was. We would think that amendment would pass with overwhelming support, but sadly, it did not.

• (1155)

When we put the amendment forward, among the other parties, one NDP member, one Bloc member and four out of five Liberals voted down the amendment to give an indigenous economic national organization a seat on the board of directors. I would compliment one of the Liberal members for voting for this amendment, and we had other support for it as well.

This gets down to the whole purpose of why we are even seeking economic reconciliation. It is really so that indigenous people can thrive and prosper in our country. That is what we were asked to do and that is what reconciliation seeks to re-establish. It is meant to re-establish a relationship, and if we can do that with this legislation, complementing it with economic reconciliation as a key component, it would be a far better piece of legislation. There is still hope that the government will fix it, but it does not look like that will be the case, which is sad to say.

I want to read a quote by Chief Willie Sellars of the Williams Lake First Nation. He stated:

I look at economics through reconciliation and our aspirations to get to be a self-governing community. That has been through the treaty process, but we've also taken these incremental steps to self-government. We are under the first nations land management regime. We are governing over our reserve lands. We have a financial administration law, so these sectoral forms of self-government have allowed us to move at the speed of business and become this machine that works efficiently and is able to make decisions, because the capacity that we have on board helps us negotiate these deals and these agreements and start these other businesses that we've been able to see a lot of success and prosperity with.

In this place, sometimes we say what we heard in testimony in committee, so I have a couple of examples.

Theresa Tait Day is a good friend and is a former hereditary chief of the Wet'suwet'en. I met her at a natural resource forum in Prince George, where all around, people were asking where the support was for developing our resources. One would have sworn by the media coverage of the Wet'suwet'en situation and the blockades that no Wet'suwet'en person would want to develop resources. She said it was quite the opposite. She informed me that 80% to 85% of the Wet'suwet'en wanted a project to go through because they would benefit and prosper from it. She said the first nation has jobs and the economic prosperity that comes from that, so they see the benefit of it.

I was intrigued by her response, and then she said it was not just her I could talk to. I talked to the elected leaders of the

Wet'suwet'en, who all said they supported the particular natural resource project that was so contentious a couple of years ago. I thought it was interesting that often the public from coast to coast to coast did not hear the true story of the first nations that really wanted to develop it.

The 80% to 85% number has become key to me. I have gone around the Northwest Territories and elsewhere in the north, whether it be Nunavut or other northern communities, and the 80% to 85% number is consistent. I was recently in Nunavut and asked a minister about a particular project in natural resource development. I asked how many people the minister thought supported this particular project in the community and he said it was easily 80% to 85%.

What I am getting to is that economic reconciliation is such an important part of reconciliation to indigenous people. They are our friends, neighbours and fellow Canadians, and we want to work together to see reconciliation occur and be realized. The leader of my party said we should get gatekeepers out the way and put first nations in charge of their own destinies, and I could not agree more.

• (1200)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did quite substantial work before I was a member of Parliament in teaching about the calls to action and reviewing them. I looked at all the harms that were caused by the residential schools. The calls to action talk about the loss of language, the high incarceration rates and the deep need for healing in our communities, but one thing I do not see once in the calls to action is the term “economic reconciliation”.

I will ask the member a straightforward question. In which specific call to action do you see economic reconciliation to address the healing that needs to happen in our indigenous communities?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member not to use the word “you”, because he should be addressing all questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I recognize and respect the hon. member from the INAN committee.

I absolutely support all of what is requested and all the past wrongs that have happened, which really need to be reconciled. I absolutely agree with all that he is saying. What I would ask the member back is, did we not hear testimony after testimony at INAN that asked for economic reconciliation to be added to Bill C-29? I know the member heard that as well but chose to vote it down.

I would challenge the government: If it really wants to pursue true, fulsome reconciliation, it needs to add economic reconciliation to this bill.

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• (1205)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I sat in those committee meetings with the witnesses and heard all the questions raised by all parties. I specifically remember the witnesses only responding to questions raised by the Conservatives about economic reconciliation. Most times, witnesses did not voluntarily talk about economic reconciliation.

Would the member concede that when the witnesses talked about it, it was in response to Conservative questions and not said on their own?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I respect greatly the member for Nunavut on our committee.

I have more of a question back to her. Manny Jules, Chief Commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission, in his testimony, even before we got to ask him questions, talked about economic reconciliation being fundamental to this bill. He said, “I recommend that Bill C-29 be amended so that the council’s first board of directors also includes a member of the First Nations Fiscal Management Act institutions to ensure economic reconciliation is addressed as a foundation for reconciliation.”

Manny has a right to ask for this when he comes before our committee. We owe it to him to respect what he is asking for and to include it in this bill.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member’s speech in regard to economic reconciliation. Nowhere in the TRC is that mentioned, but I understand the principle the member is discussing in relation to the need to ensure first nations, Métis and Inuit folks have the economic tools to ensure they are fit and prepared to participate in the economy.

The truth and reality of the member’s statement, however, are only in direct relation to natural resource projects. What if, for example, an indigenous group were to take an approach to build renewable green energy? Would the economic reconciliation principle exist in something like that for the Conservatives?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, on a couple of fronts, those projects are happening as we speak, even in my own jurisdiction in B.C.

Call to action 92 actually says, at the end of the paragraph, “Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.”

If that is not economic reconciliation, what is?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for truth and reconciliation. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin peoples.

At the outset, I want to acknowledge the incredible work of many of my colleagues from different parties, including the member for Sydney—Victoria, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the member for Northwest Territories, the member for Nunavut, the member for Winnipeg Centre, the member for Edmonton Griesbach and others, who, over the many years we have been here, have been inspirational in their work and advocacy as we make sure that as a government, we move forward on reconciliation.

Reconciliation is multi-layered, is often complex and is an issue that will take generations to achieve in Canada. Canada has gone through 154 years of colonialism and deeply rooted legislation that often disempowered and displaced first nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada. We have gone from having over 90 indigenous languages to only a handful being spoken today. We have seen the horrific results of residential schools and the intergenerational trauma they have created, and the lasting effects of the hurt and loss. We saw this with the unmarked graves, starting last year, and I suspect we will see it again and again as we unpack this deeply hurtful issue over the next few years. Parliament recently acknowledged what happened with residential schools as genocide, and that, too, is a very important aspect of moving forward and speaking truth to power.

As we look at establishing the national council for reconciliation, it is important to look at history. In 2015, when we took office, the commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented their findings, with 94 calls to action. That was in December 2015. They outlined the bare minimum that needs to be done in order for our path to reconciliation to move forward.

Since then, we have seen a number of different initiatives, including the report of the MMIWG, the missing and murdered women and girls report, and the calls to justice, as well as several other very important findings, including the unmarked graves. These things put additional responsibilities on the government and on all Canadians to address.

The 94 calls to action are an all-encompassing set of guidelines for the federal government, provincial governments and in some cases municipal governments, as well as organizations, particularly national indigenous organizations, and all Canadians. It is important to recognize that reconciliation is not a journey that can just be undertaken by Canada as a government. It needs to be an all-of-Canada effort that includes all stakeholders.

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When we talk about reconciliation, oftentimes we talk about what Canada is prepared to do, but it really comes down to how much trust and confidence indigenous people can have in this process. What we have seen in the last seven years is that while we have moved ahead on a number of very important initiatives, we have often seen this relationship be two steps forward and one step back because there is a lot of unpacking to do. As we approach and encounter these issues, it is important that as a government we double down and recommit to working harder to ensure we move forward on this process.

• (1210)

It is an imperfect process. It is an imperfect set of ideas that often may need reflection, and in that I am pleased to share with the House some of my experiences over the past seven years working across party lines with the members opposite.

I do want to start off with our work on Bill C-262, which was a private member's bill brought forward by my friend Romeo Saganash. It essentially called for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and I was fortunate to work with Mr. Saganash over the couple of years he was actively advocating for Bill C-262. We travelled a fair bit in our committee work and spoke to many individuals: young people, elders, band councils and indigenous organization members. The enormous support the bill had across Canada with indigenous people was remarkable. However, we saw that the same level of commitment was not here in Parliament.

Over time, sadly, Bill C-262 did not pass, but we were able to get Bill C-15 through Parliament in 2021, and basically it calls to action 43 and 44, and it was able to pass. The second part of UNDRIP is the implementation of a national action plan, and our department is working very hard with indigenous partners and national indigenous organizations, as well as rights holders and many others, to make sure we have an action plan that can really address a review of laws and move us forward on this path.

One of the things that has really humbled me is the work we have done on indigenous languages. There is an act, Bill C-91, which was passed in 2019, and it was a critical moment in Canada because, when we talk about language, it is so fundamental to all of us. Often, I look at the passion with which my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois address the issue of bilingualism and language, and the passion with which many of my colleagues on this side speak to the need to protect the French language.

I think it is so critical to ensure that linguistic minorities are protected across Canada, but often missing in that conversation is the need to protect and save the many indigenous languages that existed prior to Confederation. In many ways, those languages are in their last stages. Medically speaking, they are on life support because we have so many languages that are at a point of being lost permanently.

I know the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London spoke about Oneida Nation on the Thames, and that is one of the groups we met during the development of Bill C-91. It was devastating to see that only a handful of people were able to speak that language, which shows how important it is that Bill C-91 is there. As well, we, along with the support of the New Democratic Party, repealed mandatory

minimum penalties just last week, and we implemented the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

These are some measures that speak to the work that has been done, but there is a lot more to do, and I believe the national council would be a very important tool for us to measure objectively what work we need to do. It would measure and report back to the House, as well as to Canadians, on the need to fill in the gaps and to make sure we fulfill all the commitments in the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I look forward to questions and comments from my friends, and I thank them for this opportunity to speak.

• (1215)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked this question of another Liberal member earlier here today. It is about the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. I hope that the parliamentary secretary is aware of the Daniels decision related to the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Government of Canada, and the long legal battle between the two with the recognition that the federal government is legally accountable for Métis and non-status Indian interests.

That is key because, over the course of debate at committee, additional and important interests, including national indigenous organizations, were added to this council, yet we see an amendment, dropped on the table here today by the Liberal minister, which would remove the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It is an important voice for indigenous concerns, many of which are not represented by other forums. Does this member support removing CAP from this commission?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I am very content that the government is moving forward in establishing the council with representation from a range of indigenous organizations. I believe that it is going in the right direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, call to action 54 called upon the government “to provide multi-year funding for the National Council for Reconciliation” to ensure that it has the financial and technical resources required.

In the 2019 budget, the government announced a total investment of \$126 million for the national council for reconciliation, including \$1.5 million to cover operating costs for the first year.

We have no idea whether this is a permanent measure. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary what is going on with that and, in particular, whether it has been discussed in committee.

Were any suggestions made? Can we get more information about the financial costs involved? Is the investment even sufficient?

Government Orders

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I cannot really speak to the second aspect of my friend's question, but I can assure the House that, as a government, we are committed to ensuring that the national council would be supported. When councils of this nature are established, there is a ramp-up period, so often times the budget in the first year may not be the same as in the fourth or fifth year. I can assure the House that our government would continue to support the needs of the national council for reconciliation so it can function to its mandate.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have such a tremendous amount of respect for my hon. colleague across the way. We did some pretty critical work together in committee to pass Bill C-15.

In saying that, I know that my colleague is very committed to human rights, but one of the frustrations that I have had, particularly as we are talking about this council, is the focus being shifted away from survivors and toward organizations. My second frustration is with this whole history of incremental justice.

With the current Liberal government, according to reports, only 13 out of the 94 calls to action, knowing that not all of them pertain to the federal government, have been responded to. The government still fails to respond adequately to the calls for justice from the national inquiry. I wonder if my colleague agrees with me that true reconciliation is demonstrated through action and not rhetoric.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I too share an immense respect for my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. She is well aware of many of the efforts undertaken by the government. I do not believe it is just 13, and that is the reason we need a council that can objectively give us a sense of where we are at with the calls to action.

It does not just end there. Yesterday, for example, I had the honour of introducing Justice O'Bonsawin to the Supreme Court. It is another very important move forward in ensuring that our courts reflect the true nature and fabric of Canada.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Red Deer—Mountain View. I am rising today to speak to the government's bill, Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

I believe that truth and reconciliation should be viewed as a partnership, a journey to reach a successful destination. Rebuilding relationships is not easy, particularly when there has been a history of distrust. It is necessary for us to view this legislation through that lens of distrust as we review Bill C-29 and that we use that lens to focus on building bridges and consensus.

Bill C-29 is an attempt to address calls to actions 53 to 56 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by establishing a mechanism of accountability on the progress of reconciliation across Canada.

As previous members of my caucus have stated, our party supports accountability. I had the honour to sit at the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee many years ago when we es-

tablished the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I will say that up until these latest amendments were introduced, I was supportive of Bill C-29, thanks to the strong work of my Conservative colleagues at committee who pushed to have common-sense amendments passed, which ultimately made this bill stronger. The Liberal amendments now cloud the issue. No matter what, there are still other areas of concern, and I would like to focus my comments on those now.

First, I have an issue with the appointment process of the board of directors of the national council for reconciliation, of its transparency and its independence. To address this, we need to reflect on the realities of the government's actions. The Prime Minister announced in December of 2017 that he would start the process of establishing a national council for reconciliation by putting in place an interim board of directors. In June 2018, that interim board of directors presented its final report with 20 specific recommendations. However, it took three and half years for the minister to then get around to appointing the new board members of this national council or to prepare for that reality.

The minister, in my view, needs to be accountable and transparent in the House when addressing the concerns Canadians have about the selection process, particularly to indigenous peoples. Why did it take so long for the government and the minister to complete the appointments? Who is responsible for analyzing the process, and why was it acceptable for it to take over three years?

As a former math teacher, I truly appreciate the importance of metrics and tracking. I speak about this a lot at the environment and natural resources committees, which leads me to my next concern. Bill C-29 has nothing in it to measure outcomes. If we do not know what we have and where we are going, how will we ever know when we get there? We need that data to understand if what we are doing aligns with our desired goals. No one can see into the future and no one can speak for indigenous people better than they can themselves. Having data that we can measure can help everyone ensure that the outcomes we all want are actually achieved.

I understand that quantifying reconciliation is hard, but call to action 55 shows us there are several items we can measure. For example, the comparative number of indigenous children to non-indigenous children in care and the reasons for that care. We can measure and track that. I am sure that such data would be extremely helpful in policy development for this very important cause.

Government Orders

Another example to help us develop youth justice policy and social supports would be to track the progress made on eliminating overrepresentation of indigenous children in youth custody, as well as progress made in reducing the rate of criminal victimization in homicide, family violence and other crimes. I am sure these metrics would also be an asset to the policy development process. To measure accountability, we first must set targets to determine success from failure. We understand that the government has a poor track record with meeting targets and measuring accountability.

The PBO released a report in May 2022 in response to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs' request to conduct research and comparative analysis on the main estimates of the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada.

• (1225)

The PBO was critical of the departments of Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. He noted that over the 2015-16 and 2022-23 periods there was a significant increase in the amount of financial resources allocated to providing indigenous services.

Then he added that this increase in expenditures “did not result in a commensurate [increase] in the ability of these organizations to achieve the goals that they had set for themselves.”

He further stated, “Based on the qualitative review the ability [of the organizations] to achieve the targets [that they have] specified has declined.”

Increases in budgets without any improvements to outcomes are never a good thing. Whether we are spending money or implementing policy, we need to be accountable to taxpayers and Canadians, and I feel that our Liberal colleagues have forgotten that principle.

When the bill appeared at second reading, I was concerned about the unacceptable timelines we saw in bringing the bill to the House for debate. I still remained concerned about the issues surrounding transparency as well as the independence of the appointment process of the board of directors. I am also concerned about the lack of measurable outcomes in the bill as well as barriers that governments erect to curb indigenous economic power.

Mr. Calvin Helin is a seven-time, best-selling, multi-award winning author, the son of a hereditary chief, the current CEO of Eagle Group of Companies and the previous president of the Native Investment and Trade Association. He recently appeared at the natural resources committee and talked about the need for indigenous peoples to have access to capital and markets. He spoke about the need to develop resources on their land and the issues indigenous peoples are having with the government in order to do that.

In Mr. Helin's book, *Dances with Dependency*, which I read when I first came here in 2008 and make sure that everyone who works for me also reads it, he addressed the reality of eco-colonialists. I fully agree with him that departments and governments are in the way of resource development for indigenous peoples, particularly at a time when the world needs Canada's ethical resources. It would be a real shame to see that these assets are stranded and to see our indigenous people further struggle for economic freedom

because of the roadblocks the current government puts up around our oil and gas sector or, for that matter, many of our resource extraction activities.

At committee, a proposed amendment was defeated that would have given the national indigenous economic organization a seat on the board of directors. This contradicts multiple witnesses who testified on the importance of having a strong voice on economic reconciliation at the table. My Conservative colleagues at committee made strong arguments that economic reconciliation is the solution to eradicating poverty, solving the social issues that poverty creates and ultimately creating a pathway to self-determination for indigenous people.

It has been said that if one cannot be part of a solution, there is still money to be made prolonging the problem. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada, along with their ministers, seem content in prolonging the problem with our indigenous people.

We have seen this over the past seven years with the Liberal government, especially on indigenous issues. It makes big announcements, and it holds press conferences and photo ops only to ignore and rag the puck in order to avoid the hard work needed to help our indigenous peoples.

Seventeen of the 19 proposed amendments that were brought forward to committee were brought forward by my Conservative colleagues. Those 17 amendments all passed with the support of the other parties, and I want to thank them for their co-operation. Sadly, today we see a backtracking on some of these initiatives.

In closing, I will go back to where this discussion started with our former Conservative government, which formed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We advocated for more transparency on reserve for indigenous peoples. My former colleague, Rob Clarke, passed the Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act, which received royal assent in December 2014. It is sad that no real action has been seen on this initiative.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed in many of the things the member said. However, the question I have for him is in regard to Bill C-5.

When we think of the calls to action, a lot of things deal with the issue of systemic racism and the percentage of indigenous people in our prison system. Bill C-5 would attempt to deal with that by looking, at least in part, at what the calls to action are talking about, which is minimum sentences and repealing them.

Could the member provide the Conservative Party's position on addressing that aspect of a number of calls to action that are looking at ways in which we can decrease the high percentage of indigenous people in jail? What are the member's thoughts in regard to, in particular, Bill C-5?

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that the bill before the House is Bill C-29.

I will allow the hon. member the opportunity to respond to that if he wishes, but I do want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that we are on Bill C-29.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, with great respect, Bill C-5 is very relevant to this conversation. Calls to action 32—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I have already indicated that we are on Bill C-29.

The hon. parliamentary secretary spoke about Bill C-5. I understand that there is flexibility, but the relevancy also has to be to Bill C-29.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, one of the main themes that was presented was the government and its calls to action. The member for the NDP had mentioned, just a moment ago, that we have 13 out of 94 that have been developed.

Having been there, sitting with natives in the territories, when all of this was going on and having had time to discuss with them their concerns, I think that it is kind of important that we realize that the government has been picking and choosing how it is going to help our indigenous people.

Certainly, if we can only get 13 out of 94, we are not—

• (1235)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is the second time that I have risen in the House today to remind members not to use the words “our natives” or “our indigenous peoples”. We are not owned. We are individuals. We are independent people with our own individual rights as indigenous peoples.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind members to respect the language that is before the House. This is not the first time this matter has been raised in the House. There have been a number of occasions.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, perhaps, just to that point of order, when I was there in 2008 and 2010, when the discussions were taking place, these were terms. I apologize for using a term that was the case at that point in time. It certainly has changed now.

I believe that my points that were made to the member of the Liberal Party have been addressed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, the idea of creating a council for reconciliation is of course about encouraging reflection and dialogue. I would like to hear my colleague's views on how this council will be accountable. How should the public be kept up to date on what is being discussed on the council?

I am interested in knowing how this council's work will progress, so I am wondering whether my colleague has anything to propose in terms of how Canadians and Quebecers can be better informed about what will be discussed on the council.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I think that is important as we determine what the mandate of the council is going to be. As I said in my address, if we do not know what the mandate is going to be, then it will be very hard to measure what the outcomes are and what it is that we have achieved.

Of course, I know that there was a great amount of work done in committee. We found out this morning that the Liberals put an amendment forward to remove the seat of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples on the board of directors. I am sure that has come as a bit of a shock to the NDP members who were there and to the Bloc, which had also supported this.

It is not very often, but in this case, I feel sorry for the NDP if its coalition forces threw it under the bus while its leadership searched for a justification to prop up the Liberal betrayal.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I know that the point of order was already raised, but I did want to say that indigenous peoples do not belong to governments, especially not to the Conservative Party, which keeps using that language.

I need to remind its members, from me as well, that we do not belong to organizations such as the federal government or the Conservative Party.

I do have a quick question for the member on his statements about responses that he has heard from indigenous peoples who say that they support such mining industry.

Does the member not agree that maybe those peoples have been drawn to make those statements, because it is the only form of economic development that has been made available to them, based on the failures of the federal government and provincial governments toward indigenous peoples?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, absolutely not. When I was on the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee, I was in the territories speaking to leaders. Those leaders were asking for opportunities to bring their people out of poverty. That was it. It was not because of any political party. It is not because of who belonged to whom. It was a case of them saying that it needed to be done.

They had some of the most amazing individuals who I would love to have running a company if I was that sort of an individual or person. That is what we have in our northern communities. We have to get off this dependency approach. We cannot allow this eco-colonialism to continue. I think that is what Calvin Helin has indicated and, certainly, it is time now for us to give them the opportunities that they deserve. That is what I am standing up for.

Government Orders

• (1240)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

It is a privilege to participate in the third reading debate on an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. I would like to acknowledge all of my colleagues in the House who have spoken so eloquently as to the importance of this bill.

[*Translation*]

In the past year and a half, reconciliation and relations between Canada and the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have altered considerably. The discovery of unmarked graves at former residential schools was a turning point. Survivors and indigenous people across the country spoke out. The discovery opened up new conversations about the hard truths surrounding the residential schools and our country's colonial past, the meaning of reconciliation and how we can all move forward together.

We need to know where we are making real progress and, more importantly, where we are failing and why, so that we can do better. We need a way to measure our progress as we move forward, so that the federal government and the entire country are held accountable for our promises to indigenous peoples.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission pointed out in its final report, “[p]rogress on reconciliation at all...levels of government and civil society organizations also needs vigilant attention and measurement to determine improvements”.

However, as many indigenous partners and organizations pointed out, the government cannot evaluate itself in the reconciliation process. We need help. That is why, in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the Parliament of Canada to establish a national council for reconciliation, hence the bill before us.

[*English*]

If passed, Bill C-29 would do exactly what was requested. It would establish the national council for reconciliation as an indigenous-led, independent, permanent and non-political body. The council would monitor long-term progress on reconciliation in this country, and it would evaluate and report on the implementation of the 94 calls to action.

This aligns directly with what many indigenous leaders have been calling for over many years and that is greater accountability, greater transparency and a way to hold the government and Canada responsible for our role in reconciliation.

For the last number of years, the government has used the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action as a way to measure our progress on reconciliation. Establishing this national council for reconciliation would be a vital milestone along our path to implementing all of the calls to action. More specifically, it would also ensure the full implementation of calls to action 53 to 56.

If passed, this bill would allow for the creation of a national reconciliation council to immediately respond to call to action 53. It

would also respond to calls to action 54, 55 and 56, which elaborate on the roles, responsibilities and expectations for the council and the various levels of government and their involvement.

Let me briefly explain by providing an overview of some of the key elements of the bill. The proposed bill defines a process for establishing the council, including selecting the first board of directors, and that has been a topic of much discussion this morning.

The bill states that at least two-thirds of the board must be indigenous. More specifically, the council must include, over time, the voices of first nations, Inuit and Métis as well as non-indigenous peoples in Canada. Indigenous organizations would also be included, with a nominee each from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council as well as the Native Women's Association of Canada. It would include youth, women, men and gender-diverse peoples, elders and survivors, and people from various regions of our vast country, including the territories, urban, rural and remote regions.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Indigenous peoples are holding us to account. The board of directors will be composed of nine to 13 directors, in total. The bill states that the minister responsible will work jointly with the transitional committee to appoint the first board of directors. The council will subsequently establish the election process for future directors.

Our government will establish a protocol respecting the disclosure of information by the Government of Canada to the national council for reconciliation within six months of its creation. We released documents about residential schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and it is imperative that we ensure that the national council for reconciliation has the information it needs to do its work.

I also want to point out that the national council for reconciliation will be completely independent of the government and will operate as a not-for-profit organization. Therefore it will have no ties to the federal government or the Crown. We will have no control over this council. The Government of Canada will provide an endowment fund and initial funding, but it will be an indigenous-led organization.

Even though it will be set up as a non-profit organization, the council will be required to report annually on the progress being made towards reconciliation in Canada and to make recommendations to advance the work. That means that the council will have to provide annual and financial reports to which the government must respond. These reports will help the federal government set objectives and make plans to advance reconciliation based on those recommendations.

Government Orders

[English]

The reporting-back mechanism that is laid out in the bill ensures transparency and accountability, and it will ensure that we make further progress on the calls to action.

I will just point out a final aspect of the bill, which outlines the purpose and functions of the council. This is the most vital part of the legislation in my view. In short, the mission of the council would be to hold the Government of Canada and all levels of government to account on reconciliation and on the calls to action. The council would be responsible for developing and implementing a multi-year national action plan to advance efforts towards reconciliation.

[Translation]

To get an accurate picture of what is happening on the ground, the council will conduct research and discuss with partners the progress being made towards reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments. That will include following up on efforts to implement the calls to action.

It will also include monitoring government policies and programs and federal laws that affect indigenous people, and producing reports on their progress.

Based on this research, the council will also be responsible for recommending measures to promote, prioritize and coordinate reconciliation.

[English]

While the council will certainly chart its own path, part of its role would be to make connections and harmonize the work being done in all sectors of Canadian society, including all levels of government.

To sum up, the purpose and functions of the council would be multifold. Not only would it be there to react and report on Canada's progress, but it would also be leading the action we take as a country on reconciliation.

I just want to emphasize a final important point. This legislation should absolutely pass without further delay. With each passing moment, survivors, elders, knowledge-keepers and families grow older. This is urgent. Many survivors have already passed away without having seen the full scope of our efforts to advance reconciliation. That is why I ask members here today to press forward to support establishing this council as quickly as possible. We owe it to survivors, to indigenous people and to all Canadians.

I would like to acknowledge and thank residential school survivors for sharing their truths and experiences. Without them, we would not be here today discussing the importance of our history. *Meegwetch.*

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the timeline in getting the bill to the House.

This process was initiated in December 2017. There was a bunch of work done by an interim board of directors that lasted from January to June 2018. When they completed their work, they issued a report with a number of recommendations. They actually included a

draft bill in that report in June 2018. Nothing happened until December 2021, when the minister appointed the new transitional committee.

We agree this is a very important issue, but why did it take three and a half years to take that next step in the process?

• (1250)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that it has taken some time. The member is referring to events that preceded my election in 2019, but I understand and appreciate that this is of utmost interest to, it sounds like, all of us in this House.

Rather than focus on the time that has passed to get to this point, I hope we can focus on passing the bill now that it is before this chamber. It is at third reading and I hope we can get to a vote on it today. I certainly appreciate the fact that we are where we are, but we need to move forward, and the time is now.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the debate today I have heard a lot about the importance of some organizations and leaving others out. One thing I have not heard enough of in the House today, which is deeply troubling to me, is about the voices of survivors. I have concerns about that, because their voice needs to be central in this council for reconciliation.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can assure me that the voices of survivors will be the central voice on this council and not be usurped by all of this political mudslinging that I am hearing in the chamber today.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, this is a very important point being raised by my colleague. In looking at this legislation and working with the whole of government on the importance of reconciliation, we rely very much, at least in the Liberal caucus, on the voices of indigenous members. I believe that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations was on his feet many times this morning to explain, from his perspective, how we would put forward the voice of indigenous people and ensure that the council is indeed led by indigenous people, and that is the advice that we took to heart.

I am very sensitive to the fact that we should not be designing this or even dictating the exact composition of the council. That is why I mentioned in my speech that the council would be empowered, going forward, to designate its own members. The council being indigenous-led is a critical part of the success of this piece of legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Outremont.

As we know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I would therefore like to understand what my colleague and her government truly think about the Indian Act. How can her government claim to be relying on Bill C-29 to embark on a true reconciliation process without talking about the possibility of replacing or eliminating the Indian Act, which the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has described as unacceptable? I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Government Orders

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I was in the House when you ruled that it was inappropriate to discuss Bill C-5 in the context of this debate. With all due respect to my colleague and his political party, I note that he is referring to a different piece of legislation.

I, for one, would need more than 10 seconds to comment on the Indian Act. I am very aware of the importance of the issue raised by my colleague and I would be pleased to continue the discussion with him.

• (1255)

[English]

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *kwe, ulaakut, tansi*, hello, *bonjour* and *marhaba*. I would like to acknowledge before I begin that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I am proud today to stand and participate in the third reading debate on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. First, I want to thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the member for Sydney—Victoria. For the many years I have known him, his information, his experience, his knowledge and everything I have learned from him have really enriched me and made me a better representative of the people, so I want to thank him for that.

In September we marked the second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and I recognize there is still a lot of work to do and that Canadians rightfully want to see more tangible progress.

[Translation]

For example, a few weeks ago, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation participated in the raising of the survivors' flag on Parliament Hill. The flag pays tribute to the survivors and those affected by residential schools, and it represents our responsibility and commitment to reconciliation.

During the ceremony, the right hon. Prime Minister reminded us that reconciliation is something in which all Canadians, including all levels of government, can and must participate. Reconciliation is not just something that affects indigenous peoples or the government. It affects all of us, including all the members here today.

[English]

We need to know where we are making important progress on reconciliation and, more importantly, where we are failing and why, so that we can do better.

[Translation]

These conversations are not easy, but progress is being made, and indigenous communities, families and survivors are guiding that progress.

[English]

I would like to take some time to reflect on the genesis of this legislation. The road to get here required collaboration and a lot of work. Bill C-29 has been many years in the making, and as I just mentioned, the original idea for the national council was laid out in

2015 by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Since then we have been working from the foundation set by the TRC commissioners to advance and establish this council.

[Translation]

In 2018, an interim board made up of six eminent indigenous leaders—including one of the commissioners from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—made recommendations based on its extensive research and consultations regarding the council's mandate, governance and operations, which served as a basis for a draft legislative framework for consultation. The interim board also recommended the creation of a transitional committee to move the initiative forward.

Last December, our government announced the creation of the transitional committee. The committee members examined the draft legislative framework, consulted indigenous and non-indigenous technical experts and provided their recommendations. That led to the bill that is before us today.

[English]

As we heard from the members of the transitional Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, it is clear the bill is the culmination of a substantial amount of work, including many years of advocacy by indigenous people and leaders. The council's mandate would be to advance reconciliation in Canada, including monitoring and evaluating the government's progress on all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. This means the council would have access to relevant information about how governments are delivering on their commitments.

[Translation]

I also want to emphasize that the national council for reconciliation would be completely independent of the government and operate as a not-for-profit organization. As such, it will answer neither to Canada nor to the Crown.

We will have no control over this council. The Government of Canada will provide an endowment fund and initial funding, but I can guarantee that it will be run by indigenous individuals.

• (1300)

[English]

After coming so far, it would be unwise to let the opportunity to accelerate the legislation slip through our hands.

[Translation]

Creating the national council for reconciliation is one of the best tools we have available to achieve true reconciliation in this country.

[English]

While there is much work to be done on reconciliation, there is innovative work happening across the country. Part of the council's mandate would be to conduct research on new and promising practices to advance efforts on reconciliation.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

In addition to its monitoring and reporting work on the progress of reconciliation, the council would be a strong and respected authority in the area of reconciliation. It would not only be there for oversight, it would also be there to set an example. The council would play a role in promoting reconciliation in its own way. This means communicating the realities and stories of indigenous peoples to the public and fostering dialogue, reflection and action leading to reconciliation.

This research could be based on segments of Canadian society that are already contributing to reconciliation work. The interim board and the transitional committee have clearly indicated that these positive examples also need to be highlighted. We can and must learn from the successes that have already taken place.

[*English*]

In addition to research, education and monitoring, the council could determine additional priorities as it moves forward in its work. This bill is not exhaustive, but rather is intended to be a flexible framework for the council. We must give the council the authority to pursue other measures it deems important and necessary to achieve its purpose.

To get to this point, many indigenous voices were included in developing the bill that we are debating. The interim board engaged with various indigenous and non-indigenous people and organizations on options to establish the council. Board members helped define the scope and scale of the council's mandate.

The indigenous process will not end with the passage of the bill. In fact, the bill itself contains provisions to ensure that the voices of indigenous people and communities will remain at the centre of the national council for reconciliation's work moving forward.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank all those who helped design this bill. I am very grateful for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada commissioners, members of the interim board of directors, members of the transitional committee, survivors, families and all indigenous and non-indigenous people who are campaigning for the government to be held accountable for its promises of reconciliation.

Together, we are advancing this difficult but important work. This bill goes far beyond the creation of a national council for reconciliation. It is about making a new commitment to reconciliation in this country. It is about finding common ground to move forward together.

[*English*]

I call upon my colleagues to advance Bill C-29 and pass the proposed legislation without delay. We must work with purpose and action to fulfill the calls to action and establish the council as quickly as we can.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, in matters of truth and reconciliation, concrete action is important. Right now, the World Cup is on.

Sport is obviously a huge source of pride. The Iroquois nation, whose historic territory straddles Ontario, Quebec and the United States, invented a sport called lacrosse. It is a member of the international federation and is among the best in the world. One of its concrete demands right now is to have a team at the 2028 Olympics. This would require the support of the Government of Canada.

Does my colleague not think that it would be a very good idea to support the Iroquois nation's demands that it have a team at the Olympics to represent it in a sport in which it excels?

• (1305)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, Bill C-29 would establish the national council for reconciliation. This council will be a permanent, independent and indigenous-led organization. It will monitor and support the progress being made towards reconciliation in Canada, including the full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. Indigenous and non-indigenous people have a lot to do to contribute to this council.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the debate today on this very important issue. According to Statistics Canada, almost 800,000 indigenous peoples are not represented by the AFN, the ITK or the MNC. Why would you only choose four of the five NIOs knowing there would be thousands of voices left out?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that I am not choosing. She might want to address the question through the Chair to the member.

The hon. member for Halifax West.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, I want to remind everybody that following the recommendation of the interim board, a transitional committee was established to review the legislative framework and ensure that the proposed vision and function of a future council was well supported. It went to committee.

The key provisions of the bill were to establish a composition to the council's board of directors. Of course, there is a nomination by the first nations, a nomination by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and one by the Métis National Council. These are the three nations represented in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I am very happy about the addition of the Native Women's Association of Canada, because we all know that women and elders are key in establishing truth and reconciliation.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have a similar question. According to clauses 9 and 10, with respect to the composition and the nominations, while only four national organizations are named as being able to nominate directors, there will be five to nine other directors that can be nominated through other means.

Does the member agree that these five to nine other directors can represent those other indigenous groups so they can be heard through other means?

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Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, I look forward to any time the member stands up, because she has a lot of experience and personal connection to this.

Absolutely, yes. That is the purpose of establishing and having the composition on the council's board of directors. The board will establish a process for nominating and electing future directors, as well as filling the other posts. There are a lot of opportunities for others to be on the board.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour and a privilege to stand in the House of Commons to represent my community of Peterborough—Kawartha.

Today I rise to speak to the report stage of Bill C-29, an act that would provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. If we are to show leadership, accountability and transparency in the House, there must be proper follow through on what has been promised.

After six and a half years under the Liberal government, Bill C-29 is the Liberals' attempt to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 through 56. I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage all Canadians, if they have not, to read the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There are 94 of them.

Calls to action 53 to 56 are: 53, the establishment of a national council for reconciliation; 54, providing multi-year funding for the national council for reconciliation to ensure it has the financial, human and technical resources required to conduct its work; 55, provide annual reports to show progress on reconciliation; and, finally, 56, the issuance of an annual "state of aboriginal peoples" report to outline the government's plans for advancing reconciliation.

If we are to work toward meaningful reconciliation with indigenous peoples, a robust and inclusive response to calls to action 53 to 56 is needed. We are the leaders in our country and it is important we do what we say we are going to do.

I had the privilege to debate this bill at second reading, when I outlined some of the issues Conservatives had with the bill. Specifically, we are concerned with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations hand-picking the board members who are to hold the same minister to account. Another concern is a lack of accountability for the expenditure of the \$126.5 million in allocated funds. Most glaring is the lack of representation on the national council, ensuring that the voices of urban indigenous, advocates for women and girls, children, aboriginal business associations and native development offices have a seat at the table when it comes to meaningful reconciliation.

After meaningful consultation from community members and those most affected by Bill C-29, the Conservatives brought forward 19 amendments to the areas with the most issues. Our amendments included: strengthening the wording to add transparency, accountability and independence to the board of director appointment process; three amendments that would give the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and an indigenous economic national organization a seat at the table; and ensuring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action

56 would be honoured. In particular, we asked the Prime Minister, not the minister, to respond to the national council for reconciliation's annual report. We further asked that concrete, measurable targets be included in its annual report, to strengthen government accountability. Measurable targets are critical.

There were significant concerns after the second reading of this bill. Of the 19 amendments brought forth by the Conservatives in committee, 17 were adopted and passed with the support of the other parties in the House, but we have not reached consensus yet, hence we are here today.

The Liberals love to say, and I hear often in the committees I represent, which are the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, "nothing about us without us", yet this morning, the Liberals repealed a key amendment brought forward by the Conservatives that would contradict their philosophy of including those most impacted by their decisions and policy.

The Conservatives know it is imperative to include CAP, or Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, on the board to support the voices of Métis, status and non-status Indians and southern Inuit indigenous people living off-reserve in Canada. The goal of CAP is to improve the socio-economic conditions in urban and rural communities.

I do not understand why the Liberals do not support having the voices of off-reserve indigenous people. One does not suddenly become non-indigenous when one moves off reserve. Why do the Liberals believe Métis, status and non-status Indians and southern Inuit indigenous people living off-reserve do not deserve a voice of their own at the table? Its shameful.

● (1310)

One of the biggest concerns that need to be addressed is the Liberals' refusal to acknowledge the critical role economic reconciliation plays in truth and reconciliation. This voice must be represented at the table. The Conservatives proposed an amendment that was put forward because of testimony heard during consultation that economic reconciliation is the solution to eradicating poverty, solving the social issues that poverty causes and ultimately being the path to self-determination for indigenous people.

Those who follow politics, primarily my mom and dad, as they watch CPAC a lot, know how imperative committee business is to democracy. It is a crucial process for listening to witnesses, and as elected officials in the House of Commons, it is our job to listen to Canadians and make the decisions that best serve them.

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During consultation on the bill, committee members were heard loud and clear and listened to the importance of economic reconciliation. Karen Restoule stated, “Economic reconciliation is the vehicle forward in terms of setting our peoples or communities back on a path to prosperity—not only our nation, but the country as a whole. It really does lead to a strong social fabric.”

Manny Jules stated, “I recommend that Bill C-29 be amended so that the council's first board of directors also includes a member of the First Nations Fiscal Management Act institutions to ensure economic reconciliation is addressed as a foundation for reconciliation.” Ellis Ross said, “A number of aboriginal leaders feel strongly that economic reconciliation not only lifts up first nations but also obviously lifts up the provinces and the country. The proof is out there.” However, only the Conservatives felt it was important to give an indigenous economic national organization a seat at the table. Why?

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the current work happening in my community on economic reconciliation. Curve Lake First Nation is on a path toward self-sufficiency and economic autonomy with the construction of a 45,000 square foot facility on its reserve that will be home to both a fish farm and a greenhouse. About 19,000 square feet of the facility will be dedicated to fish production. Curve Lake First Nation plans to sell homegrown fish and vegetables at local farmers' markets and is in talks to form partnerships with grocery chains, with seafood markets also expressing interest.

The facility will bring 15 jobs to the reserve, with the project being a business owned and operated by Curve Lake First Nation that provides a revenue source for the community, alongside employment and educational opportunities. The development of the facility was born out of a common desire from community members and leaders to foster self-sustainability. Members of the House should be fostering more of these ideas and supporting their establishment as we look toward meaningful reconciliation.

As I mentioned earlier, economic prosperity of indigenous peoples is a key solution to eradicating poverty, solving the social issues that poverty causes and ultimately providing the path to self-determination for indigenous people. I look forward to a Conservative government that recognizes this work and advances it further.

Today, I would ask the Liberals to support our amendments and take meaningful action toward truth and reconciliation. They are only words if there is no action to follow.

● (1315)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the colonial approach that we have taken historically with indigenous people across the country, including in the north and on the east coast and west coast, still seems to be playing out given the fact that making this commission work is going to require government funding for which the government will be made accountable to Parliament.

I am wondering whether the hon. member sees this as a conflict of the intent of reconciliation and what we might possibly do differently to make reconciliation work, even in this context.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, we have to look at the end goal here. The end goal is very much what we talk about when we speak of economic reconciliation, prosperity and self-autonomy, much like the example I gave in my speech of Curve Lake First Nation. We want to eradicate poverty, we want to end systemic trauma and we want to help facilitate, but we want to get out of the way.

To the member's point, it is important to listen to the voices, which is what we heard in committee. I put to the member that their philosophy is “nothing about us without us”.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, whom I have had the pleasure of working with on the status of women committee. I appreciate working with her tremendously.

One of the observations I have made of the Conservatives' contributions to the debate today is their complete focus on economic reconciliation. I read something from the Yellowhead Institute that basically said the focus, including by the Liberal government, is on things like economic reconciliation.

I do not feel they have demonstrated the same sort of respect for indigenous nations that make other decisions about their lands outside of resource extraction. This goes to free, prior and informed consent regarding how they wish to use their lands. It is one thing to talk about economic reconciliation and respecting indigenous people's rights to make decisions about their own affairs, but I have not seen that demonstrated in practice.

Does my hon. colleague respect nations that choose not to participate in resource extraction on their own lands and territories? Does she support that?

● (1320)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I also enjoy working with the hon. member on the status of women committee.

As I said in my speech, I think the discussion always has to be about listening to the people who are coming to the table. We cannot make a decision about somebody's area or reserve without their input. If there is no desire or wish to have economic prosperity or self-autonomy, we have to listen. If there is, we have to listen.

What we put forward in our amendment is that this is included among all the other things. It is a key factor in self-autonomy, and that is what we are asking for. We also added other amendments, so I hope she sees them as well.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was on the school board for over 10 years, and I am really happy with the amendments the Conservatives made for off-reserve urbanites, if I can say that, because in school divisions across this country, that is a big issue.

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I would like the member to address those who have come off reserve and are now unnoticed when they get into the big city. I like the amendments proposed by the Conservatives.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely true. Some 800,000 indigenous people live off reserve. They are incredible and important, and we are not addressing them. It is a very critical amendment and we hope the Liberals listen to it.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

It is a pleasure to begin report stage debate on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

We have concluded an in-depth, detailed study on Bill C-29 at the INAN committee. Over the past month, a total of 32 witnesses gave their testimony during seven meetings on Bill C-29. Witnesses included representatives from national indigenous organizations and indigenous groups. The members of the transitional committee were also invited as witnesses. We worked together in a collaborative spirit and listened to the many witnesses with open minds.

During clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, 41 amendments were proposed and 26 were adopted to strengthen the bill in terms of diversity, representation, transparency and accountability. These amendments respect the council as an independent indigenous-led organization. The vision of the council was set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the interim board, and the transitional committee has been strengthened, not changed.

I would like to highlight some of the key amendments that were made by the committee to this bill.

Many of the amendments that have been adopted focused on strengthening the composition and representation of the board of directors of this council. The original bill outlined that the board should include first nations, Inuit and Métis, as well as other people here in this great nation; other indigenous organizations; youth, women, men and gender-diverse people; and people from various regions of Canada, including urban, rural and remote regions. Amendments have been adopted that include two directors from the territories to ensure representation of the north.

All parties submitted amendments to have the Native Women's Association of Canada nominate a director to the board in recognition of the need to respect women's voices, contributions to policy and research, and, more broadly, to respect reconciliation. This includes the implementation of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls calls for justice.

There was also broad consensus that the committee must include representation of elders and survivors of residential schools and their descendants, in recognition of the knowledge they carry and the origins of the National Council for Reconciliation, in the TRC calls to action. We know that elders are central figures in indigenous cultures and, equally as important, individual communities. Survivors and their descendants are important voices in the advancement of reconciliation.

Finally, the committee added representation for indigenous persons with French as their first or second language learned.

These amendments ensure that the board of directors is representative of the diversity and plurality of indigenous peoples.

The bill has also been updated to recognize that the revitalization and celebration of indigenous languages is part of reconciliation and, more importantly, the resurgence of reconciliation. The functions of the council now include protecting indigenous language rights. This includes supporting the participation of indigenous peoples in the work of the council through translation and interpretation services.

As members will recall, the House passed the Indigenous Languages Act to preserve, promote and revitalize indigenous languages throughout this great country. Ronald E. Ignace was appointed as the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. These amendments align with our government's commitment to implementing the Indigenous Languages Act in order to reclaim and strengthen indigenous languages.

● (1325)

It would be the national council's work to monitor, to evaluate, to conduct research and to report on the progress being made toward reconciliation. To do so, it would need to access information from all levels of government as outlined in call to action number 55. The original bill included the development of an information-sharing protocol that would obligate the government to share with the council information that would be relevant to its purpose.

Establishing this protocol through legislation is an innovative tool to hold the Government of Canada accountable for supporting the council's needs to efficiently as well as effectively implement its mandate, while also preserving its independence from government. It would be developed within six months of incorporation of the council.

Another amendment has been adopted, which requires the government to provide the council with the information identified in the Truth and Reconciliation call to action 55, such as the number of indigenous children in care compared with non-indigenous children and data on comparative funding for education, health indicators and the overrepresentation of indigenous people in the justice and the correctional systems. Like other amendments adopted at INAN, this respects the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

As I noted at the beginning of my remarks, the legislation would obligate the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to table the council's annual report in both Houses of Parliament and, as amended, the Prime Minister to formally respond to the council's report. This responds to call to action 56, which calls on the Prime Minister to formally respond to the report of the national council for reconciliation by issuing an annual state of aboriginal peoples report, which would outline the government's plans for advancing the cause of reconciliation.

It is important that the council's report leads to action. The Government of Canada is committed to reconciliation, but recognizes the important role of other levels of government and sectors in supporting this work.

Finally, I would like to discuss the amendment that was introduced today. As I previously mentioned, the bill now includes a provision to ensure inclusion of indigenous persons whose first or second language is French. The government is proposing revised wording to the amendment in clause 12 to remove the term "mother tongue" as it is a gendered term. This would ensure that the wording is clear so the council would know how to interpret and implement it.

Before I conclude, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and to express my sincere appreciation to the residential school survivors once again for sharing the truths of their experiences. Without them, we would not be where we are today.

I would encourage each and every member of this Parliament and our colleagues who worked together to bring this forward to move quickly to pass this important legislation and to move forward once again with reconciliation.

• (1330)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague from INAN, the parliamentary secretary, talked a lot about the collaborative work that was done at the committee, and a lot of good work was done there.

In that democratic process at committee, we agreed with a majority of the votes to include a seat at the table for CAP, an organization that represents over 800,000 indigenous people. I am curious about this. Between the democratic work done at committee and coming back to the House, we were surprised this morning with an amendment that would undo that democratic work at committee to include CAP's having a seat at the table. Why now?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, the member does a lot of great work on this file. We sit together on INAN and I appreciate the work he and his colleagues do on the committee.

We spoke earlier about reconciliation. We also spoke earlier, as the member opposite mentioned, about opening a door and getting out of the way and ensuring that self-determination would be first and foremost when we embark on this new committee.

Frankly, the key to that is to ensure that decisions that are being made are not being made necessarily from the House. Yes, we are creating that foundation and, yes, we are giving an opportunity to move forward with this council. However, with respect to self-determination, it would be up to members of this committee to move

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forward with what they think should be a seat at the table as well as the actions being taken ultimately by the committee and the mandate it has before it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last week, I had to ask my Conservative friends the same question three times because I was not getting an answer. I will ask this question for a second time today because I did not get an answer earlier from my colleague from the government side.

Sport is a source of social cohesion and pride. We are seeing that now with the World Cup. Wales is not a country, yet it is represented at the World Cup. The Iroquois nation, which is present in Quebec, Ontario and the United States, invented a sport called lacrosse. In fact, the Iroquois are the best in the world. They compete internationally, and they want to attend the Olympic Games in 2028 as the inventors of the sport. It would be a huge gesture toward reconciliation if the House supported their request.

Does my colleague agree with this proposal?

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I would agree with the member across the way. What I would encourage the member to do is to come and see me. My door is wide open. We can chat about it. Hopefully, we can make some efforts toward getting your desire, and quite frankly, I would assume all our desires, to move forward with respect to their participation.

• (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments through the Speaker and not to the member directly.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have a question regarding the composition and nomination that can happen. As we have discussed in the House, four national organizations can make nominations, but five to nine other directors can be nominated from others. This does not prevent other organized indigenous organizations from making their nominations.

Does the member agree that these four members are sufficient to ensure there is national representation, but that others are not excluded from submitting their nominations?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I do apologize for directing my earlier answer directly to the member. I have a habit of talking eye to eye and straight on.

For the member opposite, again, a member who does great work and who has a passion for indigenous issues on the committee as well as in her daily work in the House. The short answer is yes.

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Again, with respect to self-determination and reconciliation, a lot of the composition and those who will be part of this committee will be brought forward by the committee itself. The minister has put the foundation in place, but the expectation is that we will be getting out of its way, as I mentioned earlier, to ensure that it is not abiding by any of the old practices of government when it comes to colonialism, that, in fact, it is opening the door for it to make its decisions through self-determination, the composition being a part of that effort.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured today to rise on behalf of survivors, community members and elders who had to unfortunately live through the traumatic experience of Canada's horrific residential schools.

Today we are talking about an issue that is living in the hearts of children, their parents and their grandparents. Today throughout this debate we heard from the government about the importance of finally tabling this much awaited legislation, legislation for which survivors and their families have been calling for years now.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission travelled across our country, spoke to survivors and families about the importance of finally building an independent body that would be tasked with seeking justice on behalf of indigenous families that are still with us today.

That is the need and goal of the call to action we are speaking of today.

We also heard from the Conservatives. We heard about the need for economic reconciliation. Although much of what they are advocating for ignores the reality and plight of survivors, I do recognize the need to see true economic opportunities for indigenous people, but they must go beyond resource extraction. They must truly need indigenous people and their values, and truly lead to a better outcome for indigenous people led by them through self-determination processes.

This work is real. Right now, people across the country are deciding in their families, with their kids, in public schools and even in churches. They are having discussions with regular everyday folks about what it means when we say "reconciliation". When I say "reconciliation", it is important that we understand where I am coming from and where members from indigenous communities are coming from when we use that language. Reconciliation implies there was at some point some kind of conciliation that took place in Canada. It is important to recognize that indigenous people have often found themselves in the back seat of government decision-making.

Something we must avoid at all costs in legislation is the prescriptive use of government control to insist who sits at the table to guide, and maybe in some ways influence, the nature of the independent purpose of the legislation.

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 is new for some Canadians, but not all Canadians. Some might remember what happened in the late seventies and early eighties as indigenous people across the country organized. They built new organizations. They fought for their voice. They brought their voice into this place to demand

justice, that the rights of indigenous people, their inherent and treaty rights, would be protected. We are not far from that moment in our history. Canada is a very young country, but what is needed is truly concrete action rather than words.

This is not only indigenous people saying this, it is Canada's top Auditor General. She stated just last week, "In 2011, at the end of her mandate as auditor general of Canada, Sheila Fraser summed up her impressions of the government's actions after 10 years of audits and related recommendations on First Nations issues with the word 'unacceptable'." Five years later her predecessor, Michael Ferguson, used the words "beyond unacceptable".

She further said, "We are now into decades of audits of programs and government commitments that have repeatedly failed to effectively serve Canada's Indigenous peoples... It is clear to me that strong words are not driving change." She has said, "Concrete actions are needed to address these long-standing issues, and government needs to be held accountable."

Those are not the words of the New Democrats. Those are the words of Canada's Auditor General, by which I stand firmly.

The age of accountability is upon us. Indigenous people are done waiting. Indigenous people are done asking. Indigenous people are now demanding that the government take seriously and earnestly the words of its own Auditor General in echoing the facts of the failures of the government almost 10 years ago. Those words are still being echoed by the Auditor General today. We must do better.

● (1340)

By better, I point to some jarring statistics. Before I do that, I want to mention that when we use numbers in this place, it has to be founded with the earnest understanding that those numbers represent people, real children, people in each and every one of our communities. There is not one MP in the House who does not and is not affected by the policies of this place, in particular the policies directed at indigenous people and, most important, children. Canada's history in the prosecution of children continues still today.

Statistics Canada said that a 2021 census showed that indigenous children accounted for 53.8% of all children in foster care. This has gone up since the 2016 census, which found that 52.2% of children in care under the age of 14 were indigenous.

If I asked the government this question, which I have today, it will simply deflect and say that the provincial governments are responsible. However, that does not stop the advocates, the strong members like former Chief Norma Kassi, who said, "The doors are closed at the Residential Schools but the foster homes are still existing and our children are still being taken away."

These are real truths, truths that may not be spoken in this place but are spoken across the country every single day, including in the courtrooms. The very honourable Cindy Blackstock, a champion and true warrior for indigenous people, fighting for the most vulnerable children, said:

...the last residential schools closed in 1997. That trauma echoed forward and then these First Nations children and families had fewer public resources to be able to deal with it. But they were often judged by Canadian public who didn't know any better...And that perpetuated the cycle of racism and the cycle of trauma.

What she is telling us is that members of Parliament must listen earnestly to the fact that if we do not act now, this will continue generation after generation. That is how deep these wounds truly are.

We can think about the mistreatment of indigenous children, not just the residential school period but also in the sixties scoop, of which I am an intergenerational survivor. The sixties scoop was not all that long ago, and it affects families every day. Some family members we never meet. I have never met all my family members. This is not a rare story. This is a common story of many people from coast to coast to coast.

It gets even worse. Many face mistreatment, even now as we speak, such as physical, sexual and spiritual abuse. There are at least 14,100 maltreatment incident investigations for indigenous children, according to the Canadian child welfare research portal's most recent statistics. If we are not talking about the basic principles of justice in this place for the most vulnerable people in our society, what are we truly doing here? There are 14,000 children who are malnourished in Canada and we are talking about who gets to sit on a national board for reconciliation.

I challenge the government to go far beyond rhetoric, far beyond tabling legislation, but I agree with the fact that I need to use this opportunity to echo that more must be done. This is barely the first step to ensuring the government truly does what must be done.

We know these children will continue to need our support. They will continue to need indigenous people. They will continue to need their language. They will continue to need access to land. That is critical to our people's rebuilding.

I want to thank my hon. colleagues for debating this very serious topic. I hope we can unite the House, not just for the principles of fairness found within this legislation but toward justice for indigenous people, not just today but every single day in the House. That is my hope.

• (1345)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member touched upon the importance of the children. Several calls to action speak to education and the need to talk about the true indigenous history all across Canada, Métis history, Inuit history and first nations history.

I wonder if the member opposite could talk a little about what he sees in his province. We now have National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We have a national council of reconciliation, \$126.5 million. Could the member opposite talk a little about whether

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thinks the education that children are currently receiving on reconciliation and indigenous history within his province is adequate or does more need to be done?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for ensuring that this question is asked today, because it is an important one. It touches on the very basis of where our society goes and the purpose of public education in that journey.

We are in an age, not only of reconciliation, but of action and consequence. If we did not act in every facet of society, including our public schools, a whole new generation of Canadians would have been failed. They would have not understood more deeply the importance of residential schools and the impact they have on children. They would not have information regarding the sixties scoop. They would not have information with respect to the CFS system. It is important we continue to do work to ensure our public schools from coast to coast to coast are equipped with the tools to discuss this important history.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Griesbach for his comments. I have appreciated the opportunity to work with him on a number of files over the last year.

I want to go back to the amendment that has been proposed by the Liberals. In 2018 the government signed an accord recognizing the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples as one of the five national indigenous organizations, which is why at committee the Conservatives brought forward a motion to add a seat at the table for this organization. That passed with the support of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois members.

Given that the Liberals are now bringing forward an amendment to remove that seat, I wonder if the member for Edmonton Griesbach can clarify if the NDP members will vote, as they did at committee, in favour of reserving a seat on this board for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to mention something very critical to the understanding of this place, Canada, and the government in relation to the conversation of representatives who represent indigenous people. When we say “national organizations”, what are the nations we are talking about, and who belongs to those nations? It is critical that we flip that question upside down and understand that indigenous people are truly grassroots people and that Canada must meet them where they are, not the other way around.

Therefore, to appease the member, I understand where the Conservatives are coming from. The composition of this board is seemingly and perceptively looking as though it is lacking independence, because the government is appointing members, and the Conservatives are trying to appoint members right now. The New Democrats are saying that the composition does not matter. The composition needs to be one that truly understands that indigenous people have to be met where they are, on the ground.

Statements by Members

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is worth noting, when we talk about the calls to action, that today's bill, Bill C-29, with its amendments, is a significant achievement in recognizing that there are in fact four calls that are addressed. Timing and politics aside, I think it is important for us to recognize the significance of this legislation. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, it is important that we thank the survivors, the important members of indigenous governments and the grassroots leaders, but in some ways it is also important to give a shout-out to the children who are enduring this pain every single day and relying on parliamentarians in the House to provide the kind of justice that not only indigenous children but all children deserve in this country. When we talk about not being political with respect to these issues, it is important that we also understand that there is far more to do to ensure that these children get the justice and the kind of compensation they deserve for this treatment.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on Motion No. 1. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be carried or carried on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

[English]

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, we would like to request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[English]

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill.

• (1355)

[Translation]

However, pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the recorded divisions stand deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I suspect you would find consent to suspend until 2 p.m. when we could commence S.O. 31s.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The House will now suspend until 2 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1:55 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 2 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

CANNABIS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to commend the Toronto Police Service, specifically Sergeant Jeff Zammit and the major crimes unit at 14 Division. Yesterday, they raided an illegal cannabis store operating right across the street from two elementary schools and a community centre in Spadina—Fort York.

There were six adults arrested for selling illegal cannabis and magic mushrooms. They were charged with possession of a schedule III substance for the purpose of trafficking, possession for the purpose of selling and possession of proceeds of crime. Right across the street from two elementary schools, there was an illegal store that set up shop with dried cannabis, pre-rolled joints, oils, hash, 48 kilos of edibles and, believe it or not, psilocybin in chocolate bars.

The raid sent a message to illegal cannabis stores sprouting up throughout Toronto. They will be found. They will be closed down, and they will be arrested.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is an occasion to remember, reflect and renew our commitment to the just cause of the Palestinian people.

On this day in 1947, the United Nations adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine, which has yet to be implemented. Millions of Palestinians have been deprived of their fundamental human rights. Millions are refugees, and a third of registered Palestinian refugees live in camps and need humanitarian assistance.

I call on Canada to stand up to its reputation as a defender of human rights and immediately take steps to implement its policies. I also call on Canada to join 138 other countries in recognizing the sovereign state of Palestine.

* * *

LEON FONTAINE

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, many Canadians were saddened by the unexpected passing of Leon Fontaine, pastor of Springs Church, which has campuses in Winnipeg and Calgary. He was also CEO of the Miracle Channel, Springs Christian Academy and Springs College.

Leon's motto of "love, acceptance and forgiveness" is what grew Springs Church to be among the largest churches in Canada. His faith inspired the good he did in his community and around the globe.

Leon's passion was for folks to join God's family, accept Jesus as their saviour and live a miraculous, spirit-led life. He had a heart for Winnipeg, a heart for Calgary and a heart for Canada. Every service, Leon would open by praying for our leaders, in business, as well as medical and political. He would pray that God would raise up great leaders who have a heart for people and a heart to serve people.

If Leon could have addressed Parliament today, this is what his message would have been: When it comes to matters of faith, we do not all have to agree, but we need the freedom to agree. We need leaders who would keep Canada the greatest and freest country in the world.

We join Sally, their five children and their families to celebrate a life well lived. Until we meet again.

* * *

CANADIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the achievements of the most decorated Canadian gymnast, 2019 Pan Am games gymnast and three-time Olympian, Ms. Ellie Black, a Haligonian, who has put Canadian athletics on the map and inspired future female athletes.

At her seventh world championship in Liverpool, Ellie anchored her team of rookies to a historic bronze medal and earned herself a silver medal on the balance beam. Despite her numerous international accolades as a two-time Pan Am Games champion, Com-

monwealth Games champion and a World Championship silver medallist, she distinguishes herself by placing team results first, earning landmark successes for team Canada.

Over 90% of girls decreased or stopped playing sports during the pandemic, and one in four are not committed to returning to their sport. Ellie reminds us that we must celebrate the successes of our female athletes and encourage them as we do men and boys. Let us all work to make sport safer for girls, and ensure they feel proud and supported in pursuing their athletic endeavours.

I send my congratulations to Ellie. She makes us proud.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

AVEOS WORKERS

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the determination of thousands of Aveos workers who have been fighting against Air Canada for 10 years to obtain justice. They had to take on a company that decided to run roughshod over their rights and break the law by illegally laying them off. They had to take on a federal government that was a party to this injustice.

The Bloc Québécois is very glad to hear that the Superior Court of Quebec has ruled in favour of the workers and ordered Air Canada to compensate them for years of financial stress and anxiety. I would especially like to recognize Jean Poirier, a former Aveos worker who, along with others, championed this cause and waged this long battle with purpose and conviction.

In solidarity with the workers and their families, who are still dealing with the repercussions of this saga today, we urge Air Canada to refrain from appealing this ruling and to finally bring them justice.

* * *

CANADA-ITALY BUSINESS FORUM ON AI

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Canada held the fourth edition of the Canada-Italy Business Forum on AI. This year's theme was cybersecurity. The forum brought together leading experts in the field to discuss both challenges and solutions.

Protecting and safeguarding critical infrastructure, such as energy, transportation, aerospace, defence, manufacturing, finance and health care is the central challenge we face in the 21st century, and cybersecurity is the key to meeting that challenge.

Statements by Members

Forums like this one are an excellent way to discuss innovative solutions and accelerate our capacity to respond to this emerging threat, which is fuelled by new geopolitical realities and a strong acceleration of technological trajectories.

I applaud this collaboration among governments, researchers, scientists and private enterprise to address this threat.

* * *

[English]

BRITISH PENSIONERS IN CANADA

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the pensions of approximately 125,000 U.K. expats currently living in Canada are still frozen. These pensions are frozen because the U.K. government and Canada do not have a reciprocal social security agreement.

As a result, British pensioners living in Canada are being punished, such as 83-year-old Peter Sanguinetti, who served in the Dorset Regiment and was stationed in the West Indies. He now needs to work part time as a school bus driver because his pension has been frozen at a mere 90 pounds per week. There is also 97-year-old Anne Puckridge, who moved to Calgary to live near her daughters, but because of this cruel and indefensible policy, Anne receives just 72 pounds a week.

Simply put, people who have worked all their lives in the United Kingdom and paid into the United Kingdom system deserve to be treated fairly. The U.K. government needs to get around the table, agree to a new reciprocal agreement and end this injustice.

* * *

NIZAR LADHA

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Nizar Ladha, a prominent Newfoundland and Labrador psychiatrist and mental health activist, passed away unexpectedly but peacefully on November 12 at the age of 80.

St. John's, and the entire province, has lost a true friend and an advocate for vulnerable persons. Simply put, he was kind, decent and caring to all. He fought against the stigma of mental illness long before it was openly talked about, and he was a remarkable trailblazer.

Dr. Ladha practised general and forensic psychiatry for nearly 50 years, served as the president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association and was an associate professor at Memorial University's school of medicine.

I am honoured to have known Nizar and can personally speak to his passion and advocacy for the dignity and respect of all persons. I send my deepest condolences to his wife, Dr. Linda Inkpen; their three sons, Justin, Michael and Jonathan; and their families. He will be remembered fondly.

• (1410)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week was the start of commemorating 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The campaign strives to eliminate all types of gender-based violence through education and through action.

Ending gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in our communities will take all of us. It does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a society that condones and encourages it. Change is possible when we take collective responsibility. It takes courage for women to come forward, but it is not reasonable to expect survivors to be the only ones to lead the change.

We need more male allies, so I ask men to stand up to help break this cycle and question complicity within the systems of violence. As silence is one form of complicity, men must speak up when they hear oppressive language or comments. From amplifying the voices of survivors to supporting women's organizations, we can all act to empower survivors, reduce and prevent violence against women and girls, and protect women's rights.

* * *

RURAL CANADIANS

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rural Canadians are at a breaking point under the Liberal government's carbon tax. They are the Canadians who are lining up at food banks because grocery prices are too high. They are the Canadians who cannot afford to drive to the city because gas prices are too expensive. They are the Canadians who are wearing winter jackets inside because home heating has emptied their savings account.

The Liberal government does not care about these rural Canadians. When speaking about the carbon tax, the government's own member said, "There needs to be a bit of pain there. That's the point of it."

Rural Canadians are out of money, and the Liberal government is out of touch. Only the Conservatives will fight for rural Canada and cancel the painful carbon tax.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 29 is recognized by the United Nations as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It was on this day in 1947 that the UN adopted the partition resolution calling for the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state and an Arab state. Of the two states to be created under this resolution, only one has so far come into being. On this day, we express solidarity with the Palestinian people who still wait, decades later, for their right to self-determination.

We call on all governments, including Canada, to stand up and champion the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to have the same human rights that we hold dear to ourselves and for a just and fair two-state solution to be negotiated.

As chair of the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group, I will continue to be a voice for justice and human rights for the people of Palestine.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government says that inflation in Canada is not its fault. Blowing up people's mortgage payments is not its fault. High interest rates are not its fault. If one cannot afford gas, groceries or home heating, it is not its fault either. However, now we know the truth.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada has confirmed “inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what's happening in Canada.” Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney even said, “[Inflation] is quite broad...most of it is now domestically generated inflation.”

The truth is that the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. The more the Liberals spend, the more things cost. Just last week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada admitted as much when he confirmed that, if government spending had been just half of what it was during the pandemic, we would be seeing lower inflation today. He said that inflation is costing each Canadian an extra \$3,500 per year.

The Prime Minister is out of touch and Canadians are out of money. Instead of creating more cash, it is time to create more of what cash buys.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how do we encourage someone when they are discouraged? Can hope be restored when everything feels broken? So many Canadians have given so much in the worst of these recent times.

Our nurses and doctors put their lives on the line, sacrificed time with their families, and were championed as heroes by this government until they revealed their personal medical choice.

Farmers across Canada, who are cutting edge and the best in the world, are burdened with Liberal high taxes and tariffs. Veterans who were promised that they and their families would be cared for are now being informed by VAC employees that they can use MAID to end their lives.

Canadian Armed Forces members served for all of our freedoms, until the Liberal election call, when they were forced to retire. Our truckers became a voice of pride for millions of Canadians although they were labelled fringe, racists, misogynists by the Prime Minister.

There is a wonderful proverb that says, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”

Statements by Members

Everything feels broken. Do not lose hope. We will fix it.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

ARGENTEUIL—LA PETITE-NATION COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surely not the only one who has been hearing the music and songs of the holiday season playing in the shops, and who is seeing their calendars fill up with dinners and gatherings with family, friends and constituents. The holiday season is also the time of year when community organizations are busy helping the poorest members of our society. The number of successful fundraising campaigns in Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation is a testament to the enormous generosity of the people in my community.

The 32nd edition of the Lachute charity drive was held on November 19. The event raised over \$29,000, which is a new record, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the people of that community in the Argenteuil RCM. I want to congratulate the event's honorary chair, the municipal councillor Hugo Lajoie, as well as the Centre d'entraide de Lachute and all the volunteers.

A few more charity drives are planned for our riding, and I encourage everyone to contribute just as generously.

[English]

The Speaker: Order.

I would like to remind everyone that Standing Order 31s are in process. I am sure the hon. members want to be heard to let other members know what is going on that is important them.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

* * *

DOUG KIMOTO

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Doug Kimoto spent almost 60 years dedicated to commercial salmon trolling and his family's livelihood on the west coast of Vancouver Island. He was a tireless advocate for the salmon trolling industry and for salmon enhancement.

In 1985, Doug's industry was sacrificed in Canada's Pacific Salmon Treaty with the United States, which resulted in a 50% cut in the Chinook catch for which the Government of Canada received \$30 million in compensation.

Doug Kimoto passed away last year, without receiving one cent of this compensation. He equated his treatment by the Canadian government in his fishing career with the way his own Japanese-Canadian family was treated in 1942.

Oral Questions

To this day, DFO has still not spent more than \$10 million of the Pacific salmon treaty settlement, while Doug Kimoto lost half of his income from 2008 to 2019 as a result.

Doug Kimoto was a proud Canadian who fought hard for the commercial salmon trolling industry and the compensation he and his fellow fishers were owed. Their treatment by the Canadian government has been a national disgrace. Doug is gone but not forgotten. His fight will not end until there is justice for the west coast commercial salmon fishers.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VANIER CUP

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec City lives for football. I am talking about Laval University's Rouge et Or team, which went for the win and brought home its 11th Vanier Cup. I have to mention Kevin Mital's standout performance, which earned him the Hec Crighton Trophy as Canada's top university player. I also want to congratulate head coach Glen Constantin on his 10th Vanier Cup victory.

The Vanier Cup is not the only win for schools in the Quebec City area. There were victories at all levels. The Séminaire Saint-François Blizzard won the Juvenile Division 1 Bol d'Or, and the Limoilou Titans won the College Division 1 Bol d'Or. No doubt about it, the best football is played in Quebec, with all due respect to my colleagues.

This success is due to the incredible teamwork of the coaches, players, support staff and parents. We are so proud of the Rouge et Or, the Blizzard and the Limoilou Titans.

Well done.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot afford their homes. A house is not simply four walls and a roof. A house is the single largest investment most Canadians will ever own. Even more important, a home is a place where people start their families, where they celebrate with family and mark some of the most important events of their lives.

The reality is that if people own a variable mortgage or if they have just renewed their mortgage, their interest rate payments have doubled. We must get these inflationary policies under control.

I call upon the government to stop deficit spending and to get interest rates and inflation under control. However, the Liberals cannot help themselves. They just want to spend and spend. The only way that Canadians will be able to retain their homes is for the Prime Minister to lose his taxpayer-funded house.

• (1420)

HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing is a human right. I am proud of our government that is investing in building affordable and social housing in our communities. In fact, these investments in building new homes are taking place now.

Just last week, I was honoured to announce funding for 240 new affordable homes in my community of Ottawa Centre, along with our Minister of Housing. This includes projects led by CCOC and Ottawa Community Housing, two of the most important not-for-profit housing providers in our city.

Another project from the John Howard Society will offer supportive housing for indigenous women experiencing homelessness. This is all in addition to previous investments by our government since 2015 that add up to almost 2,000 new affordable homes, with over 11,000 retrofitted units just in my community of Ottawa Centre.

[*Translation*]

Housing is a human right.

[*English*]

Our government will continue its work until every Canadian can find a safe and affordable home. We can end chronic homelessness in our country.

The Speaker: Before we go to question period, I just want to point out that, yesterday, things got a little noisy and heated. When I called out a certain member, by the sounds of it, and I have to admit when I do make a mistake, I called out the wrong member. My apologies go out to the hon. member for Edmonton West for calling him out incorrectly.

I want to ask everyone to not shout out or do what I perceived him to do yesterday and help me not make mistakes again today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did our intelligence services, public servants or police inform the Prime Minister of Beijing's interference in our elections, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, our intelligence and law enforcement agencies are very serious about the importance of combatting foreign interference, including Chinese interference.

I can reassure the member and all Canadians that the 2019 and 2021 elections were not interfered with in a way that would have significantly changed the outcome of the election. That is what the independent committee's report said.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now the Prime Minister has used words to obscure the answer. He says that there was not interference in a significant way that would have changed the outcome. Was there any interference of any kind?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our intelligence services have highlighted many times in many different fora for Canadians, interference in Canadians' affairs by foreign powers is an ongoing thing. Whether it is cyber interference, whether it is interference with communities in Canada, whether it is attempts to influence the media, these are things that take place on an ongoing basis and things that our intelligence agencies and police agencies work very hard to counter. However, Canadians can be reassured that the integrity of our elections was not compromised.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he still will not answer the question. The question was specifically about whether intelligence, law enforcement or public servants briefed him or in any way informed him of any interference in any of our elections.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in 2019, we established a non-partisan independent group of top civil servants and intelligence officials to ensure that the integrity of our elections would not be compromised. They watched and reported in the 2019 election. They watched and reported in the 2021 election. In both cases, they confirmed that the integrity of our elections was not compromised.

● (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was not whether the election was compromised. The question was whether officials in intelligence, law enforcement or the public service at any time informed the Prime Minister of allegations of any interference in our elections, yes or no.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite brought in the element of allegations of interference. I can confirm, based on the news reports that a number of people have been remarking on for the past number of weeks, that I have never gotten any information from any of our security agencies, or police officers, or intelligence officials or public servants of a federal candidate receiving money from China, as the allegations highlighted.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was not whether he heard allegations of money from China going to a candidate. Obviously, money does not travel on a big ship from the other side of the Pacific, go to the shore and then be delivered to a candidate. That is obviously a denial of an absurdity.

The question is whether the Prime Minister ever got information from the public service, the police or intelligence bodies on any interference of any kind by Beijing in our elections.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I got a report back from our panel of experts established in the national security agencies to report back on whether our elections

were subject to foreign interference and they confirmed that the elections were held in full integrity and the outcome was not impacted. Canadians can have full confidence in the integrity of our elections in 2019 and 2021.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my fear is that it will be even more confusing in French.

The head of the RCMP says that they did not investigate then, but that they are investigating now. In addition, the security agencies say that they informed the Prime Minister.

I hope there are no members in the House who benefited from illegal financing. There could be as many as 11. No one wants that to be the case.

In order to protect democracy and trust in our institutions, should the Prime Minister not reveal which ridings were targeted?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have all heard these media reports on allegations about China funding certain candidates in the federal election.

I can confirm that none of the experts or officials from our intelligence services shared anything with me about interference where Canadian candidates may have received money directly or indirectly from China.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whether the Prime Minister says that he does not know or that he is getting his information about the allegations from the media, it is not reassuring either way.

This Prime Minister who wants to act tough, who jumps ahead of the Chinese president without even bothering to rally allies around him, could he tell us whether, when it comes to interference, trade, containment of China, he should make allies first instead of basing domestic policy on foreign policy gamesmanship?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been working with its allies for years on countering foreign interference, including Chinese interference, in our cybersecurity systems, in our media, toward our population.

We are working very closely with our allies in the United States, in England and elsewhere to counter that influence, and we will continue to work with our allies to stand up for the values and principles all Canadians hold dear.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

*[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative premiers are trying to privatize health care across the country. Doug Ford is setting up a for-pay virtual pediatric hospital, so parents have to pay for access to care. Danielle Smith is telling people that they have to fundraise to pay for their own operations.

When will the Prime Minister get serious and stop the privatization going on across our country so people can get the care they need without having to pay for it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting because some days from the opposition we get “Why aren’t you sending money to the premiers to solve the health care problems?” Other days we get, like this one, “Be careful; don’t send money to the premiers because they are trying to privatize health care.”

Regardless of what the opposition members say, we are going to continue to do the work of making sure Canadians get reliable results and outcomes from their health care systems across the country. That means standing up for the Canada Health Act, but also ensuring that any work we do with the provinces delivers concretely in line with the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that means stopping the privatization that is happening across the country. That is the question.

[Translation]

The health care system is crumbling across the country, including in Quebec. The Montreal Children’s Hospital is at 175% occupancy. This means that children are not getting the care they need.

Our children deserve better. When will the Prime Minister take action to save our health care system, both in Quebec and across the country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were there with billions and billions of dollars. An additional \$72 billion was invested in the past few years during the pandemic to help the provinces improve the health care system, and we will continue to be there with billions more to help them with the health care system.

However, we must ensure that this money is tied to improvements and that there are better services and better access to health care for Quebec and Canadian families. That is why we are working with the provinces. We want to deliver real results for children, for families and for everyone.

* * *

*[English]***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Prime Minister some very specific questions today about whether he was informed of allegations that Beijing interfered in any of our elections, and he refused to answer, so I will give him a sixth try.

The question is not whether he knows of the candidate who received money. It is not whether there is a committee somewhere that said the election turned out as it should. The question is, was he, at any time prior to the recent media reports, informed by his officials of interference by Beijing in our elections, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleagues can be assured that Canadians know the elections in 2019 and 2021 were free and fair. We know that because we had two independent panels that looked at allegations of foreign interference and confirmed as much. More importantly, we are putting in place the tools necessary to protect all of our democratic institutions so that Canadians can have their voices reflected and heard in this chamber.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP wrote a letter to a parliamentary committee confirming that it is investigating foreign interference. It said in particular that this interference includes in “democratic processes”. The Constitution defines democratic rights as voting, which is about elections. The RCMP put that in writing. CSIS officials testified that there was foreign interference that included in “elections and ridings”.

Would CSIS and the RCMP have made these comments publicly without informing the Prime Minister first?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said very clearly, and as my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, has repeated, our government put in place an independent process of experts chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council, something the previous Conservative government had not thought important enough to do. That group of experts chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council, which included the heads of our security and intelligence agencies, was given the important responsibility of ensuring that Canadian elections were free and democratic. The good news, which I know will not impress the Leader of the Opposition, is that it confirmed both elections were exactly that.

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was exactly not the question. The question was not whether a committee confirmed the validity of the overall election result. The question was not whether the Prime Minister was aware of an individual candidate getting money from another country. The question was whether he was briefed by police, intelligence or public servants on any interference by Beijing in any of our elections.

Would the Prime Minister please stand up and speak for himself and say yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern, and that is why we had two independent panels look at, with great forensic detail, allegations of foreign interference. This review was carried out by non-partisan professional public servants so that we could all be sure our elections were free and fair, and that is precisely what they confirmed. Now our government continues to be vigilant against all forms of foreign interference by giving law enforcement and national security partners the tools they need to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has the tools he needs to stand up and answer the question. He would know if his officials, the police or intelligence bodies briefed him on any foreign interference in elections. That is the specific question I have now asked seven times. At first, the Prime Minister refused to give a proper answer, and now he is refusing to even take to his feet and face the question.

I will ask one last time. Was he ever briefed on interference by foreign actors in our elections, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously share the concern of all members of the House about the importance of protecting Canadian democracy from any foreign interference, and we know that authoritarian regimes around the world have attacked other western democracies for many reasons and for many years.

That is why we thought it was important to take all steps necessary to protect our democratic institutions. As the Leader of the Opposition will know, we set up the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, something the previous Conservative government did not do, and they have access to that confidential information.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the holiday season is fast approaching, but Canadians are not really in the mood for a celebration. Inflation is stretching families thin, food banks are overwhelmed and the profile of those seeking help is changing. Some people used to donate food, but now they are the ones coming to get it. Even people with good jobs are asking for help.

Families have a simple wish list for 2023. Can the Liberals guarantee that they will not raise taxes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my answers today with some good news for Canadian families. This week, on Thursday, December 1, Canadians will be able to start applying for the Canada dental benefit. This means that parents of children under the age of 12 will be able to claim \$650 for dental visits. This is good news for Canadians and I hope everyone will use this program.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree that kids should get the treatment they need, but even more important than dental care, they need to be able to eat. Some 30% of food bank users are children. Kids are going hungry and they are going to school on an empty stomach.

I remind the House that the basic needs of a child include food, water, a roof over their head and access to medicine when they are ill. Can the government guarantee that it will not raise taxes?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by the comments of the member opposite, because I think he voted against dental care for Canadian families. It is important to be honest with Canadians and make sure they know who voted for children's dental care, a necessary and fair program, and who voted against it.

I want to take this opportunity to point out that this great program, which begins on Thursday, is a plan that the Conservatives voted against.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government wanted to add China to the trans-Pacific partnership. It wanted to negotiate a free trade agreement with China. It seems to be ignoring the advice of its very own security services. What kind of credibility do this government and this Prime Minister have if that is their policy on China, which may very well want to keep doing these things? The government is hiding the facts from its very own people.

At the very least, will it tell us whether one of these 11 MPs received funds and was elected?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the government has said, we too are concerned about the threat of foreign interference. That is exactly why we created two committees that operate independently. Both committees found that the 2019 and 2021 federal election results were free and fair.

Oral Questions

Going forward, we will continue to invest in making sure we have all the tools we need to protect Canadians' interests.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a study by the AQDR and the Observatoire qu b cois des in galit s shows that half of seniors do not have the income necessary to live in dignity, and we are not just talking about seniors aged 75 and over. These numbers do not even take into account the record inflation that is currently affecting the cost of groceries and housing.

Unlike the government, inflation does not discriminate against seniors based on their age. We have a study here that shows that half of seniors do not have a livable income. What more will it take for this government to increase the old age security pension for all seniors aged 65 and up?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the challenges that seniors are facing, and our government has been there for them.

We are delivering for them by doubling the GST credit, which is going to help 11 million people. That is why we are providing dental and rental support. This summer, we permanently increased old age security for seniors aged 75 and over. That is \$800 more for full pensioners. That is why we increased the guaranteed income supplement, which is helping over 900,000 seniors and has lifted 45,000 seniors out of poverty.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to deliver for seniors.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not what I am talking about. The Liberals gave seniors aged 75 and up a \$500 election cheque, but they gave nothing to seniors aged 65 to 74. They are increasing OAS by 10% for seniors aged 75 and up, but they are not giving seniors aged 65 to 74 a penny more. That is the discrimination that I am talking about. Enough is enough.

Half of seniors are living in situations of insecurity. The government knows it. The government could increase OAS by \$110 a month for all seniors starting at age 65, as we have been proposing for years. However, the government chooses to do nothing.

Why?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, our government has been there to support seniors. This summer, we delivered on our promise to increase old age security by 10% for those 75 and older, strengthening support for Canadian seniors. On this side of the House, we increased the guaranteed income supplement, which has helped over 900,000 single seniors and lifted over 45,000 seniors out of poverty. That is why we doubled the GST credit. That is going to help 11 million Canadians.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to make sure we support all Canadians, including seniors.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is not answering our very legitimate questions. We know the Prime Minister has been briefed at least three times about foreign interference since the 2019 election. In the briefings, CSIS mentioned Beijing's foreign interference and also mentioned politicians and riding associations being targeted.

I have a simple question. Was the Prime Minister told about Beijing targeting candidates in the 2019 or 2021 election?

• (1445)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague has heard on many occasions now, we had independent panels look at allegations of foreign interference. He can also be assured, as all members can, that the RCMP and CSIS have their eyes wide open when it comes to potential threats of foreign interference.

We are giving the community all the tools and resources it needs so we can protect all of our institutions, including for elections. That is something all members should share as a common objective.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS also said in those briefings that the government's response to foreign interference should be "grounded in transparency and sunlight" so that foreign interference is "exposed to the public".

The government's response to our legitimate questions has been anything but; it has stonewalled us for weeks. Commissioner Lucki said yesterday that the RCMP has investigations into broad foreign interference, including "interference in democratic processes."

I have a simple question. Do these investigations include the 2019 or 2021 election?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is an experienced member of the House and he sat in cabinet. He would know that ministers do not answer questions on details of specific police investigations in the House of Commons. What governments do is put in place the appropriate processes to ensure that our democratic institutions are protected from foreign interference, a concern that all members of the House share.

As my colleagues have pointed out, we took steps that previous Conservative governments did not think they should take to put in place the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the integrity of our elections, and that is exactly what we did.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned from the RCMP commissioner that there are ongoing RCMP investigations into Beijing's election interference in 2019. The Leader of the Opposition has asked a very straightforward and specific question of the Prime Minister, one he has repeatedly refused to answer. It is whether he was briefed about election interference by Beijing.

Canadians deserve transparency, so again, on election interference by Beijing, was the Prime Minister briefed, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and all members of this chamber can be assured of the integrity of the 2019 and 2021 elections, because we had independent panels that looked with great detail and great attention at documents, interviewed witnesses and confirmed the result. More importantly, we will continue to give all tools necessary to our independent police community and independent national security community so they can protect all democratic institutions, and Canadians can have their voices reflected in our governments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a request from the parliamentary committee looking into foreign interference in our election, the RCMP refused to provide documents in its possession because they could compromise ongoing investigations.

CSIS has been a bit more forthcoming. I have here a top secret document entitled "Briefing for the Prime Minister on Foreign Interference". There are just two people who deny that there has been foreign influence in our elections: the Prime Minister and the spokesperson for the Chinese government. No one believes either of them.

When will the Prime Minister finally tell the whole truth?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that the government has been very transparent.

My colleague across the way is referring to documents that a House committee has requested. The good news is that there is a committee of parliamentarians specifically tasked with looking at these kinds of intelligence and national security issues.

I invite my colleague to ensure, as will we, that this committee has access to all the necessary information, as it is the appropriate group to be looking at these kinds of documents.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Bank is about to take over another bank. Loblaw's announced profits are up 30%. Large corporations avoided paying \$30 billion in taxes. With the Liberals' help, corporate Canada is raking it in while workers, people on fixed incomes, northerners and indigenous peoples are paying the price. The current government is missing in action. The Deputy Prime Minister

refuses to bring in a windfall tax. Instead, her solution is to cancel Disney+.

Instead of catering to billionaires, why will the Liberals not stand up for working people and make the ultrarich pay their fair share?

• (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely is committed to ensuring that everyone in Canada pays their fair share. In fact, we have brought in a COVID windfall tax. It is called the COVID recovery dividend. It is levied at 15% on financial institutions and insurers. We have also brought in a permanent 1.5% tax on banks and insurers. We have introduced a luxury tax of 10% on private planes, luxury cars and luxury boats.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Telus has celebrated its highest ever second-quarter profits, shareholders are getting richer at the expense of Canadian workers by outsourcing 11,000 of its jobs overseas, and this is grotesque. Canadian workers are fed up. USW Local 1944 has reached a 97% strike mandate, and the current government is giving Telus millions of dollars in federal procurement contracts.

Will the current Liberal government stand up for workers by ending lucrative contracts with companies like Telus that use taxpayer dollars to ship our Canadian jobs overseas?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned that Canadians pay some of the highest prices in the world to stay connected. That is why our government is taking action to make services more affordable and to hold the big national carriers accountable, and our plan is working. In 2020, our government announced a historic program to reduce mid-range cellphone plans by 25%. I am happy to report that our government reached this ambitious target ahead of schedule, but we know more work remains to be done. That is why we will continue to push for lower prices for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important EI sickness benefits are for Canadians who are impacted and have to be able to leave the workforce as a result of injuries or sickness. That is exactly why our government, in budget 2021, extended the EI sickness benefit, to make sure those Canadians who face an income gap between the time their benefits expire and when they are able to get back to work are protected.

Can the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion provide an update to the House on the work of that extension and how we are protecting Canadians?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kings—Hants for his tireless work on behalf of his constituents.

We know many workers face a stressful income gap between when they exhaust their EI sickness benefits and when they are able to return to work. That is why I am pleased to announce that, as of December 18, we are permanently extending EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, which will benefit approximately 169,000 Canadians each year. This extension to 26 weeks will give workers more time to recover from serious illnesses or injuries before they rejoin the workforce.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have made life easier for criminals in this country.

After seven years of their soft-on-crime approach, violent crime has increased 32%, gang homicide is up 92%, and the overall incidents of violent crime in 2021 were up 124,000 compared to 2015. For a government that claims to make evidence-based decisions, it appears to be wilfully blind to the evidence.

Will the government stop its soft-on-crime policies?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Canada's history, we have repealed mandatory minimum penalties, giving judges the flexibility to impose sentences that fit the crimes.

We have repealed the MMP that contribute most to the overincarceration of indigenous, Black and racialized people. The adoption of Bill C-5 means prosecutors and police can dedicate more resources and time to fighting serious crimes.

I want to thank all those who supported us, including members of the opposition, as well as senators, in getting Bill C-5 through royal assent.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's misguided approach continues with Bill C-5.

Bill C-5 reduces the mandatory minimum sentences for numerous violent crimes, including crimes with firearms. Bill C-75 made it easier for criminals to get out on bail. Now, rather than going af-

ter the illegal guns used by criminals and street gangs, the Liberals are targeting law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters with Bill C-21.

When will the government stop its soft-on-crime approach and get serious about public safety?

● (1455)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the hon. member is entitled to his opinions, but he is not entitled to the facts.

The fact is that the Conservatives cut \$390 million from CBSA, further weakening our borders. In addition, the Conservatives are comfortable with attacking Bill C-5, which comes from the first government to tackle the issue of the massive overrepresentation of indigenous and Black Canadian people in our prison system. That is a scandal and the Conservatives should not fight that.

We are trying to fix the systemic discriminatory effects of mandatory minimum sentences that have not improved community safety but have led to a massive increase in overrepresentation of disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, violent crime has risen 32% since the Liberals formed government in 2015.

This is a fact across all of Canada, including in my riding where I am reading local headlines, titled “Arrested again” for “participation in a criminal organization”, “Failure to comply with a probation order”, “Eleven counts of knowledge of possession of a firearm while prohibited”, “Two counts of disobeying a court order” and “Two counts of breach of a weapons prohibition”.

Why are the Liberals removing mandatory minimums on repeat offenders? When will they repeal their soft-on-crime policies?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, serious crimes will always have serious consequences.

Oral Questions

Bill C-5 is about moving past the failed policies of the Conservatives that clogged our system and filled our prisons with low-risk first-time offenders, time and resources that should have been devoted to fighting serious crimes.

In fact, former Supreme Court Justice Moldaver, whom no one could accuse of being soft on crime, recently stressed the need for a different approach to less serious offences. In the past decade we saw the impact of harsh, ineffective policies on indigenous and racialized people, and on those who suffer from addiction.

These are smart criminal justice policies.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us make sure talking points do not get in the way of the facts.

Ten of the 12 mandatory minimums the Liberals are removing were introduced by previous Liberal governments, i.e., the senior Trudeau and Chrétien governments. What did the previous Liberal governments get so wrong?

As violent crime continued to increase in the last seven years under the Liberal government, why is it so focused on helping criminals and repeat offenders instead of standing up for the victims?

When will the Liberals repeal their soft-on-crime agenda?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is defending those failed policies because it is defending itself.

The member and his party opposite have been in the forefront of the Harper era implementing policies targeting indigenous, Black and marginalized people. Those policies did not protect our communities. In fact, even Conservatives in the U.S. are abandoning mandatory minimum penalties and recognizing that they do not work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a Radio-Canada interview on Sunday about the invocation of the Emergencies Act, the Minister of Public Safety defended himself, stating that the act has some shortcomings and needs to be updated.

That was a candid admission that his government knew it had not met the threshold for invoking the act, but did so anyway. In a country governed by the rule of law, the end does not justify the means.

Do the Liberals acknowledge and take responsibility for the fact that the precedent they set now authorizes any future government to suspend individual freedoms as it sees fit?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect my colleague opposite, but no matter how many times he says something that is not true, he cannot make it true.

Nothing our government did suspended Canadians' rights. We made an important decision in order to protect Canada's economy and keep Canadians safe. We were transparent at every stage of the decision-making process, including before the commission last

week, and we look forward to Justice Rouleau's report, which will provide answers to all these questions.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the precedent that the father of the Emergencies Act, former minister Perrin Beatty, was concerned about.

When he appeared before the committee, he said that once the act has been used for the first time, the temptation will be to use it for other crises. He recalled that he had consciously included the specific criteria that must be met in order to counteract the arbitrariness and abuses that the old War Measures Act allowed for. The Liberals flouted these criteria when they invoked the act.

Can the minister tell us what will prevent any future governments from using it arbitrarily to suspend individual freedoms?

● (1500)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that all the criteria were properly met. We respected the rights of all Canadians in an important process. We also thought it was a good idea, when we established the criteria with the Rouleau commission, to ask the commission for suggestions and opinions on the possibility of modernizing the Emergencies Act, to listen to the experts. That is why we are looking forward to Justice Rouleau's recommendations.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the Liberals promised not to raise the carbon tax, and then they tripled the tax. Then they said Canadians would get more money back when they paid the carbon tax. That was proven false. Then the Liberals promised the carbon tax would lower emissions, but emissions went up.

When will the Liberal government stop misleading Canadians and cancel the failed carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House a number of times, affordability is extremely important to all members of the House. This government has taken very significant actions to address that, but I would also say that eight out of 10 Canadian families actually get more money back from the carbon tax, from the price on pollution, than they actually pay.

In terms of misleading the House, I would ask the hon. member who asked the question about what he campaigned on in the last campaign, which included putting a price on pollution. I am not sure exactly how he explains that to his constituents. Misleading? Yes, that is very much misleading.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have no compassion for workers struggling to make ends meet. They are going to make things even harder for small and medium-sized businesses in January when they raise taxes. Worse still, Liberal policies are hurting businesses in Beauce that hire foreign workers and spend thousands of dollars recruiting them with no certainty that they will be able to keep them on for the duration of their contract.

When will the government realize it has to help our small and medium-sized businesses by fixing this problem and by cancelling the tax hikes?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say on this side of the House that every day we think about what we can do to help Canadians and to help those small businesses. We have cut taxes for small businesses throughout the pandemic. We have helped them keep their staff on staff. We saw many businesses pivot to being e-commerce friendly so that they can help their customers.

On this side of the House, every day is about helping small businesses. We will keep doing that.

* * *

SENIORS

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in only one month, 1.5 million individuals used the food bank. The fact is that a lot of seniors now depend on the food bank for survival. Unfortunately, due to the Liberal government's careless spending practices, life for people who founded this country is no longer affordable.

For our seniors, who raised us, fed us and cared for us, will the Liberal government show compassion and stop the tripling of the carbon tax on food, gas and home heating, yes or no?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the word “fact”, so let us look at some facts.

The fact is that when the Conservative Party was in power, its plan for seniors was to raise the age of retirement to 67.

The fact is that the first thing we did on this side was to reverse that back to 65.

The fact is that the party opposite has opposed every single measure our government has put forward to support seniors, including the increase to the guaranteed income supplement, including the 10% increase to the old age security, and including our enhancements to the CPP.

We will not take any lessons from the party opposite on seniors. We are going to continue to deliver for them.

• (1505)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 25 marked the beginning of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. This year's theme, “It's Not Just”, reminds us of both the injustice of gender-based violence and how often society dismisses or minimizes behaviours and beliefs that contribute to its pervasiveness.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth share what our government is doing to address the injustices and provide support to those experiencing gender-based violence?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to anyone experiencing gender-based violence, we see them and we hear them. We know crisis lines are being used more than ever across the country, and we have responded. We have entered into agreements to fund crisis lines with Nova Scotia, Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We are committed to expanding those services in the coming days.

I have to tell members, I am honoured to continue to do this work in every province and in every territory, and to know that if a person needs help, there is someone to listen on the other end of a crisis line.

* * *

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this Liberal government has shown us that it is always lagging behind and in reaction mode. It lacks vision. No other country has a shortage of children's Tylenol and Advil like Canada. What are parents doing to save their children? They are going to the hospital. CHU Sainte-Justine in Montreal is 150% over capacity. We have known about this problem since April.

My question is simple: Why is the Liberal government always lagging behind?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all share the concerns of parents, grandparents, and teachers about our children's health across Canada.

With respect to lagging behind, perhaps my colleague did not carefully listen to the most recent news. Almost two weeks ago, we announced the emergency import of more than one million units of children's medication. Last week, we announced the shipment of 500,000 units in the next few weeks.

I would be pleased to keep my colleague up to date if he would like.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the minister has not gone to the pharmacy in the past few days because the shelves are empty. His government has been aware of the problem since April.

Let us talk about the economy. We are entering into a recession and the Liberals are raising taxes. They do not have the heart to lend a hand to Canadians. What more will it take? Consumer insolvency has increased by 22%. One in six businesses are considering closing their doors. The average credit card balance is at a record high of over \$2,000. Requests for help at food banks are skyrocketing.

Will the Liberals listen to reason and stop increasing taxes?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague across the way that the best slogan for the Conservative Party has always been and will always be chop, chop, chop.

They are the ones who have not accepted any program we have presented. They do not agree with the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit or the help for seniors.

We have no lessons to learn from the Conservatives.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has created a mess. Everything it touches is broken: the arrive scam app, huge passport backlogs, NEXUS at a standstill and the fact that 1.5 million Canadians used a food bank in a single month. Seniors are telling me they are skipping meals, and they are not alone. One in five Canadians are skipping meals.

This is all thanks to the Liberals' inflationary spending, and it is completely unacceptable. When will the government stop making life hard for Canadians and give them back control of their lives?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, on this side of the House we understand how hard life is for Canadians right now, which is why we have put forward significant benefits to help Canadians. Whether that be the Canada child benefit, the Canada dental benefit, the Canada housing benefit or an increase to the Canada workers benefit, we are there for Canadians at every single stage of their lives because we understand that these are difficult times right now.

Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for my colleagues opposite. The Conservatives have voted against Canadians and against supporting Canadians every single time. If they want to join us and help Canadians, they are welcome to do that.

• (1510)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is working day and night to ensure that Afghans and their families who helped Canada's mission to help women and girls read and write, maintain peace and build democracy in Afghanistan will have a safe haven here. We know the Taliban is trying to reverse this progress and making it harder for those fleeing persecution to escape the country. Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship give us an update on how Canada is stepping up to provide safe passage to Afghans who are most in need of protection?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his continued advocacy to support some of the world's most vulnerable people.

The circumstances in Afghanistan are absolutely heartbreaking. That is why Canada made one of the most substantial commitments of any country in the world to welcome at least 40,000 Afghan refugees. I am so thrilled to share with my colleague that Canada has now welcomed more than 25,000 Afghan refugees, who are safe and have been given a second lease on life here in Canada.

They are here wanting to make a difference. I have met women judges and parliamentarians. I have met members of the LGBTQ2+ community. I have met people who have served alongside the Canadian Armed Forces to help us in our time of need. It is our turn to help them, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are already dealing with the high costs of food and utilities, and now they will have to pay a whopping 39.5% fuel fee on Canada Post packages this holiday season. It is price gouging, and the government is approving it.

It is already hard to be away from loved ones during the holidays, and the Prime Minister is making it worse by allowing a Crown corporation to gouge families. Will the Prime Minister stop piling costs onto families and cancel Canada Post's holiday surcharge?

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite is aware, the Canada Post Corporation operates at arm's length from the government, but we have regular conversations with Canada Post officials in terms of their initiatives. We monitor this very closely. I am in communication with the board, and I commit to the member that I will continue that type of conversation.

*Government Orders***AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, three people in my riding died in a tragic float-plane crash off the coast of Port Hardy. Travel by air and water are a reality in communities like mine, and that is why we need reliable information from the weather stations. Safety is at risk when they are not working.

The owner of the plane showed me his letters to Transport Canada, desperately requesting that weather stations be fixed. Some were not working for months and even years. What is the Minister of Transport doing to ensure that those weather stations are properly maintained and working?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, safety in the aviation sector is our number one priority. The government and I are working with Transport Canada, with our stakeholders and with all airline operators to make sure we maintain the highest level of safety in Canada and around the world. I am willing to work with my colleague and other members of the House to ensure that we maintain the highest level in our standards of safety.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for oral question period.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, during question period, I quoted a document entitled “Briefing for the Prime Minister on Foreign Interference”.

I am asking for the collaboration and unanimous consent of the House to table one of the many documents that were submitted to us by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in this regard.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

• (1515)

[*English*]

The Speaker: During question period, everything went rather smoothly, and I want to thank all members for being so kind to each other.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motions at report stage of Bill C-29.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1.

• (1525)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 224*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alhabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

Government Orders

McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koevenden
Vandenbeld
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 177

McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Regan
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Seeback
Shiple
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCaulley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Shields
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 144

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genius
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire

PAIRED

Members

Caputo
Joly
Lametti
Muys
Schmale
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Jones
Martinez Ferrada
Oliphant
Sinclair-Desgagné — 10

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried.

The question is on Motion No. 2.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote, with the Liberal members voting in favour.

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives agree to apply the vote with Conservatives voting yea.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will vote in favour.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the result of the previous vote, voting in favour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the result of the previous vote, and I will be voting in favour.

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 225*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Albas	Aldag	Freeland	Gaheer
Alghabra	Ali	Gallant	Garneau
Allison	Anand	Garon	Garrison
Anandasangaree	Angus	Gaudreau	Gazan
Arnold	Arseneault	Généreux	Genuis
Arya	Ashton	Gerretsen	Gill
Atwin	Bachrach	Gladu	Godin
Badawey	Bains	Goodridge	Gould
Baker	Baldinelli	Gourde	Gray
Barlow	Barrett	Green	Hajdu
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Hallan	Hanley
Battiste	Beaulieu	Hardie	Hepfner
Beech	Bendayan	Hoback	Holland
Bennett	Benzen	Housefather	Hughes
Bergen	Bergeron	Hussen	Hutchings
Berthold	Bérubé	Iacono	Idlout
Bezan	Bibeau	Ien	Jacek
Bittle	Blaikie	Jeneroux	Johns
Blair	Blanchet	Jowhari	Julian
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Kayabaga	Kelloway
Block	Blois	Kelly	Khalid
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Khera	Kitchen
Bradford	Bragdon	Kmiec	Koutrakis
Brassard	Brock	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Kurek	Kusie
Cannings	Carr	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Carrie	Casey	Lake	Lalonde
Chabot	Chagger	Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Chahal	Chambers	Lantsman	Lapointe
Champagne	Champoux	Larouche	Lattanzio
Chatel	Chen	Lauzon	Lawrence
Chiang	Chong	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Lehoux	Lemire
Cooper	Cormier	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Coteau	Dabrusin	Liepert	Lightbound
Dalton	Damoff	Lloyd	Lobb
Dancho	Davidson	Long	Longfield
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Deltell	d'Entremont	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKenzie
Desbiens	Desilets	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Maloney	Martel
Dhillon	Diab	Masse	Mathysen
Doherty	Dong	May (Cambridge)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Drouin	Dubourg	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Duclos	Duguid	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	McLean	McLeod
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	McPherson	Melillo
El-Khoury	Ellis	Mendès	Mendicino
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Miao	Michaud
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Miller	Moore
Fergus	Ferreri	Morantz	Morrice
Fillmore	Findlay	Morrison	Morrissey
Fisher	Fonseca	Motz	Murray
Fortier	Fortin	Naqvi	Nater
		Ng	Noormohamed
		Normandin	O'Connell
		O'Regan	O'Toole
		Patzer	Paul-Hus
		Paupé	Perkins
		Perron	Petitpas Taylor
		Plamondon	Poilievre
		Powlowski	Qualtrough
		Rayes	Redekopp
		Reid	Rempel Garner
		Richards	Roberts
		Robillard	Rodriguez
		Rogers	Romanado
		Rood	Ruff
		Sahota	Sajjan
		Saks	Samson
		Sarai	Savard-Tremblay

Government Orders

Scarpaleggia
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Small
Soroka
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Trudel
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi — 321

Scheer
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Sorbara
Steinley
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Caputo
Joly
Lametti
Muys
Schmale
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Jones
Martinez Ferrada
Oliphant
Sinclair-Desgagné— 10

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 carried.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 3.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, again, I believe you will find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting yes.

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives agree to apply the vote with Conservatives voting yea.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote with the NDP voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the results of the previous vote, voting in favour.

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 3, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 226*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin

Government Orders

Fragiskatos	Fraser	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Freeland	Gaheer	Schiefke	Seeback
Gallant	Garneau	Serré	Sgro
Garon	Garrison	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gaudreau	Gazan	Shields	Shipley
Généreux	Genus	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Gerretsen	Gill	Simard	Singh
Gladu	Godin	Small	Sorbara
Goodridge	Gould	Soroka	Steinley
Gourde	Gray	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Green	Hajdu	St-Onge	Strahl
Hallan	Hanley	Stubbs	Sudds
Hardie	Hepfner	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Hoback	Holland	Therrien	Thomas
Housefather	Hughes	Thompson	Tochor
Hussen	Hutchings	Tolmie	Trudeau
Iacono	Idlout	Trudel	Turnbull
Ien	Jaczek	Uppal	Valdez
Jeneroux	Johns	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Jowhari	Julian	Van Popta	Vandal
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Kelly	Khalid	Vidal	Vien
Khera	Kitchen	Viersen	Vignola
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Villemure	Virani
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vis	Vuong
Kurek	Kusie	Wagantall	Warkentin
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Waugh	Webber
Lake	Lalonde	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Williams	Williamson
Lantsman	Lapointe	Yip	Zahid
Larouche	Lattanzio	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lauzon	Lawrence	Zuberi— 321	
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier		
Lehoux	Lemire		
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)		
Liepert	Lightbound	Nil	
Lloyd	Lobb		
Long	Longfield		
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)		
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKenzie		
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire	Caputo	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Maloney	Martel	Joly	Jones
Masse	Mathysen	Lametti	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Muys	Oliphant
Mazier	McCaulley (Edmonton West)	Schmale	Sinclair-Desgagné— 10
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty		
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod		
McPherson	Melillo		
Mendès	Mendicino		
Miao	Michaud		
Miller	Moore		
Morantz	Morrice		
Morrison	Morrissey		
Motz	Murray		
Naqvi	Nater		
Ng	Noormohamed		
Normandin	O'Connell		
O'Regan	O'Toole		
Patzer	Paul-Hus		
Pauzé	Perkins		
Perron	Petitpas Taylor		
Plamondon	Poilievre		
Powlowski	Qualtrough		
Rayes	Redekopp		
Reid	Rempel Garner		
Richards	Roberts		
Robillard	Rodriguez		
Rogers	Romanado		
Rood	Ruff		
Sahota	Sajjan		
Saks	Samson		
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay		

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Caputo	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Joly	Jones
Lametti	Martinez Ferrada
Muys	Oliphant
Schmale	Sinclair-Desgagné— 10

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, again, I believe you will find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting yes.

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives agree to apply the vote with Conservatives voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply and will be voting in favour.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the result of the previous vote, voting in favour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and will be voting in favour of the motion.

• (1535)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 227*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Fisher	Fonseca
Albas	Aldag	Fortier	Fortin
Alghabra	Ali	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Allison	Anand	Freeland	Gaheer
Anandasangaree	Angus	Gallant	Garneau
Arnold	Arseneault	Garon	Garrison
Arya	Ashton	Gaudreau	Gazan
Atwin	Bachrach	Généreux	Genuis
Badawey	Bains	Gerretsen	Gill
Baker	Baldinelli	Gladu	Godin
Barlow	Barrett	Goodridge	Gould
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Gourde	Gray
Battiste	Beaulieu	Green	Hajdu
Beech	Bendayan	Hallan	Hanley
Bennett	Benzen	Hardie	Hepfner
Bergen	Bergeron	Hoback	Holland
Berthold	Bérubé	Housefather	Hughes
Bezan	Bibeau	Hussen	Hutchings
Bittle	Blaikie	Iacono	Idlout
Blair	Blanchet	Ien	Jaczek
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Jeneroux	Johns
Block	Blois	Jowhari	Julian
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Kayabaga	Kelloway
Bradford	Bragdon	Kelly	Khalid
Brassard	Brock	Khera	Kitchen
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Kmiec	Koutrakis
Cannings	Carr	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Carrie	Casey	Kurek	Kusie
Chabot	Chagger	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Chahal	Chambers	Lake	Lalonde
Champagne	Champoux	Lamoureux	Lantsman
Chatel	Chen	Lapointe	Larouche
Chiang	Chong	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Lawrence	LeBlanc
Cooper	Cormier	Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Coteau	Dabrusin	Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Dalton	Damoff	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Dancho	Davidson	Lightbound	Lloyd
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Lobb	Long
Deltell	d'Entremont	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Desbiens	Desilets	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Dhillon	Diab	Maguire	Maloney
Doherty	Dong	Martel	Masse
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Drouin	Dubourg	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Duclos	Duguid	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	McGuinty	McKay
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
El-Khoury	Ellis	McLeod	McPherson
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Melillo	Mendès
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Mendicino	Miao
Fergus	Ferreri	Michaud	Miller
Fillmore	Findlay	Moore	Morantz
		Morrice	Morrison
		Morrissey	Motz
		Murray	Naqvi
		Nater	Ng
		Noormohamed	Normandin
		O'Connell	O'Regan
		O'Toole	Patzer
		Paul-Hus	Pauzé
		Perkins	Perron
		Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
		Poilievre	Powlowski
		Qualtrough	Rayes
		Redekopp	Reid
		Rempel Garner	Richards
		Roberts	Robillard
		Rodriguez	Rogers
		Romanado	Rood
		Ruff	Sahota
		Sajjan	Saks

Government Orders

Government Orders

Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shiplay	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 320

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Caputo	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Joly	Jones
Lametti	Martinez Ferrada
Muys	Oliphant
Schmale	Sinclair-Desgagné — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in the process of applying the vote, before we applied the final vote, the member for Saint-Laurent happened to leave the chamber. I wanted to raise this, because I believe that impacts the count of the vote.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for her point of order, and the vote count will be adjusted accordingly.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 19 minutes.

Hon. Marc Miller moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, *kwe, kwe. Ullukkut. Tansi. Hello. Bonjour.*

First, before I begin the more formal parts of my speech, I want to acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

At this time, I would also like to seek unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Sydney—Victoria.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to begin third reading debate on Bill C-29, an act that would provide the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

First, I would like to thank my colleagues from all parties in the House who supported this bill and expressed their comments and concerns about the bill at second reading. We heard their input.

Many of these comments were taken up in committee and amendments were adopted. In this regard, I would also like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for their thorough consideration of Bill C-29. In the past month and a half, during the seven meetings on this bill, the committee heard from 32 witnesses.

[*English*]

I would like to acknowledge all the witnesses who took the time to present their perspectives and answer the committee's questions. Every piece of testimony was critical. It allowed us to make important amendments to strengthen the bill before us today.

Following the advice of the transitional committee, on June 22, 2022, we introduced Bill C-29, which seeks to establish a national council for reconciliation.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs' study was extensive. It is worth noting once again that 32 witnesses provided testimony to the committee, including representatives of national, provincial and territorial indigenous organizations, councils and governments, a former commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, federal officials from the departments of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Justice Canada and four of the national council for reconciliation transitional committee members.

Through their testimonies, many witnesses proposed concrete suggestions on how we can strengthen this legislation.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Many of these amendments are now included in the version of the bill that is before Parliament today. I can say that these amendments are consistent with the general legal and policy objectives of Bill C-29, that they do not raise legal risks and that they do not have immediate financial implications.

I will explain some of the major changes we have made together.

Government Orders

First, we made several changes to ensure that the board promotes diversity and inclusion. One thing that was stressed to us on many occasions, as part of our engagement with indigenous peoples and organizations, and again when the committee reviewed the bill, was the importance of having a board that is representative of the realities of indigenous peoples in Canada.

The original bill provided that the board of directors should consist of 9 to 13 persons, two-thirds of whom would be indigenous. It also provided for the inclusion of individuals from the following groups: first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, as well as other peoples in Canada; Indigenous organizations, including a representative from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council; youth, women, men and gender-diverse persons; and people from various regions of Canada, including urban, rural and remote regions.

Throughout the committee process, we worked with partners and committee members to increase the diversity of the board. We had to ensure the participation of additional voices, including those from the territories, elders and, very importantly, survivors of residential schools and other discriminatory policies, and their descendants.

[*English*]

There was also an amendment to ensure the board must ensure and equitably reflect gender diversity. Gender balance is vital for respecting the rights of women and making progress on issues faced by women and gender diverse peoples. Adding the Native Women's Association of Canada to the list of national indigenous organizations ensures women's voices will be centred and attention will be given to the MMIWG calls to justice.

While the bill already guarantees regional representation, more was needed to ensure the inclusion of a northern perspective based on the fact that indigenous peoples represent a higher percentage of territorial populations. The amended bill provides that at least two of the board's members must be from the north. This is a good development.

In all indigenous cultures, communities and organizations, elders are central figures. As such, an amendment has been made to ensure elders are included in the composition of the council.

Finally, reconciliation cannot happen without including the voices of survivors of residential schools and other discriminatory policies and their families. This ethos was central to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work and needed to be reflected in the composition of this council, which is why we have made an amendment to guarantee their participation.

When I was in Winnipeg earlier this month, I had the opportunity to speak with survivors, elders and many indigenous peoples at the groundbreaking of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Those I listened to reminded me of the importance of education for everyone in Canada about the truth of the residential school system. The council and Canada will benefit from hearing from a diversity of experiences, perspectives and voices. I truly think we have accomplished that with this bill, and I thank the House.

[*Translation*]

These amendments were put forward on the advice of opposition party members, committee members, and indigenous peoples themselves. Taken together, these amendments will ensure that the council's composition reflects regional, gender and cultural diversity.

We added key provisions about respecting, protecting and promoting indigenous languages. Our goal is to support the participation of all indigenous peoples in the council's work and the revitalization of indigenous languages.

This measure is consistent with the government's commitment to fully implement the Indigenous Languages Act in order to maintain, promote and revitalize indigenous languages in Canada. It contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous people, including indigenous language rights, is part of reconciliation. It is therefore a natural extension of the council's mandate.

[*English*]

As I mentioned earlier, the national council for reconciliation would provide a structure for advancing reconciliation in Canada. Inclusion of measurable outcomes will support the council by demonstrating progress. To ensure the council is as effective as possible at advancing reconciliation, we have clarified its core duties and functions, allowing the council to determine measurable outcomes and monitor and report on progress toward those outcomes.

Placing this responsibility on the council reinforces its autonomy and authority to choose the best indicators for measuring progress on reconciliation. Maintaining the autonomy of the council is a top priority, and the government supports the independence of the council as a foundational principle.

To uphold the autonomy and authority of the council, we have modified the selection process for the first board of directors. To remove some of my own authority, the board of directors will be jointly selected by the members of the transitional committee and myself in my role as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

This change enhances the independence of the council by strengthening the role of the indigenous-led transitional committee. It also helps ensure the selection process to determine the council's first board of directors is open and fair.

As we strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the council, we must also ensure it has access to the information it needs to carry out its work. Even with the amendments we have proposed, I recognize this bill is not perfect. I would like to highlight something that was raised during the committee's study of this bill: More engagement with indigenous communities and Canadians will be done after the council is established as they build their action plan and goals for the council.

Government Orders

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Throughout the development of this bill, our government has ensured that members of indigenous communities and political leaders have the opportunity to express their views on the creation of the council. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made it clear in its final report that reconciliation does not just involve indigenous peoples, but all Canadians.

The responsibility for educating people like me often falls on indigenous people, but that should not be the case. There is still a lot of work to be done and a lot of ignorance to be fought. Reconciliation is something that all Canadians, including all levels of government and all areas of the country, must be involved in. The work must be done not just by indigenous people or the federal government, but by all of us.

During the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs' study of the bill, Michael DeGagné, a member of the National Council of Reconciliation Transitional Committee, stated that "reconciliation is not a political process. Certainly it involves politics, but it is not solely a political process. It's a way to engage both indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians in a dialogue around going forward in a good way".

That is what the council aims to achieve. It will open up lines of communication and connect various sectors of society. It will offer criticisms and make recommendations on ways to improve things. It will hold our government and future governments to account and ensure that the dialogue on reconciliation continues.

[*English*]

It has now been four years after the interim council's final report and eight years since the TRC released its final report and the 94 corresponding calls to action. Creating a national council for reconciliation is long overdue, but we are hoping it will happen now with this legislation.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at committee, all parties supported the inclusion of someone on the board of directors of the national council for reconciliation with regard to diversity and various regions. This included the northern regions that were added, the language addition and the survivors of residential schools. Conservatives put forward an amendment to include somebody with expertise on economic reconciliation. We did that because we believe that the solution to eradicating poverty, and with it the social ills that poverty creates, is very important.

I am curious as to why the government chose to vote against having one single voice on this board that would represent economic interests and making sure we strive for the eradication of poverty in indigenous communities.

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent on all of the board members to fight precisely what the member opposite is highlighting. There are a number of difficult choices that we have to make when the committee appoints members. We are within a structure that has been imposed on indigenous people, so there is an inherent contradiction in sitting here, appointing board members and deciding who goes on what board for what reason.

This is not a slight on any notion of economic reconciliation. In every interaction I have with indigenous peoples and communities, one of the main points of their economic reconciliation is making sure that they are dealing with someone who has paid the bills over the last 100 years, and in a lot of cases we have not. There is a basis of it that has fuelled the poverty that exists in communities today. The suspicion with which they treat the Government of Canada and anyone they interact with is well justified in hundreds of years of not paying the bills.

It starts with that premise, but it moves on into many other areas of closing the capital gap that exists between non-indigenous and indigenous investors and investments. It spans a much broader range than was normally understood as simply the purview of the economy.

• (1550)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about diversity on the board, such as elders, survivors and those who have been intergenerationally impacted, but that is not what is being reflected in the debate that I have participated in all day. I think we are forgetting why we are here. It is because of the courageous stories, which were told by survivors, that brought forth the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and they are why we are even talking about this bill today.

How will the minister ensure that the voices of survivors and those intergenerationally impacted will not be outshone with all the other discussions that I have listened to in the House today?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, it is precisely this type of commission that will allow us to make sure we are focused on survivors and their families.

It is not lost on anyone that the vast composition of the House is non-indigenous. We sometimes superimpose our own views of what we think is good or not good for indigenous peoples. Having a commission like that to remind us, particularly in the wake of the last year and a half of discoveries in and around unmarked graves, will be an opportunity and a catalyst to keep reminding the House of the importance of putting survivors and families first, knowing that this is trauma that has passed on from generation to generation.

There are still survivors who are speaking for the first time, courageously. There are also people who are courageously choosing not to speak out about their experiences. We need to honour them and their silence as well. This is a very difficult time still for communities and will be for some time. However, having an institution like this, which will be able to radiate across Canada, will be key in keeping survivors and their families front and centre in this ongoing national tragedy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech.

Government Orders

The bill before us responds to calls to action 53 to 56 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. As we know, this relates to residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives and those responsible for setting up the schools. I would like to know whether the minister could tell Canadians what happened at residential schools. My colleague talked about this earlier.

Does the minister want the bill dealing with calls to action 53 to 56 to be properly reviewed, approved and passed in committee?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I think the committee has a duty to adhere to calls to action 53 to 56. The Prime Minister will report on reconciliation every year.

Certainly, let us talk about the tragic story of residential schools. As my colleagues from the NDP and the Bloc Québécois have said, it will be very important to continue to focus on the survivors and their families, and the traumatic legacy that continues to affect indigenous communities across Canada to this day. A council will allow us to reach out nationally across the country, to raise these issues and to keep highlighting the importance of responding to calls to action 53 to 56.

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by acknowledging that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. I would like to continue the third reading debate on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not a new idea or process. This is something that has been actively working its way through our country for the last 50 years: in 1982, through changes to recognize and affirm indigenous rights in the Constitution; in 1996, with the report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; and in 2015, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.

Today, after careful consideration at second reading and through study by the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, we are considering the national council for reconciliation in response to the TRC calls to action.

Although the INAN committee has made some important amendments to the legislation, this bill, at its core, remains much the same. Bill C-29 would establish a national council for reconciliation as an indigenous-led, permanent and independent non-partisan oversight body to monitor, evaluate and report on Canada's progress on reconciliation. This is significant.

It responds to calls to action 53 to 56, and it supports the Government of Canada's commitment to accelerate and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Many of my hon. colleagues are familiar with origins of this legislation, but let me provide an overview.

Since the TRC released its final report, our government has responded to the calls to action through reconciliation efforts. We committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. We established a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This year, we witnessed the Pope offer a

historic apology to the residential school survivors in an indigenous community.

This is supplemented by the work done at the grassroots level. There are many encouraging initiatives under way across Canada and across many sectors, but no one is monitoring or reporting on that activity on a national scale.

As was pointed out in the committee study, thus far, we have not had the mechanism to share emerging best practices and create a dialogue to celebrate progress and provide recommendations for improvement. We lack a formal structure for monitoring reconciliation work at all levels of government and society in Canada. Such oversight is critically important for making progress and leaving a lasting and meaningful legacy. That is exactly what the national council for reconciliation would do.

As envisioned by the TRC, an indigenous-led, non-political, independent and permanent national council for reconciliation would provide a structure to monitor, evaluate and report on reconciliation efforts.

This was laid out in four of its calls to action: 53 and 54, which call for the creation of a national council for reconciliation through legislation and funding; and also in 55 and 56, which further clarify the expectations for the council in various levels of government on data and information sharing and reporting on the progress.

Since the TRC released the calls to action, we have been working with indigenous partners, leaders and communities to develop this proposed legislation. We have strived to uphold the principles set out by the commission. Keeping indigenous voices and survivors at the heart of our work is a key part of this legislation.

Front and centre in our process to establish a national council for reconciliation has been the leadership by the interim board and the transitional committee. Both independent bodies were composed of first nations, Inuit and Métis members who provided their advice on a path forward, taking into account a wide range of diverse voices and perspectives.

I will take a few minutes to outline the process we used to develop the bill and the engagement that was done at each stage.

Government Orders

Five years ago, we set the wheels in motion to establish the council with the creation of an interim board of directors. The board comprised six indigenous leaders representing first nations, Inuit and Métis, including the former truth and reconciliation commissioner, Dr. Wilton Littlechild.

Its mandate was to make recommendations on the creation of a national council for reconciliation. To formulate its recommendations, the interim board engaged with community members; academics; business, arts and health professionals; and other interested parties to gather their input.

In 2018, the board presented its final report to the minister, which contained 20 specific recommendations related to the name, vision, mission, mandate, structure, membership, funding, reporting and legislation of the national council of reconciliation. The interim board's recommendations formed the basis of the bill.

● (1555)

To continue this process, in December 2021, the transitional committee was appointed. It has done important work to date convening discussions on the council's functions, identifying key milestones and timelines, and proposing an engagement approach. It also reviewed a draft legislation framework developed by the Department of Justice based on the interim board's recommendations. It led preliminary engagements on the framework with indigenous partners and non-indigenous experts, including lawyers, data specialists and financial and reconciliation experts. It also gathered feedback and advice in areas such as reconciliation, law, data, organizational finance, information sharing, governance and accountability.

In March 2022, the committee provided its recommendations on how to strengthen the draft legislative framework. The committee also suggested that this proposed legislation be brought forward as quickly as possible, amplifying the wishes of survivors, who want to see this council become a reality during their lifetimes. This fall, it passed second reading and was referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs on October 6, which brings us to today.

I would encourage the swift passage of the bill. As hon. members here know, this is something that I am personally passionate about. We must do more when it comes to implementing the calls to action and advancing reconciliation. I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure the council has the support it needs to do the work of monitoring the implementation of the calls to action. I hope that other levels of government across the country can commit to working with the council as we have committed to doing.

As we debate this bill at third reading, we cannot take our eyes off the end goal and what this legislation would truly accomplish, which is advancing reconciliation in this country. I encourage my hon. colleagues to consider how they can support the council once it is established and how they can connect the council with initiatives or community members at home.

Advancing reconciliation is something that must be done hand in hand with indigenous people across the country. Reconciliation is not linear and will not come easy, but in our work we will always

strive to advance progress and address the existing gaps. This is the goal of Bill C-29.

● (1600)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General report that was published two weeks ago points to the abject failure of the Indigenous Services Canada department to implement any of the concrete changes related to how it handled the emergency planning for first nations communities. They were recommended in the audit of 2013.

In 10 years, the department could not change its approach to make the lives of indigenous people better. How confident is the member of the Liberal government that it would act on any of the recommendations made by the national council for reconciliation?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we not confuse Indigenous Services Canada's Crown-indigenous relations with the work we are doing on reconciliation. When we are talking about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we are talking about survivors who attended residential schools and who made suggestions on how we move forward. That is the blueprint for the calls to action.

While the national council for reconciliation would remain focused on implementing the calls to action, in the future it is also important that we do all of the things we need to do to close the gap between indigenous Canadians and the rest of Canada and to address the harms created by colonization. Only then do we get to the pathways for prosperity that we need for all indigenous people across Canada. However, as a starting point, we owe it to survivors to make sure that the first things we do are in relation to the calls to action that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission moved forward on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his fine speech.

I would like to know his views about the council's governance and representativeness within the council.

In terms of governance, the bill proposes that the board of directors be composed of a minimum of nine and a maximum of 13 directors.

In terms of representativeness, the bill proposes that the board of directors include representation from first nations, Inuit, Métis, other peoples in Canada, indigenous organizations, youth, women, men and gender-diverse persons.

I would like my colleague to tell me what he thinks of the council's governance and its representativeness.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I think the important part of our government's working hand in hand with the transition committee is to make sure that indigenous leaders and indigenous communities themselves are taking on a key role. What we want to do is open up the door for them to take the wheel and drive the bus, not for us as a federal government to be overly prescriptive and say how we are going to do this step by step. It is up to them. We want to put it in their hands, and that is the process we are going to move forward.

• (1605)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has broken many promises to indigenous people over the last seven year, such as the promise to lift long-term drinking water advisories across the country by 2021. If this body had been set up before, would it have helped? If so, why did we not do this earlier?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, one of the beautiful things about the national council for reconciliation is that its initial task is to move forward on the calls to action. However, we know we have a long way to go on reconciliation in Canada. As the national council for reconciliation knocks off all the different things we are doing to ensure better lives for indigenous people and indigenous communities, its role will change. It will be looking at things like language, overincarceration and making sure we have better processes around the justice system, but that does not prevent it from moving on in the future.

We also want to make sure we are doing exactly as I said earlier, which is closing the gap between the way indigenous people live on reserve and off reserve. That is a key part of reconciliation. We need to close the gaps, address the harm and make sure we create pathways to prosperity.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this may be received as more of a comment than a question.

Quite frequently, due to motions passed before committees, I am able to go before committees instead of bringing up my amendments at report stage, which is what normally would occur. In the case of Bill C-29, I want to put on the record that I have never had a more collaborative, supportive and open process with the minister responsible and with the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria. I felt that the first reading of Bill C-29 failed to deliver on the calls to action, particularly the specific information requirements set out in call to action 55. My amendment, with very few modifications, was accepted at committee, and I am very grateful for that.

I know the hon. member comes from the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy nation. I say to him *wela'lin*, and thank him and the minister for their openness to opposition amendments.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her participation at the committee. I think all parties in the House strengthened this bill and made it possible. That is how reconciliation moves forward in the House. We should move forward in a non-partisan way and together. We owe this to indigenous peoples in Canada, and when we all work together, great things happen.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I am asking for unanimous consent to share my time with the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about reconciliation between the Crown and first nations people. I want to focus on the concept of economic reconciliation.

Canada is a wealthy nation, wealthy in natural resources, in human resources, in technological and industrial advances and in many other metrics that economists use to measure the wealth of nations. However, unfortunately this wealth is not shared by all people, and that is unjust.

Just to be clear, I am not here to promote the government's ill-conceived wealth redistribution tax plans involving the carbon tax, which it masks as an environmental plan, or its focus on the middle class and those striving to get into it despite tax policies that are pushing people out of the middle class. I am not talking about its ill-conceived housing policies, which apparently are designed to help people get into homes, even though those policies are driving first-time buyers out of the market while the dream of home ownership is evaporating for many young families. I am talking about the creation of wealth.

The former finance minister, Mr. Bill Morneau, after he left the government and was cut loose from the Liberal Party's talking points, pointed out what is obvious to many of us in the House: The problem with the government is that it is overly focused on wealth redistribution and not focused enough on wealth creation. I agree with that. That is obvious to me and to many others in the House.

There is no better way for a nation to create wealth than for all the people in the nation to work, to do what they are good at, to trade with each other and to enjoy the dignity that work brings. In pursuing their economic self-interest, the whole nation becomes wealthy.

Adam Smith did not invent that concept 250 years ago; it is an ancient concept. Just to prove that, I am going to quote from the ancient and wise King Solomon, who several thousand years ago had this to say about work and the dignity it brings: There is nothing more rewarding for people than to eat, drink and enjoy the fruits of their labour. That is what I want to talk about today as we talk about reconciliation. All people should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Government Orders

That brings me to the topic of the day: the setting up of a national council for reconciliation, as called for in the 2015 truth and reconciliation report by the commission that the previous Conservative government appointed. We appointed that commission to tackle the ongoing and deeply embedded societal challenges plaguing our development as a nation caused by the ill-conceived government policies of previous decades. Those policies failed. Separating children from their families is indeed very bad public policy, and many people are still suffering today. This is Canada's shame. How do we fix it?

I have spoken with many people in my community of Langley, in Fort Langley to be specific, who are residential school survivors. The announcement coming out of Kamloops a couple of years ago triggered memories. The memories are fresh, the pain is real and the anger is just below the surface. The sad thing is that the news is not even news. We have known about this for a long time. As a matter of fact, six of the 94 calls to action of the truth and reconciliation report talk about unmarked graves under the heading "Missing Children and Burial Information". The report is now seven years old and not enough progress has been made. It is time to get the job done.

Bill C-29, which is what we are debating today, is an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. It is a step in the right direction. This council will be tasked with monitoring and reporting on the government's post-apology progress on reconciliation.

I believe there is full agreement on both sides of the House that we need to correct and compensate for the misguided policies of the past, but we are not all agreed on how we get there. The Liberals like to make announcements and boast about how much money they are spending on programs. The Conservatives, on the other hand, want action. We want to get everyone to work. We want to remove barriers to the full participation of indigenous communities in all sectors of society.

• (1610)

That is why Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs put forward a motion to amend Bill C-29 to incorporate the concept of economic reconciliation. Inexplicably, members from the other parties on that committee voted against it. I hope that in debate today we can convince them otherwise, because without economic reconciliation, there is no reconciliation.

In British Columbia we have a very good example of what economic reconciliation can look like. The Coastal GasLink LNG project is a provincially regulated project that is going to link the very rich natural gas fields of northern British Columbia to the LNG Canada processing plant on the coast in Kitimat. The pipeline route runs through 20 first nations communities, and all 20 of them will benefit economically from this project.

The project has signed benefit agreements with all 20 nations. It has signed option agreements to sell at 10% equity interest in the project to those nations. It has issued many contracts to indigenous subcontractors, service providers and local businesses, and it is funding job training. This is a long-term economic benefit for first nations communities. That is what reconciliation looks like.

I want to end with a real-life example of what economic reconciliation looks like for first nations peoples. To do so, I am going to read testimony given by Mr. Ellis Ross, a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and a first nations person, when he appeared at the committee on indigenous and northern affairs last month. I will read from his testimony, which I think zeroes in on exactly what the issue is. He said:

A number of aboriginal leaders feel strongly that economic reconciliation not only lifts up first nations but also obviously lifts up the provinces and the country. The proof is out there.

In my community, for example, the economic reconciliation that we participated in...made us one of the wealthiest bands in B.C.

He continued:

[W]e have young aboriginals getting mortgages in their own right without depending on Indian Affairs or their band council. They're going on vacation. They're planning futures for their children.

In discussing previous governments' attempts of reconciliation, this is what Mr. Ross had to say:

Well, government, you can't; if you could fix it, it would have been fixed long ago. If you're going to do something, then do something in partnership with first nations that can make their band councils—and, more importantly, their band members—independent.

Mr. Ross ended with this invitation, which I believe is still an open invitation to anybody in the House who is interested. He said:

If you want an example, come to my village, Kitimaat Village, B.C. I'll show you around.

To sum up, we in Canadian society have made a lot of errors in the past. We can learn from our mistakes, but we can also learn from our successes, and there are a lot of successes. This is just one example that I raised. Let us learn from them. Let us move ahead with indigenous communities and reconciliation.

• (1615)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a critique of what I have been hearing today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission went all across this country hearing from survivors. We heard about the abuses. We heard about the mental, physical and sexual abuses. We heard about the addictions. We heard about the need for mental health resources. We are hearing about communities trying to establish their connection with their language.

However, the Conservatives seem to think that instead of listening to the survivors and the 94 calls to action of what they have laid out as a blueprint moving forward, what we really need is for indigenous people to adopt more of a capitalist approach to how they do things moving forward. If they just had a little more money in their pockets, they would not worry about the loss of their language and the abuse their parents or grandparents had to go through.

Government Orders

I am trying to figure out where the Conservatives are. Do they not feel that is a little paternalistic? Instead of talking about the 94 actions that are actually within the calls to action, they keep talking about the term “economic reconciliation”, which is nowhere in the calls to action by survivors.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, that question gives me the opportunity to emphasize how important economic reconciliation is.

Again, I want to quote from Mr. Ellis Ross, who said:

In my community, for example, the economic reconciliation that we participated in not only made us one of the wealthiest bands in B.C., but it also, for some reason, got rid of the alcohol parties. I think a study should be made in that respect.

Absolutely, get people to work and they will live healthier lifestyles, and they will promote their children's future. To quote Mr. Ross, “They're going on vacation. They're planning futures for their children.”

That is what it looks like. That is what a good job would do for a person.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure I understood my colleague's speech.

What has to be done to create more unity and inclusiveness in society is to get rid of taxes and lower income taxes so that one day there will be a trickle-down effect that will unite everyone in Canada and Quebec.

Have I correctly understood the underlying Conservative mentality in the speech my Conservative colleague just gave?

• (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where that came from. I am not talking about more taxation. I am talking about less taxation. I am talking about promoting free enterprise. I am talking about promoting resource development. I am definitely talking about allowing the people in whose traditional lands these resources are developed to be able to participate economically. I believe that was the emphasis of my talk.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is well-meaning in his suggestions in terms of economic development, so I do not mean to suggest anything other than good intentions.

However, the reality of the Trans Mountain pipeline is that it is neither economical, nor are there markets, nor is there anything long term for any part of our population. I will say to him that in terms of the hearings that were held before the National Energy Board, the Kinder Morgan corporation put forward that it plans to create through its project fewer than 100 permanent jobs. It also put forward that it was going to be the 100% backstop for costs. The corporation then carved off its Canadian operations, kept the money it had raised towards building the pipeline and used it to pay off the debts of the parent corporation, at which point it told the federal government it was not going to build it. There is no case that it is economically viable.

Meanwhile there are many nations all along the pipeline route that want it stopped because it violates their rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I would just suggest to the member that the particular example he gave is rather fraught.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there was a question in that, but I will attempt to respond to the hon. member's comments.

She and I have a difference of opinion on what resource development could do and what liquid natural gas could do for British Columbia and also for global climate challenges. We say to promote clean-burning, ethically produced liquid natural gas to replace much dirtier-burning coal. There is a market for it. That is clear if we take a look at what is going on in Europe today.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place and represent the people from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, and today as I speak to Bill C-29 and the creation of a national council for reconciliation, I suggest to this place that this is a continuation of a journey that all Canadians are to be part of as we create a better future.

Speaking previously, in September, I made it clear that it was important to use a consensus-building approach to improve the legislation. Bill C-29, in its formation, deserved a responsible look at areas where it needed improvement, and I have to admit we have heard much testimony today that this was the work that was done at committee with the help of everybody there.

At second reading I pointed out a few issues that I thought needed to be addressed. I talked about the transparency and independence in the selection process of the board of directors. I talked about some words that seemed purposely vague to avoid accountability. I talked about the lack of any measurable outcomes. I talked about the fact that it took over three years to bring the bill to the House in the first place. Finally, I spoke about how the Prime Minister should be the one responding to the council's annual report, as that was the direction in call to action number 56.

In response to those concerns and the testimony of witnesses, we brought forward reasonable amendments to strengthen Bill C-29, and I am very proud today to report that 17 of the 19 amendments we put forward were passed at committee. It is the job of the official opposition to improve legislation and to make it truly representative of all voices, and that is exactly what we did at that committee.

I must admit, however, that I am a bit disappointed today to realize that the government, and specifically the minister, would not accept the democratic will of the INAN committee on the amendment to add a seat at the table for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. This is a national indigenous organization that represents over 800,000 urban indigenous people.

Government Orders

A second concern I have coming out of that committee debate is that there was one amendment we proposed that was disappointingly voted down by all the other parties, and that is the one I want to spend a few minutes talking about.

As many of my colleagues have talked about today, we put forward an amendment to add a seat on the board of directors for someone from an indigenous organization that is focused on economic reconciliation. With many options available from the FNFMB, or the First Nations Financial Management Board, NAC-CA and the CCAB, there are many great organizations doing good work in this sphere, and finding a well-established organization that historically has done great work would have been very easy. It would not have been a barrier to find somebody to sit at that table.

However, the lack of support for this amendment, it should be pointed out, came at the expense of not listening to multiple witnesses who clearly voiced their approval for the inclusion of an economic lens as part of this board. We did not advocate for that to be the only voice; it would have been only one voice at the table. To ignore these voices discredits the very process of reconciliation.

I have observed, over the last few years, Liberal and NDP MPs aggressively challenging indigenous leaders who have appeared as witnesses at the INAN committee to advocate for economic reconciliation. I often find myself questioning why. Why is there an aversion to even having this discussion? Something does not add up. What is it that they dislike about indigenous people being the masters of their own destiny? What is it that they dislike about the creation of a healthy, strong and vibrant community through prosperity? What is it that they dislike about using own-source revenue from true partnerships that address long-standing social issues? What is it that they dislike about leaving behind the destructive grip of poverty to offer hope and opportunity for future generations?

The sad answer is that they are more interested in political power and control. By imposing their own views rather than listening to indigenous voices, they create the same environment that indigenous people have lived under in this country for far too long.

It is time for a fundamental change to that approach. In fact, for those who are listening and watching closely, the change has already begun on the ground. Economic reconciliation plays such an important role in the overall discussion. Let me begin by sharing a few stories from my own riding in northern Saskatchewan.

As I returned home this September for this year's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, I spent time at Pelican Lake First Nation with Chief Peter Bill. As we arrived in the community, I was greeted by Chief Bill, a member of the RCMP and two of Pelican Lake's own community safety officers. With first nations policing being a very important topic the day after the tragedy at James Smith Cree Nation, I asked how their newly established community safety officer program was going. Chief Bill was happy to report to me that the community now has six full-time employees and its own fully equipped vehicles, and that they were in the process of hiring more officers. The RCMP officer explained to me how helpful the program had been in achieving safety in their community.

• (1625)

How did Pelican Lake first nation pay for this community safety officer program? They paid with their own sourced revenue. They invested profits to assist in the overall health and safety of their community instead of waiting for years for government and bureaucrats to plan and meet, develop frameworks, do benefit assessments and feasibility studies, or use the signing of MOUs for photo ops.

Later that day, I was at Flying Dust First Nation. After the formal speeches were done, we all left the hall and participated in a walk of solidarity with residential school survivors. On that walk, if I looked one way I could see a hockey rink that was built a few years ago and just beside that was their brand new 6,000-square foot sporting goods store and facility called "Snipe and Celly Sports Excellence". If I looked the other way, out by the highway there was the brand new Petro-Canada gas station.

This was a visual reminder of what my friend Vice Chief Richard Derocher had mentioned earlier in the speeches when he spoke positively about reconciliation. He shared his wish that, when people were either visiting or driving through our communities, they would not be able to recognize when they were leaving Flying Dust First Nation and entering Meadow Lake or vice versa. How does that happen? It is by generating prosperity through economic development, which is something that Flying Dust First Nation and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council have a proud history of doing.

In northern Saskatchewan, there are many examples of these success stories. Whether it be Athabasca Basin Development group, the Des Nedhe Group of English River, Pinehouse Business North, Kitsaki Management Limited Partnership from Lac la Ronge, Sakitawak Development Corporation from the Métis village of Île-à-la-Crosse or the Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies, each is creating prosperity and capacity through the ownership and development of business opportunities. These opportunities give their people employment and a sense of pride.

These are groups on the ground that have already started the change. Their approach is the new way forward. It is their stories that the national council for reconciliation should also be reporting, along with many other things, and sharing with all Canadians.

Often Conservatives are labelled as only caring about the economy. Maybe that is our own fault because we do not explain the why. Let me try to do that. One of those community safety officers of Pelican Lake I talked about is named Dalton. I had the privilege of coaching Dalton when he played AA midget hockey in Meadow Lake. He was a sturdy, dependable defenceman who understood his role. He never missed a practice or a game. He was a player whom any coach would love to have on his team.

Dalton took those attributes and applied them to his first career choice to become a power engineer. He was supported in that choice by his mom and dad, and he would have had many options going forward in where he wanted to work, but something inside of him called him home to Pelican Lake. It was an opportunity to go home to get trained as a community safety officer and to be a leader in his own community, to be a driver of change and to set the example for the next generation.

I could not have been prouder of Dalton as I watched young kids come to him in his uniform and ask if he had any more tattoos. They felt comfortable around him. He provided them a sense of safety. He is a quality young man who is providing leadership within his community because the opportunity was there to take. That is the why. That is the outcome of economic reconciliation.

Conservatives promote and believe in economic reconciliation because it is the solution to eradicating poverty and with it the social ills that poverty creates. By putting control back in the hands of indigenous people, they get to begin to manage prosperity instead of poverty, and they get to take concrete steps toward healing through self-determination.

To conclude, I am proud of the work that our team did in making Bill C-29 a better version than when it originally came to the House in June. Many concerns that we expressed at second reading were addressed and have been improved. That is how we follow up words with action.

• (1630)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here listening to this debate all day and this is the first time that I have gotten up to even ask a question. I cannot help but reflect on the fact that, time after time, every Conservative who gets up to speak to this links the concept of economic reconciliation to fossil fuel extraction. It is as though that is the only part of reconciliation that the Conservatives are interested in.

I have heard very few comments about anything other than this idea of economic reconciliation. I know the member is extremely proud of the fact that he thinks that the Conservatives think a lot about the economy, as he indicated in his speech, but is there any other part of this bill or, indeed, the reconciliation process that the member or any Conservative member would like to talk about other than economic reconciliation?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if my hon. colleague was listening to my story about Dalton, the young man of Pelican Lake, but do members know what? That was not from the extraction of any oil and gas. Their businesses are from the forestry business in northern Saskatchewan.

I can tell members 20 other stories of communities in northern Saskatchewan that are not only about extraction. It is about opportunity that gives those young people hope for a better future.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Rivière Churchill for his speech.

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I sit with him on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and I must say that his diligence, his tireless efforts—we see that there is work behind each of his interventions—and his openness make him a great colleague to work with.

I have a question for him because his work goes beyond what was said a few seconds ago, for example when it comes to including the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It is an idea he could have debated.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on this and anything else he would like to add to improve the bill.

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from the Bloc and I do work a lot together on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I hope I got the context of the question accurate in the translation.

Some of the things we did to improve the bill that we worked together on, which I believe was the crux of her question, was that we definitely improved some of the accountability measures within the act.

We heard the minister speak earlier about better governance, where, with regard to some of the authority that was granted to the minister in the original draft of the bill, we actually shared that responsibility with council members so that governance was better. It was not just in the hands of the minister.

That included the appointment process. That included many other things. For example, there was a number of areas in the bill where the language was very questionable in the requirement to create the protocol to provide information to the council so that it could do its great work.

Those are a couple of examples of the things we did to take away some of the fluffy and vague language to make this bill stronger, so that there would be greater accountability of the government to the council.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt my colleague, but there is no interpretation.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[English]

I am going to allow the member to respond to the question once again, in an abridged version, so the interpretation can happen.

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if this member has an abridged version, but I will try.

I am just going to briefly summarize a couple of the things that we improved in the bill. The first was accountability, through the governance model that was there.

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The second thing we improved was to remove some questionable language, which was vague and left room for wiggle space. We want to improve accountability, and we removed some of that language to make the government more accountable to the national council for reconciliation.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do believe that economic reconciliation is foundational. There was a situation not so long ago, with the northern gateway project, where every first nation was in support of the project, including 80% of elected members and chief counsel of the Wet'suwet'en, yet the Liberals found some spokespeople. There were some people against it, as one would expect in a democracy, but they basically nixed the entire project, which negatively impacted first nations people across British Columbia.

I wonder if the member could comment on the gap between what the Liberals say, how they are saying they were trying to help, and what is really happening on the ground.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the frustrations that we sometimes talk about in our circles, this gap between words and actions. We see that often. We can talk about the Auditor General report that was released this week.

Every time we ask a question of the government, the response is, "Look how much we have spent on this. We must have fixed it", but the Auditor General said that the government is good at measuring outputs but not as good at measuring outcomes. Our party is about outcomes.

To the hon. member's specific example, I think the other thing that we always have to be aware of with those projects is that we have to respect the right of people along the way. It is their right to say yes and their right to say no, and we want to respect both of those.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my party's critic for indigenous and northern affairs, I am pleased and proud to rise today to speak to Bill C-29. Being critic for indigenous and northern affairs takes humility and perspective. Certainly the same goes for every portfolio, but I like to mention it.

I rise to summarize everything I heard from witnesses in committee and from people I have talked to about Bill C-29. It is a bill that is important to indigenous peoples, meaning first nations, Inuit and Métis people. I want to talk about it as respectfully as possible, as I did during the committee study with my colleagues who are here today.

My thoughts are with the first nations living on the North Shore, the Innu and Naskapi. I send them my greetings. They know that I want to do my work very respectfully while keeping their wishes in mind. Even though sometimes first nations individuals and families do not all want exactly the same thing, there is a consensus, and that is what we tried to focus on when studying this bill in committee.

Having said that, I will divide my speech into several small components or several different subjects. These are the subjects that we discussed in committee and that, in my view, really stood out.

The purpose of the council that will be created by the bill will be to monitor the progress and advancement of work done as part of truth and reconciliation efforts. First, I would like to address something that was raised by several witnesses at the committee with regard to the word "reconciliation". A few minutes ago, some of my colleagues spoke and tried to qualify the term "reconciliation". They tried to categorize it and say that it must not be this or that.

I must say that, before all that, many indigenous people and members of indigenous communities said that they did not agree with the word "reconciliation". If we stop and think about it even a little, we realize that that word basically implies that there is already some sort of conciliation and relationship, that something has already been created. However, we have been told that there was nothing at the start, that there was no "us".

When we talk about reconciliation, we are starting off using a false term, one that I must point out is not even defined. We are working on a bill about truth and reconciliation, but the term "reconciliation" is not even accepted, because it is not considered the appropriate word for the situation and, on top of that, it has not even been defined. As legislators, when we study a bill, we also need to start from that point. At the very start, before we even begin, there is already a stumbling block, a problem, and we need to take that into account throughout our work. I spoke about the word "reconciliation". That seems really simple, but it is the first principle.

I would like to move on to another subject, namely consultation.

I was surprised to learn that the Innu and Naskapi in my riding, along with members of other communities elsewhere, had no idea that consultations had taken place for this bill. They were not even aware that it existed. At committee, we learned that only a few communities had been consulted. Based on the information I have and my perception, which is not necessarily the truth, I get the impression that the consultations were hastily cobbled together. Clearly, not many people were consulted, but all the communities could have been systematically consulted to get a broader picture. That way, more people would have been consulted, not just those who are more informed than others or who have a network of contacts that allows them to be more aware of what is going on.

● (1640)

That came up in committee too. I will have more to say later about representativeness, because I see that as a very important part of the bill. I am not saying that the consultations were kept quiet, but not everybody was consulted. Only a very small percentage of people were consulted. Furthermore, it was not necessarily representative of what first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples want to see in the bill. For me, that was a concern. It was also a red flag about what else was in the bill, such as the issue of representativeness.

Actually, I want to talk about this right now. I do not mind skipping two or three points that I will come back to later, because this is definitely connected to the issue of representativeness.

The bill creates a board of directors. There was an interim board and a transitional committee, and now there will be a board of directors where positions are assigned to different entities, namely national organizations that represent indigenous people. The committee wanted to make the board more representative. We wanted to know why only three organizations were mentioned in the bill, when there are five that represent indigenous peoples nationally. That was a problem for us. I wanted to know why three were mentioned, when there are five. Not only did we not get a satisfactory answer, but we did not get one at all. We wanted those groups to be included.

People came to testify and said that they did not feel represented by such and such organization and that it was another organization that represented them.

Take the Native Women's Association of Canada, for example. Half the indigenous population is made up of women or people who identify as female. They should also be represented. They were not included. We often come back to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women, and we are currently talking about the whole issue of violence, including sexual violence, but those were nowhere to be found in the bill either.

From the standpoint of equity and representativeness, I would be remiss if I did not say that this is part of the work the committee did. It was done as a team. Earlier, I heard comments about how people were antagonistic, but we really did have some very interesting discussions, including some with my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. There were some good discussions; it was remarkable.

There are other groups that were not represented. Although I am not an indigenous person myself—I am white—I do spend time with people, I have friends, I am aware and open, so I have absorbed some indigenous culture, including Innu-aimun and Innu-aitun in my riding.

Consider elders, for example. When we think about reconciliation and residential schools, elders were not automatically represented in the bill. That was the first thing that occurred to me. I did not stop there. I consulted people. Witnesses were also asked whether the bill ought to include elders, or rather survivors. They said that we were talking about elders, but that we should be calling them survivors of colonial practices and policies. This was also included in the bill.

I am talking about elders. I also talked about women. Basically, we wanted to ensure that membership on the board was not limited to certain groups selected by the minister himself from the outset.

This brings me to a point that I have not yet mentioned, but it is something that I do want to talk about: independence. I am not talking about Quebec independence. I am talking about the independence of the board. Independence is important to us.

● (1645)

Of course we need to start doing something, and we understand that the minister is involved, because this is his bill. Of course we want him to start the work, but we also want the board to eventually become autonomous and independent, with members appointed by

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the members of the transitional board. That is what we want, and we have talked about making the council more independent. The word “independent” was a key word in our discussions.

“Transparent” was another a key word. My Conservative Party colleague made a very worthwhile proposal that the Bloc Québécois completely agrees with, because we believe that the nations are nations unto themselves. The leaders are leaders of nations and should therefore be able to address their Quebec or Canadian government counterparts.

We wanted the Prime Minister himself to be required to respond to the report that will be tabled by the council every year. That was extremely important to most of us. There is talk of a nation-to-nation relationship, but such a relationship requires that the Prime Minister himself be held accountable for responding to the council's requests.

As we come to the end of the process, I must say that the opposition in particular has done a lot to strengthen Bill C-29. It has improved representativeness by enabling more indigenous people and more indigenous groups from different backgrounds to add their own colours to the council.

Earlier, we talked about economic reconciliation. Yes, the Conservatives are talking about it, but some indigenous groups are also talking about it. We need to look at reconciliation from all angles. In short, sectoral committees may be struck at that time, and the council itself would be responsible. I really think we have improved the bill in terms of transparency, independence and representativeness.

I would really like everyone to keep in mind that everything can be improved. I hope that the voice of indigenous people will be heard through this new mechanism, which will have significant power because it will be able to monitor the government's progress.

Symbolism is something that comes up a lot. Previous speakers talked about it. Other people generally get the impression that actions vis-à-vis indigenous groups and individuals are merely symbolic. I said “other people”, because I was not thinking of myself as part of that group, but I could be part of it.

Symbolic gestures may cost money, but they do not cost the government anything. They do not have a negative impact on the government or force it to take more meaningful and nuanced action. Admitting wrongdoing is one thing, but making it right is another. Saying sorry is not enough.

All I want to say is that we really hope to see more action. We hope indigenous people themselves will get really involved in this. We hear talk of a nation-to-nation relationship on the one hand and “by indigenous people for indigenous people” on the other. They are the ones who will be able to assess, draw conclusions and make recommendations. That is what will enable us to go beyond symbolic gestures, which may confer a temporary halo upon the government but do not really change anything in the day-to-day lives of indigenous people. It may have an impact on those who are close by, but not on those who are far away.

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I would like to invite all members of the House to visit my riding. Kawawachikamach, Matimekush-Lac John or Unamen Shipu are far removed from statues and celebrations. I completely agree that we must celebrate indigenous cultures, but they face other difficulties. I used the word “difficulties”, but that is an understatement because these communities have major problems that must be resolved. Naturally, the council could speak to that.

• (1650)

In closing, I would like to again address my constituents to point out that even though it is quite simple, the testimony and the fact that consultations are held, and not just superficial consultations, really help improve bills.

I am thinking, for example, of Marjolaine Tshernish of the Institut Tshakapesh, an organization that promotes Innu culture across Quebec, but also in Labrador, because there are Innu communities there. She told me that it was difficult for her. She was concerned about what would happen next, for example with the council. For some, Innu is their first language, but for others living elsewhere, their first language may be French or English. She said that she did not yet have that information and that she was concerned that she did not have it. Innu is her language. She also speaks French, but she does not speak English. She said she wanted to ensure that there would be a francophone presence on the council.

I also worked to ensure a francophone presence on the council. For me, that is a big win in terms of representation. Some may say that I thought about French or francophone issues because I am a member of the Bloc Québécois, but that is not even the case. I must humbly admit that this idea did not come from me. It was the people at the Institut Tsakapesh who pointed it out to me. In short, it is thanks to them that we managed to amend the bill. I apologized to them for not thinking of it myself, but it is something that could have been brought to light through consultations with people and communities whose first, if not second, language is French.

I would like to close by telling you about a very witty Innu chief, Mr. Piétacho, from Ekuanitshit on the north shore. Mr. Piétacho has been a chief for over 30 years. I appreciated his quick wit when he appeared in committee. We all sometimes run into minor technical difficulties in committee. In short, he forgot to take himself off mute and, as soon as he began to speak, our chair told him that he could now speak. Chief Piétacho told the chair that he had been on mute for 500 years but not to worry, he was going to speak.

I hope that this council will give all indigenous people a chance to speak and that this will enable the government to respond and take real action.

• (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Small Business; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Taxation.

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would

agree with the member. I think there was great teamwork shown at the INAN committee. We worked positively and collaboratively. On this legislation, we did a lot of work together that we were all in agreement with.

A lot of the discussion we heard focused on the importance of languages, indigenous languages as well as the French language, in making sure that different people who speak different languages had the ability to speak those languages as part of the input they give to the national council for reconciliation.

Could the member speak about the importance of ensuring that not only the French language is protected, but indigenous languages are protected as well in the legislation, which we strengthened with the amendments?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I believe that he knows my love for indigenous languages. Aside from the emotional aspect, it is clear to me that language is part of our identity. Protecting indigenous languages is certainly as important as protecting French.

I would like to share a story. I read part of an Innu dictionary and quickly realized that it contained words that presented realities that I had a hard time understanding because I did not have access to the land, to this history with the land. A language is much more than a vehicle; it is an identity, it is the entire person. I know that in communities near where my colleague lives, there are young people re-learning the Mi'kmaq language.

Naturally, I will always be an ally. I think we are all simply better for it.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with my colleague from the Bloc at committee. We did get a lot of good work done.

My question is very simple. Bill C-29 originally came to the House without any concrete measurables, without anything to measure. We talked a lot about the fact that if we want to measure accountability, we must set some targets that determine success from failure.

Call to action 55 included a number of those quantifiable measurable items. Why does the member believe those measurable goals were excluded in the first place?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of questions when we see the first iteration of a bill. We always notice things that are missing. We often draw a comparison with the private sector. If a company wants to meet goals, it needs specific targets, deadlines and, in short, the means to achieve these goals. I did not get an answer to that question or several others, but I do believe it is necessary in order to get things done and meet goals.

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As my colleague stated many times, what we want is not just to make some progress, but to make efforts to move forward. That word was taken out, incidentally. We got the word “efforts” taken out because it should already be understood. All we want is to make progress. I believe that having clear, specific goals to meet is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me digress for a moment to talk about language learning. A few years ago, in 2018, in an effort to reconnect with my roots, I was able to take classes in the Wendat language from an office in Montreal, even though Wendake is in the Quebec City area. I salute the efforts that the Wendake officials made at that time to spread their language to their diaspora. I say bravo to them.

Now, I am entirely in favour, and we are all in favour, of this national council for reconciliation, despite the reservations some may have about the word “reconciliation”, as my colleague said.

That being said, it is all well and good to begin speeches with references to unceded territory and all that, but as long as the Indian Act, a title that is racist in itself, remains in place, what is the point?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, if I think of the indigenous people I represent, when we talk about systemic racism, the Indian Act is perhaps the most obvious example, and certainly for all of us, it is shameful that it still exists.

Obviously, it is bad to be out of step with the times, and this is something that needs to change. I spoke of symbolism. We are talking about concrete actions, but we will have to go further and tackle the relics of colonialism, although the word “relics” is too weak.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important in the sense that we have before us legislation that would establish a national council. That council has been in the makings now for a while. We have had an interim council that has been advising the government and which has assisted in getting us to the point where we are today.

The member made reference, as have other members, to a number of indigenous-related issues, especially the issue of reconciliation. I am wondering if the member could expand her thoughts on the 94 calls to action and the fact that a lot of those have a shared jurisdiction. Not all of them are federal. The council would play such a critical role going forward in terms of ensuring how that reconciliation would be best achieved.

Could the member provide her thoughts on the significance of that fact?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, if I were to try to sum up my thoughts on the importance of the council with respect to the calls to action and how effective the council itself will be, I would say that it is going to be up to the indigenous people themselves.

One of the things I forgot to mention in my speech is that one of the government's responsibilities will be to provide all the information that indigenous people feel is necessary to do this work.

That is important, but the government will not be able to free itself of all its responsibilities, either. It must ensure that it does not prevent the council from functioning properly.

On the one hand, the council must be independent, but at the same time, the government is responsible for providing everything that is needed for concrete action to be taken until the Indian Act and all colonial practices are completely abandoned.

• (1705)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manicouagan for her speech.

As the critic for seniors, I was touched that she mentioned them in her speech and that she addressed the issue of indigenous women and girls.

Bill C-29 deals with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. However, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. What is stopping the government from implementing them?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I am entering my eighth year as the MP for Manicouagan. I have seen some great successes over the years, but at times I become cynical. When that happens, I tell myself that it is a question of willingness.

We have seen it many times: Large sums of money are spent, very easily, without any criteria. It is not always clear which numbers go with what. There can be some secrecy there.

There are some real concerns right now. We have concrete demands that everyone agrees on, but nothing is happening. We talk about elders, women and girls, and housing is part of that as well. It is one of the factors that keeps this violence going. Then there is the fact that seniors are facing difficulties and health is an issue.

I totally agree with my colleague. It is a question of willingness. That is perhaps one of the only things I cannot give the government as an opposition member.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to split my time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nunavut.

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It is an honour to rise today in support of Bill C-29, the national council for reconciliation act. We would not be here today without the stories of survivors who gifted us with stories so that people across Canada could learn the truth about Canada's history, that what happened in residential schools was an act of genocide, something that was acknowledged unanimously in October in the House, a recognition that what happened in these institutions against children was an act of genocide and the experiences of survivors' abuse and abhorrent human rights violations are no longer left up for debate. I want to share that I am so thankful for that. I lift up survivors, descendants and communities every day. Let us not lose sight of this while we debate this bill.

We must not lose sight of this. The voices of survivors must lead the path forward, not organizations and not government bureaucrats, but survivors and their descendants, elders. I am glad that this is reflected in the bill, but I am hoping that this is reflected in the debate we are having in the House as we move forward because we have to remember that we would not be debating this legislation today if it had not been for survivors who courageously shared their stories. We must not lose sight of that. Their voices must never ever be overshadowed, because they are the reason we are discussing how to move forward in a manner that achieves real justice while addressing ongoing injustices that continue to be perpetrated against indigenous peoples.

Progress is slow, which is one of the reasons that I keenly support implementing call to action 53 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish a national council for reconciliation through the establishment of federal legislation. Call to action 53 calls on the government to establish the council as an "independent, national, oversight body" that will monitor, evaluate and report to Parliament on the progress that is being made with regard to reconciliation.

The accountability mechanisms that have the potential to be provided by the council are crucial, because we know that without sufficient accountability, progress implementing the calls to actions has been unacceptably slow. Since the calls to action were released in 2015, only about 13 of the 94 have been implemented. For a government that has repeatedly identified reconciliation and the new relationship with indigenous people as a top priority, this is simply not good enough. One wonders if this legislation was introduced seven years ago whether we would be further along completing all of the calls to action.

Nevertheless, the fact that we are close to this bill becoming law is an important step forward. Enshrining this legislation into Canadian law is critical. Having this council act as a watchdog to ensure the effect of advancement of reconciliation is crucial and will make it more difficult for the government and all MPs to lose focus on the implementation of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

However, here is the reality. Monitoring is not enough. We need the government to do the work and put significant investments behind concrete acts of reconciliation, and there is so much more work that needs to be done. I have often said that we cannot have true reconciliation in the absence of justice. Across this country, indigenous peoples are denied justice each and every day in painful and humiliating ways.

• (1710)

We have a housing crisis that can only be described as dire. According to the 2021 census data, one in six indigenous people live in crowded housing unsuitable for the number of people who live there. To put this into perspective, that means indigenous people are almost twice as likely to live in crowded housing compared to non-indigenous people. This is shameful.

While I acknowledge that budget 2022 made new investments in indigenous housing, it does not come close to meeting the unmet needs in indigenous communities, in spite of the Conservatives' claim today of record spending on indigenous peoples. According to the AFN, \$44 billion over 10 years would be required to meet current needs on first nations' communities. Budget 2022 allocates \$2.4 billion over five years to address gaps in on-reserve housing.

We are also facing what the Prime Minister himself has acknowledged as a genocide against indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. My own city of Winnipeg was described as "ground zero" for the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls by the former minister of crown-indigenous relations, yet since the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued its final report and calls for justice in 2019, we have not seen this ongoing genocide addressed with anything close to the level of respect and urgency required.

For example, in budget 2022, the Liberal government put in zero new dollars to help put an end to this crisis of violence. Worse yet, it was shocking to learn that hardly any of the federal government's \$724.1-million violence prevention strategy, first announced in 2021, has been spent. Not a single new shelter has been built nor a single new unit of transitional housing.

While I do want to acknowledge the federal government's recent announcement in my riding of \$6.9 million to support the expansion of Velma's House, which will operate as a low-barrier, 24-7 safe space in Winnipeg Centre, there are still so many indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people who do not have a safe place to go to in their community.

We also continue to see resource extraction projects imposed on indigenous communities without their free, prior and informed consent. An egregious example of this took place almost two years ago on Wet'suwet'en territory, where land defenders, women, were met with police dogs and snipers, and the RCMP used an axe and a chainsaw to cut down the door of a tiny house where two unarmed indigenous women were inside. This is the exact opposite of what reconciliation looks like.

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I have become quite concerned about the Conservatives hyper focus on economic reconciliation with their history of opposing the right of free prior and informed consent, which is enshrined in Canadian law and articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous peoples have a right to make decisions free of intimidation, and to be informed about all aspects of projects prior to development occurring. This cannot happen down the barrel of a gun. It also is not acceptable to state that communities that choose to build economies outside of the resource extraction sector have no desire to improve their local economy. On these and so many other issues, including the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in the criminal justice and child welfare systems, and the fact that 27 communities still have boil water advisories, so much work must be done to overturn colonial policies and practices that are preventing us from achieving real reconciliation.

I am hoping that this legislation will help. I want to acknowledge the work of my wonderful colleague and MP for Nunavut in helping to strengthen this legislation at committee. We will be accompanied by a renewed focus from the government on what the Prime Minister has described as the “most important” relationship in Canada. I am confident that the council will do its job in ensuring that the government is accountable for progress being made on implementing the calls to action, but the onus is on the government to respond to accountability with real action.

• (1715)

To all the survivors who share their stories, to all survivors who did not tell their stories, I lift them up. May the bill assist in delivering them the justice that has been denied for far too long.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad the member opposite mentioned the survivors. We should never lose sight of the survivors when we are looking at Bill C-29. I think about so many of the survivors who have come to me in my community and said that what we really need to move forward are healing centres and healing for their communities. They have given me the example of wanting the trauma to stop with them.

I am wondering if the member opposite could speak to some of the people in her riding or in her nation who have inspired her in this journey of reconciliation. Could she talk a bit about the need for us to continue the journey of healing and investing in healing in indigenous communities and urban communities across Canada?

• (1720)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to mention my wonderful partner, Romeo Saganash, who is a residential school survivor and has spent his life fighting to achieve that reconciliation. I think, when we are looking at this, and certainly having the privilege of being blessed with such a good partner, the truth and reconciliation is based on the stories of survivors.

They set the path forward. Those are the stories. Now the government has to respond to those stories with action. It needs to stop stalling, and I am hoping the oversight that would be provided by this council would allow survivors, such as my beautiful partner, Romeo, to get the justice that is long overdue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. It is an honour to work with her at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We are currently working on a study she proposed on the impact of resource development on indigenous women and girls, which is an important issue.

For both our study and Bill C-29, how can we make sure that we are working collaboratively, nation to nation, with indigenous communities and various levels of government, to draw on best practices and what is being done well in Quebec, the provinces and the territories, while steering clear of overlap in terms of jurisdiction?

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, with the passing of Bill C-15 in the last session, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is mentioned 15 times in the bill, and the TRC calls for UNDRIP to be used as the framework for reconciliation.

We have a framework. We just have to follow that framework. That was a declaration that was produced after decades. It was over 23 years of work. We have the tools. We have the frameworks. We just need the political will to do the right thing.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is something I have been working on with the member for Nunavut. In Ontario there is a group of eight first nations, and they are first nations with a school collective in mind. We are talking about first nations education by first nations, and we are rewriting a curriculum that is made for indigenous people by indigenous people.

Could the member talk about how that could be a step toward that reconciliation we are talking about today?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, as a long-time educator and an educator who taught in the area of indigenous education, I am happy to answer these questions. We have several examples of first nations' control of first nations' education across the country, including in Manitoba with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. For the James Bay Cree, it has been a few decades that they have been developing their own curricula and taking control of the education of their children.

I think this is central, particularly with the history of educational systems and how things, under the guise of educational systems, were used to perpetrate genocide against our kids. For first nations, Inuit and Métis, control of education is critical and the path forward.

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Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, it has been interesting to participate in the debate on Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

We have heard from all parties their positions and questions regarding the disparities, they say, of indigenous peoples. While the New Democrats have focused on highlighting the ongoing violations of indigenous peoples' rights, others have chosen to focus on the potential composition of the national council for reconciliation.

In my final speech on this matter, I will clarify the position stated by the New Democrats. This party has been guided by advocacy from indigenous peoples in making its position, and we stand by it.

First, on clauses 9 and 10 of Bill C-29, about the composition and nominating bodies, clause 9 states the board would consist of nine to 13 directors and clause 10 only names four nominating bodies. This creates opportunities for five to nine directors who could come from other indigenous groups. I think it is important that there is representation from many nations across Canada with the independence that is necessary for this council.

I remind all indigenous peoples and groups that, if they feel the bill does not ensure their voices would be heard through the composition of the board, there would be opportunities to be heard, be it through nominating to the board through the nomination process, providing advice through advisory councils or, as outlined in the bill, reaching out to the council directly.

I thank key witnesses who spoke at committee. Zebedee Nungak spoke passionately about how decolonization needs to be the end goal of this process. Okalik Eegeesiak emphasized, "Reconciliation must come from a balanced approach, mindset and foundation, with mutual respect and equitable resources." Karen Restoule highlighted the importance of revitalizing indigenous laws and the importance of upholding indigenous rights.

The Native Women's Association of Canada plays an important role to advise and support indigenous women across the country. Indigenous women continue to fight for their rights, and with high rates of violence toward them, reconciliation should address the multiple concerns these communities have.

An amendment the New Democrats made was to ensure the inclusion of important advice to be drawn from survivors, elders and indigenous legal professionals. We have heard in this debate that it is important to ensure that survivors and elders are the centre of this work. The amendments by the New Democrats assure this. Currently, across the nation the rights of indigenous persons are violated, infringed upon and attacked. Often indigenous peoples are deprived of their rights, including basic rights such as housing.

We saw recently, in the Auditor General's report on the government's responses to emergency preparedness, that indigenous families in the Peguis first nations have been evacuees for 10 years after a flood.

Indigenous peoples are often deprived of the right to self-determination, accessible housing, educational opportunities and access to their own lands. This council will lead the conversation on what nations want to see and need from the government to move reconciliation forward. For the council to do its job effectively, it will

need access to information on both a provincial and federal level. It is important that it is granted access within the legal limits to report on what is happening to indigenous communities. It will be important to see the council work to consistently protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples with its recommendations.

• (1725)

It is because of the New Democratic Party's recommendations and amendments that the council will use a rights-based approach to its work on advancing reconciliation.

It is important we do not lose sight of what this legislation has the potential to do. First nations, Métis and Inuit have voiced for years and advocated for years for solutions that can work in indigenous communities.

The work of this national council for reconciliation will be important as it will ensure a non-partisan approach to hearing what the issues are and the work that needs to be done as it will monitor government programs and policies. It is vital that reconciliation be on the minds of all Canadians.

I remind all indigenous peoples and groups that hope to be heard that those opportunities remain. The work has started to ensure that indigenous peoples lead the way in reconciliation through the creation of this council. There has been great work already completed and more great work that needs to continue.

As a country, we have a lot to learn regarding reconciliation. I have spoken to members of Parliament from New Zealand who visited us in Canada. One member of Parliament asked how we will know when reconciliation is complete. My response to that question is reconciliation will only be complete when indigenous peoples say it is complete. This is not something that should be determined by governments.

Indigenous communities need to see action from the government that shows it is listening to what communities are saying. Governments must follow the lead of indigenous peoples, especially on matters related to reconciliation, decolonization and to the indigenization of laws, policies and programs that are to impact indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, Bill C-29 leaves me with a sense of hope that it will lead to measurable outcomes. While this bill is not the only solution to addressing the injustices experienced by indigenous peoples, it will ensure the advancement of reconciliation needed for all Canadians.

• (1730)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her work at INAN.

One of the amendments she proposed was to ensure that while not being too prescriptive to the transition committee, we give it the option, if it wanted, to have advisory committees consisting of indigenous residential school survivors and elders, and that this was an important part of what we needed to give it as an option to do as a national council for reconciliation.

Can the member opposite talk about the intent behind ensuring that the voices of survivors and elders be a part of the NCR?

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, the member's question is an important one.

Based on the composition and the nominating bodies, it is very important to make sure that we always keep in mind who this reconciliation council is for. It is to make sure that survivors are heard and that elders are heard. We know for a fact that indigenous individuals are the ones who have suffered the most. It is those people we need to honour and make sure their voices are prevalent in the work of the council for reconciliation.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, there was an amendment made that shortened the total time frame from approximately 11 months to five months for the council to present its annual report and for the Prime Minister to respond to that report.

Would she like to speak about how that raises the sense of urgency in this process? Does she think that is important?

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I did support that motion, because it is urgent.

For indigenous peoples, federal governments and bureaucrats have known for years that there are many issues that need to be addressed. We hear about the social indicators on a daily basis. We hear about the crisis situation on a daily basis. We know that federal departments have this data, and they must be able to share it as soon as possible with the national council for reconciliation.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent speech.

Creating a national council for reconciliation is one of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report, which is a few years old now. The government is acting on one of the recommendations by creating the council, which will watch over progress on the path to reconciliation. Nevertheless, the government remains responsible for taking meaningful action in response to the many calls to action.

In my colleague's opinion, how can we be sure the government will not offload its responsibilities onto the council instead of taking action itself?

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, the member has asked an important question. It is a difficult one.

Of the many steps that have been taken, including the creation of the national council for reconciliation, we also need to make sure that when we receive reports from the Auditor General and the

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PBO that we, as parliamentarians, make the government accountable by asking questions about why those commitments have not been met, and why those ongoing boil water advisories continue.

We need to keep pressuring this government to re-educate it on why it is important to make sure that the people of the Peguis First Nation, which has been evacuated for 10 years, get the attention they need so that they can return to their homes.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize that I am participating virtually from the traditional territories of the Musqueam and Coast Salish peoples. I would also like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I would like to thank the interim board of directors and the transitional committee for the council, which carried out extensive consultations to develop the framework for Bill C-29. I would also like to thank the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and all the MPs who support this important legislation, in particular, the members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the witnesses who gave testimony on Bill C-29. Their thoughtful amendments have strengthened this legislation while respecting the council's independence.

With Bill C-29, Canada takes another step on our multi-generational journey towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Of the 94 calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, three of them call upon the government to establish a national council for reconciliation. The council would be a permanent, independent and indigenous-led organization monitoring and supporting the progress of reconciliation in Canada, including the full implementation of the TRC's calls to action.

As the member of Parliament for Steveston—Richmond East and a lifelong resident of metro Vancouver, reconciliation with indigenous peoples is a moral imperative. Unearthing and celebrating indigenous peoples' history is a key step as we begin to make amends and build a more inclusive history for Canada.

In the spring, Richmond dedicated a new street in honour of B.C.'s first indigenous lieutenant governor, Steven L. Point, who chaired the Stó:lo Nation and sat as a provincial court judge before his 2007 to 2012 term at Government House.

In April, I attended the unveiling of a new plaque in downtown Vancouver celebrating the rediscovered indigenous Métis heritage of one of Canada's most inspiring heroes, Terry Fox.

Embracing indigenous stories and history is an essential step to building a more inclusive Canada.

On the road to reconciliation, these symbolic steps are necessary but insufficient unless they are accompanied by meaningful economic partnerships and improvements to the quality of life for indigenous people. That is why my community of Steveston partnered with the Musqueam and Squamish first nations, and have since established the largest craft fishing harbour in Canada.

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In the spring, to ensure the B.C. fisheries remain sustainable and to restore salmon populations, the federal and B.C. governments came together and announced the doubling of funding contributions for the British Columbia salmon restoration and innovation fund. Salmon is an essential part of the traditional diet of our local indigenous communities. Protecting this vital food source is crucial to advancing the cause of reconciliation in British Columbia.

We cannot have reconciliation without addressing the serious housing crisis indigenous peoples face both on and off reserve. This September, Vancouverites and the Salish people welcomed the Prime Minister to their traditional territory where the Prime Minister committed to providing \$1.4 billion to create nearly 3,000 homes on traditional lands in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighbourhood.

Settling long-disputed land claims is perhaps one of the most important steps on our multi-generational journey to reconciliation. This year, the Prime Minister and the chief of the Siksika Nation signed a historic land claim settlement, which is one of the largest agreements of its kind in Canada. The deal provides \$1.3 billion in compensation to the Siksika Nation to resolve outstanding land claims over 46,500 hectares of the Siksika's reserve.

In July, the Government of Canada and the Shuswap First Nation announced a negotiated settlement agreement of a 100-year-old claim, including a settlement of \$21 million.

● (1740)

Although these settlements inch us closer to reconciliation, we know that change is not happening fast enough. Creating a national council for reconciliation would do more than fulfill 30 of the TRC's 94 calls to action. The council would be able to conduct comprehensive studies and provide advice on how to overcome systemic injustices within Canada that impede us on the path to reconciliation.

Last week, at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs provided testimony about its experience and concerns with Canada's information system. It informed our committee that data sovereignty is an integral part of article 28 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms the right to just, fair and equitable compensation for confiscated traditional lands. The union pointed out that to receive the documents necessary to establish its cases, it has no alternative but to use the access to information process. In other words, indigenous nations must rely on the party they are in dispute with to produce documents and must pay for each ATIP submission.

Bureaucratic pain points such as accessing information and systemic and social injustices are obstacles on our path to reconciliation. A national council for reconciliation, as provided for in Bill C-29, would go a long way to identifying these concerns and holding governments accountable for them.

As part of the accountability process, the council would compile an annual report that would be presented to the minister and tabled in Parliament. It would outline the progress of reconciliation and offer recommendations for change within government and throughout Canadian society. The legislation would require the government

of the day to respond to the report and outline its plans to advance reconciliation.

Every level of government, and indeed every Canadian, is responsible for advancing the cause of reconciliation, but the federal government must lead from the front and be a government that works for everyone. Bill C-29 is about moving forward as a government, but also moving forward as a nation. In the words of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, "Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children rests with the kind of relationships we build today."

A national council for reconciliation is about more than redressing old grievances. It is about founding a new relationship with indigenous peoples, a relationship built upon respect, a dialogue and a new-found sense of partnership. I look forward to seeing the work of the council and its future recommendations to bring about reconciliation in Canada.

● (1745)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it has been seven years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission produced its report and the calls to action, which is as long as the government has been in power, yet only 13 of the 90-something calls to action have been implemented. This would be one of the more basic ones to implement. Had we done it earlier, we would be further ahead.

I am wondering if the member can comment on why it has taken so long to get to this point and why the government is lagging so far behind in its promises to indigenous people.

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, that is precisely what we are working toward, and we are taking into consideration the hundreds of years of bills not being paid by the Crown. That is the work we will make sure the council does. It will be independent of government and will bring solutions and recommendations forward and hold the government accountable.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, just to follow up on the last question for the member, I note the time frame of the progress. It started in December 2017 with the Prime Minister announcing that he was going to pursue this national council for reconciliation. From January to June 2018, the interim board of directors did the work it needed to do and reported, and had 20 very solid recommendations. It actually included in those recommendations a draft bill that could have been put forward in 2018. We then waited three and a half years for the minister to appoint, in the next step, the transitional committee members.

Why does the member think there was a lack of urgency for three and a half years while this just sat in limbo?

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, this is precisely what we are working for. The council will be independent. It will need to engage with provinces, territories and different jurisdictions on all 94 calls to action, and it will report its findings and recommendations back to the government. It will be an independent process. We will be accountable for supporting the council's needs.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1750)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved that Bill C-295, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (neglect of vulnerable adults), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand for the second reading of my private member's bill, Bill C-295, which would amend sections 214 and 215 of the Criminal Code to include penalties for the neglect of vulnerable adults.

What this amendment would do is add some definitions. One is "long-term care facility", which means somewhere with three or more adults unrelated to the owner or manager by blood or marriage. We are also defining what a manager is. A manager is somebody who administers, hires staff, purchases supplies like medical supplies, directs the daily performance of facility staff, coordinates and plans care for the residents and how the staff provides that care, applies protocols and procedures to give good care, and controls and evaluates those procedures and the quality of care in order to do something very important, which is to provide the necessities of life to residents.

Section 215 of the act defines the duty to provide necessities of life and the bill defines the failure to perform this as meaning to endanger life or to cause health to be injured permanently. Those are the two things we mean by the words "failure to perform".

This bill would also prohibit an offender who has been found culpable from seeking or obtaining work in any facility that takes care of vulnerable adults, or even volunteering in a facility that takes care of vulnerable adults. By "vulnerable adults" we mean anyone who is vulnerable as a result of age, mental disorder, illness or disability or who is frail. The penalty for failure to do this means a person would be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or would be punished on summary conviction.

Why are we bringing this up right now? It is because COVID-19 showed us that vulnerable adults are very much at risk. Let us look at the deaths in Canada as a result of COVID-19. Sixty-nine per cent were vulnerable adults, compared with the international average of 41% anywhere else in the world. We know that long-term care facilities are under provincial jurisdiction, so what we saw across this country during COVID-19 was a large variability in the results and deaths by province, depending on what province they were living in.

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It is interesting to note that in long-term care facilities, residents got 3% of the total COVID cases, yet that resulted in 43% of deaths from COVID. For instance, in Ontario, the incidence of death in long-term care facilities was 13 times higher than for the average 69-year-olds living in the community. What does that tell us? It tells us that there is a definite association between long-term care facilities and deaths and outbreaks due to COVID.

We know that 54% of long-term care facilities in Canada are private, and what we have seen is that many of them are not only private but for-profit. Following the first year of COVID, we got a report from the 4th Canadian Division's joint task force. If members will recall, we sent in the armed forces to help in some of these long-term care facilities. We also had a report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI, as it is called. Both of these were scathing reports. They sounded like something out of a horror movie.

We heard that many of the aides who worked in these areas did not have any real training. They did not have any ongoing medical education or health education training. Many of them did not follow protocols and many were not registered. Many of them were also not able to provide the care they were supposed to be providing.

We found that cleanliness was a huge issue, according to those two reports. There were cockroaches in these areas and people did not take care of residents who soiled themselves. They laid in their soil, sometimes for a whole day.

● (1755)

We found that the ability to give medication was compromised. Medication was often outdated in the facilities, and for the people who were getting medication, it was not even working for them. We also found out that cross-contamination was huge. Many persons who were working in these areas would go from one patient to another without changing their personal protective equipment and without washing their hands, causing cross-contamination.

We heard some horror stories. We heard about the abuse of these patients, where if they complained of pain or decided that they needed help, quite often they would get pushed roughly and handled badly. However, it was the lack of any protocol to deal with the pandemic and an epidemic that was very frightening in some of these facilities.

These facilities are run by the provinces. Long-term care facilities are a provincial jurisdiction. What can the federal government do? What we can do is make those people who own or manage these facilities liable with a penalty under the Criminal Code for the failure to provide the appropriate care by any medical standard whatsoever.

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Let us remember that there was burnout at these long-term care facilities. There was also the fact that many of the people who worked in these facilities were being paid less than equivalent medical personnel in other facilities of any kind.

We have just thrown seniors under the bus in many of these long-term care facilities, and we saw that with the deaths from COVID. I think we should be ashamed that, in Canada, we have a 69% COVID death rate in vulnerable adults versus 41% in any other country in the world. We need to do something about it. We are saying that we should make accountable anyone who manages such a facility, or owns such a facility, who did not have any of the protocols and did not do anything about cross-contamination.

We found out that the reason a lot of the aides were not doing the kinds of things they needed to do with personal protective equipment was that they were told that they should not spend money and that they should use it once, twice or three times. We know that is not how to deal with contamination.

Some of this was all about saving money. Some of it was about being scared. Some of it was about not knowing what to do and not having sufficient protocols and procedures. I really believe that we need to work with the provinces to create new sets of protocols and a real set of standardization of care for persons in long-term care facilities.

We need to make those who run or own those facilities very accountable under the Criminal Code. We could have the same penalties as under the section of the Criminal Code for the abuse of children or for failure to provide care for children who are vulnerable. We need to do this now for seniors.

I think that most of us know that COVID-19 is not our last pandemic. We know that with globalization, with people travelling everywhere, anyhow at any time, the cross-contamination of disease from one jurisdiction or one country to another can create what we now call pandemics. Pandemics are happenings, and pandemics are here to stay.

We need to be very clear about setting clear accountability and clear penalties for those who fail to provide care for vulnerable adults, which is the first thing. Then, as most of you will know, we need to also look at how we work with provinces to provide a pan-Canadian standard of care and a clear standard of care for many of these facilities. We know that 54% of them are for-profit organizations and are private sector organizations, and they do not have the appropriate ability to take care of adults.

Members who know a senior person or a vulnerable adult, whether they be disabled or senior, who actually perished or was harmed irrevocably under COVID-19 in one of these facilities would support this bill, because they know that it is important. If we do not care for the vulnerable among us, if we allow people to make money off people's vulnerability, if we allow people not to take due care and not to have compassion and the best quality of care for those who live in their long-term care facilities as adults, then we are failing, and we are failing badly.

• (1800)

I hope members will support this bill, because I think it is absolutely necessary. It is currently the only way the federal government can take care of this problem. It will take a while to negotiate with provinces. It will take a while to look at standards of care. It will take a while to do that, but in the interim, those who fail to provide appropriate care for vulnerable adults living in long-term care facilities will be penalized under the law, under sections 214 and 215 of the Criminal Code.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I was elected, I worked in Quebec as a project manager responsible for raising awareness of elder abuse and bullying. I can confirm that Quebec already has a comprehensive action plan and is working very hard on the issue of abuse.

My colleague mentioned the armed forces. It is interesting to note that during the pandemic, a report from the armed forces indicated that Quebec already has standards for long-term care centres, but it does not have the means to implement those standards.

I wonder if my colleague would agree that the solution is to give Quebec and the provinces the necessary means, in other words, to give them more money by increasing health transfers to 35%.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I would say not necessarily. We are talking about a specific component of health care under the Canada Health Act, which is what the federal government has as its ability to provide universal health care. Long-term care facilities are not part of the Canada Health Act, so transfers to provinces in any way, shape or form are going to have to be tied specifically to quality of care, to protocols for care and to outcomes. This is a totally different kettle of fish. This is not about funding medicare.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I volunteer in several long-term care homes. I have a lot of experience volunteering in them. I also had the opportunity to speak recently with the CEO of UniversalCare. One of the most important things he mentioned was the lack of staff. He has applied numerous times to have people come over from other countries who are nurses and PSWs qualified to assist us in these homes. Unfortunately, the Liberal government keeps turning them down.

Why?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, it is pretty simple: The federal government does not have jurisdiction for credentialing any health care worker. This is purely provincial legislation and provincial jurisdiction, so the provinces make a decision about whether or not someone can work as a licensed nurse or physician.

Private Members' Business

At the same time, the colleges of nurses and physicians are the ones that decide what credentials a nurse or doctor requires in order to practice quality of care under their jurisdictions. This is something that we have to talk to and work with the provinces on. I am sure the federal government is very interested in moving this agenda forward, and it is always prepared to assist in funding some of those decisions that need to be made.

The Province of British Columbia, for instance, has just starting credentialing more internationally trained workers to come here to become nurses and physicians.

• (1805)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on this bill. The NDP will be supporting it, because we, as the party of health care, have been extraordinarily concerned about the deplorable conditions in long-term care, which COVID may have exposed but which have existed for a long time.

My question is about resources. The bill, of course, would punish people after neglect has occurred. The NDP is concerned about preventing that neglect in the first place. In the last election, the Liberal Party promised to invest \$6.8 billion in safer long-term care. It also promised to invest \$1.7 billion to ensure personal support workers are paid \$25 an hour, and \$500 million to train 500,000 personal support workers. I do not think a single dollar of that funding has flowed yet from the government.

Can my hon. colleague tell the House when the money is expected to flow, so we can take care of our seniors instead of punishing people who abuse them?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think we need to do both. We need to have the carrot and we need to have the stick. We know long-term care workers are the lowest-paid health care workers in all of the health care jurisdictions. We know that. We know they are not registered. Many of them are not fully trained.

What we need to do is talk to provinces, as I said earlier on in response to my colleague who asked a question, and we need to work with provinces whose jurisdiction this is. We have that money set up to deal with provinces when they negotiate.

As a physician, I can tell members the federal government should not just be handing money over with no strings attached. We need to hand money over to deal with setting clear protocols, pan-Canadian guidelines and pan-Canadian standards of care, and to have the ability to ensure that the people who work in these facilities have very clear protocols on how they work.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank my colleague from Vancouver Centre for introducing this private member's bill to strengthen the Criminal Code provisions to protect our loved ones who reside in long-term care facilities.

Almost every Canadian knows someone who has been a resident of a long-term care facility. It goes without saying that when a family member or friend gets to that point in their life when they need extra care, we want to know that they are safe and being taken care of.

I also want to take a moment to thank the health care aides, nurses and the kitchen, laundry, housekeeping and recreation staff who work in our long-term care facilities across Canada. They should know how appreciative we all are of everything each and every one of them do.

Whenever we talk about frontline health care workers, I always feel that there is not enough attention given to those who work in our long-term care facilities. They provide care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It does not matter if there is a blizzard or horrendous weather, they answer the call and go to work. From working holidays to working night shifts, I know that it is not always easy on their families. I also know that the job is not easy on their bodies. They do it because they truly care for the residents that they serve.

In many cases, the residents they care for start to feel like a member of the family. Long-term care facilities are not hospitals. They are people's homes. The people who live there are not patients. They are residents. While this distinction may seem trivial, I can assure members it is not. In most cases, this will be people's last home. It behooves us all to ensure that we do everything we can to protect those who are most vulnerable and in need of care.

The pandemic showed how fragile our long-term care facilities are in this country, as my colleague just outlined in the presentation of her bill. There is a litany of reasons for that, but I want to start by talking about the challenges that both health care workers and the residents of those facilities face.

A significant number of the workers in our long-term care facilities are shift workers, who must either pick up extra days or work double shifts to try to get 40 hours a week. There are very few full-time health care aide or nursing positions that guarantee 40 hours a week. Many health care workers have a job at another long-term care facility to earn enough money to provide for their families.

We quickly saw the consequences of how long-term care facilities are staffed as soon as the pandemic started. Immediately, staff could no longer work in more than one facility to contain the spread of COVID. The result was that facilities were then short-staffed. It only got worse as people either had to quarantine or could no longer work as many hours as their child care options became severely impacted.

Private Members' Business

Sadly, we watched in horror as the news stories started to emerge about how short-staffed certain long-term care facilities were. Some families had the ability to take their loved ones into their homes as soon as the pandemic started. However, it was only a small number as the level of care was too much. As family members were prohibited from entering care homes due to the pandemic, all they could do was hope and pray that their loved ones were taken care of.

In many cases, when a parent, sibling or close friend becomes a resident of a long-term care facility, it is not unusual to visit them multiple times a week. Children come into the facility to help their parents eat, wash and clean up their rooms. Anyone who has ever worked in a long-term care facility knows how integral family members are to the well-being of the residents. A lot of family members also become volunteers at the long-term care facility, to help where they can, to ease the workload and to make the residents as comfortable as they can.

All that support was gone as soon as the pandemic started, and with the staffing challenges that were already present going into the crisis, unfortunately, we quickly learned of the dire consequences for many residents.

• (1810)

We must never forget the Canadian Armed Forces medical and support personnel who were temporarily deployed to support our long-term care facilities. It was their report they tabled in May 2020 that brought considerable attention to the conditions they encountered in our long-term care facilities.

They discovered systemic deficiencies in the establishment and management of infection control areas within long-term care facilities. There was a lack of care and distribution of personal protective equipment and enforcement of personal health measures. As well, as previously stated, there were severe staff shortages that compounded problems in long-term care facilities.

It is with that in mind we can turn our attention to the provisions contained in Bill C-295. I welcome the debate and attention on amending the Criminal Code to protect those who live in long-term care facilities.

Currently, the Criminal Code states under “Duties Tending to Preservation of Life” that a parent, guardian or spouse is under a legal duty to provide necessities of life to those under their care when they are unable to do so themselves due to age, illness, mental disorder or cannot otherwise provide for themselves. That is the most important area.

There have been numerous court cases over the years where people have been charged and convicted of such crimes, but to the best of my knowledge, never has the owner or manager of a long-term care facility been charged and convicted under this section of the Criminal Code.

Bill C-295 would amend the Criminal Code to clearly stipulate that owners and managers of long-term care facilities would be added to that list of being legally responsible to provide necessities of life to residents of their facilities. This level of legal protection for those who live in long-term care facilities, as stated in Bill

C-295, must be studied. I would urge my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill.

It is imperative we refer this legislation and have the much-needed debate about how the federal government can better legally protect those who live in long-term care facilities. As the onus would be on the Crown to lay the charges, we must carefully craft the legislation to ensure there are no loopholes.

I would recommend to my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to invite legal and health care experts to ensure the definition of “necessaries of life” is adequate to ensure there are legal penalties for those who fail in their duties. This will start a much larger debate about whether provincial regulations, which dictate the operations and level of care, including accountability provisions, are stringent enough.

As we debate this legislation tonight, I can assure members there are currently long-term care facilities that are running short-staffed. We know there are staff having to work double shifts so residents can get the care they need. As well, there are still far too many rooms in long-term care facilities with four beds, which is a challenge at the best of times let alone during a pandemic or flu season.

We can all agree that all levels of government, including the non-profits and companies that provide long-term care, must dramatically improve the conditions of long-term care facilities.

In closing, I was proud to run under our Conservative platform in the last election which would have directly provided federal funding that would have boosted the number of health care aides and other critical staff working in our long-term care facilities. I welcomed our commitment to prioritize and streamline immigration to include new measures to attract health care workers, especially in priority areas and regions. Our pledge to devote specific federal infrastructure funding to renovate and improve long-term care facilities was well received by many who work in the health care field.

Let us ensure this is just the start of a much larger conversation about how we can improve the living conditions, including the level of care, our loved ones receive. This legislation should pass second reading and be sent to the justice committee as quickly as possible.

Private Members' Business

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-295 is a bill that makes sense. It is a bill that we want to study in committee, that we want to support so that it moves forward. Like most bills in their original form, it is far from perfect, but it is worth examining.

In Quebec, like elsewhere in Canada, the pandemic tested us in ways we never wanted to experience. The worst of what we went through was the abandonment of our seniors. Some seniors had a much harder time during the pandemic than most people, particularly those living in long-term care facilities. They were sometimes left alone in wretched conditions. They were isolated from their loved ones. They were often inadequately fed or only given something to eat at odd hours. I think that is shameful. In this situation, we behaved like ungrateful children towards our seniors. I hope that this sort of situation never happens again. We have a duty to work on that.

In Quebec we have the law to combat elder abuse and the abuse of any vulnerable adult. This legislation provides for fines to be imposed and protects informants, because there are people in long-term care facilities who will testify and intervene to try to prevent certain situations from deteriorating. We need to protect those people. We must encourage people to blow the whistle on untenable situations. In Quebec, with this legislation to fight against abuse, we are able, or we try by giving ourselves the tools, to better protect people who assume their responsibilities and intervene in situations like that.

The federal government's legislation parallels Quebec's legislative provisions, but in my opinion, and at first glance, it is doing so within its own jurisdiction. For now, from what I have seen of Bill C-295, I am satisfied. We will have to take a closer look at the bill. There are some aspects that could easily go off the rails. We know that the issue of protecting jurisdictions is relevant to almost every bill introduced in the House. We will have to look at this more closely, but I agree, at first glance, Bill C-295 seems to stay within the parameters set for federal jurisdictions.

The bill refers to the Criminal Code, and that is obviously a federal law that was passed and amended under federal jurisdiction. That particular aspect seems to be appropriate. However, the bill must not push boundaries and lead to interference in Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions.

Having said that, I am somewhat concerned. When I look at Bill C-295, I am concerned that this bill will be considered as a panacea and that we will ease our consciences by believing that passing Bill C-295 means that we will have done what needed to be done to protect seniors and give them better living conditions. Everyone knows that is far from true. The federal government's first responsibility is to properly manage the taxes it collects. We know that the taxes the federal government collects far exceed the cost of its own responsibilities, which means that it must return some of that money to the provinces, especially for health care.

At first, 50 or so years ago, the federal government was paying around 50% of the health care costs of each province and Quebec. Today, the proportion is around 20% to 24%, and it keeps going

down all the time. The provinces are calling for a health transfer equivalent to 35% of their expenses. That is a reasonable figure that takes into account all the formulas. I would even say that this figure is lower than it should be, but it is still too high in the eyes of the federal government. The provinces can no longer manage.

• (1820)

I was talking earlier about a scandal—elderly people left in beds without care, medication and adequate services for hours, people often not eating all day because there was no one to bring them a meal. These situations are unworthy of us as a society. They are 99% due to a lack of funding. The institutions are no longer able to pay the staff they need to take care of our seniors. How much longer will we tolerate this?

I think we have a responsibility to prevent this. The primary responsibility of the federal government is to give the provinces the excess money it has collected in taxes. It must transfer the money to the provinces so that the provinces can manage their health care institutions properly. That is the only way to address the problem.

I recognize that this bill is about looking after seniors, and of course that is commendable. I am certain that not one of the 338 members in the House would say that that is unimportant or that the money should be used for something else. We all agree it is important. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that in order to run health care facilities properly and take care of our seniors properly, the money needs to be transferred. It is cruel and pointless to keep this money here in Ottawa when it is the provinces that need it. Health transfers are essential. We recognize this and the provinces are asking for it.

What is the federal government's response? It says there are conditions. It will transfer the money if we use it in a certain way, if we provide this or that type of care in a given facility, if we expand business hours, if we do this, that or the other thing. There are conditions.

Let us keep in mind that this money does not appear out of nowhere. It is tax money the government takes from Quebecers. The government says it will give the money back, but only if they comply with its conditions. It can impose conditions when it has jurisdiction the other level of government does not.

If I give children pocket money, I may tell them they cannot spend more than a dollar on candy. I may impose conditions in an attempt to teach them to manage their money properly. The thing is, the federal government does not manage any health facilities. The federal government manages health care for indigenous people and veterans and looks after new drug approvals and quarantines, but it does not manage a single long-term care facility or hospital. What makes it think it has the authority to impose conditions?

Private Members' Business

The conditions that the federal government wants to impose on the provinces are very likely to do much more harm than good, not to mention that they will prevent a rapid resolution of the problematic situation that has continued year after year. The provinces do not have the money to operate hospitals. The federal government says that it will not provide funds unless the provinces agree to its conditions.

In my view, this stubborn refusal is unworthy of a responsible government and leads to situations such as those that occurred during the pandemic. I do not want to put all the blame on the federal government. We all have some soul searching to do, especially the governments of each province, and I am certain that is what they are doing. The Quebec law I mentioned earlier was passed specifically to prevent this type of situation from happening. That is a good example.

However, the money is there to provide dignified care for our seniors. I am asking our government to carry out its responsibilities, to be fair, to be responsible with respect to our seniors and to transfer the money to the provinces to provide better care.

Bill C-295 is a bill that we must study, that we are going to study and that we will probably improve. I think the idea behind it is good, and we will work hard on it.

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased, as always, to stand and speak on behalf of the people of Vancouver Kingsway, bringing their concerns, ideas, hopes and aspirations to this chamber.

As health critic for the New Democratic Party, I am always happy to see a bill that addresses the state of health in our country and proposes a solution. This bill is very specific. Bill C-295, an act to amend the Criminal Code, targeted at the neglect of vulnerable adults, would do two things.

First, it would:

[amend] the Criminal Code to create a specific offence for long-term care facilities, their owners and their managers to fail to provide the necessities of life to residents of the facilities.

Second, it would:

[allow] the court to make an order prohibiting the owners and managers of such facilities from being, through employment or volunteering, in charge of or in a position of trust or authority towards vulnerable adults and to consider as an aggravating factor for the purpose of sentencing the fact that an organization failed to perform the legal duty that it owed to a vulnerable adult.

All Canadians were horrified over the last two years to see residents in Canada's long-term care homes living in the deplorable and, frankly, outrageous conditions that so many of the people who built this country are forced to live in. We saw how seniors in long-term care homes have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, long-term care residents accounted for 43% of all COVID-19 deaths.

Between March 1, 2020, and August 15, 2021, over 56,000 residents and 22,000 staff in Canada's long-term care and retirement homes were infected with COVID-19, resulting in more than 14,000 deaths among staff and residents. Frankly, the most astound-

ing figure that I saw was that Canada had the worst record of all OECD countries, the highest percentage of deaths in long-term care homes on a per capita basis of any OECD country. That speaks to a deplorable and long-standing issue in our long-term care sector.

Throughout the pandemic, there was a difference between for-profit long-term care facilities and public or non-profit facilities. The for-profit facilities had much worse patient outcomes than not-for-profit homes in general. According to an analysis by the Toronto Star, residents of for-profit facilities have been more three times as likely to catch COVID-19 as those in a non-profit facility, and for-profit facilities have seen more than twice as many staff infections per bed. Resident deaths have also been more common in for-profit facilities.

All Canadians were stunned when we saw that the provinces of Ontario and Quebec had to call for the Canadian Armed Forces to be deployed in some of the hardest-hit long-term care homes across Canada, where they documented horrific accounts of inhumane treatment, abuse and substandard care. "Assault" is not too strong a word.

According to the CAF reports, residents in two Ontario nursing homes died not from COVID-19, but from dehydration and neglect. The stories were documented by soldiers. I have read those documented notes of CAF soldiers, who simply wrote down in unembellished form what they saw when they entered those homes. They read like a horror story from a third world. They found residents lying in bed in soiled underpants. They found instructions that care aides were not allowed to change the bedding on a bed for 24 or 48 hours, even when the patient had an incontinence problem. Incorrect medications were given to patients. Patients were malnourished and were not fed properly. This was simply outrageous.

I want to make the point that COVID did not cause these problems. COVID exposed these problems in Canada's long-term care sector.

To date, more than 30 proposed class actions have arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic across Canada, and several of them allege that the owners and operators of long-term care and retirement facilities failed to take appropriate health and safety measures to protect their residents from COVID-19. Several provincial governments have adopted legislation limiting the potential liability of long-term care owners and operators.

Private Members' Business

• (1830)

For example, under the Supporting Ontario's Recovery Act, 2020, plaintiffs now need to show that those operating long-term care centres were grossly negligent to avoid statutory liability protection. That is a higher standard than applies to ordinary negligence claims. In this country, what provincial Conservative governments have done is to act not to protect the vulnerable patients in long-term care homes, but to protect the managers and owners of those long-term care homes who were responsible for unbelievable incidents of abuse and neglect. That is shameful.

The courts have not yet considered the meaning of "gross negligence" under that legislation, but the phrase has been defined by the Supreme Court of Canada going back 80 years. I can state that it is a very marked departure from the generally required standard of care or even simple negligence.

Under section 215 of the Criminal Code, it is currently an offence for a person to fail to provide the necessities of life to a person under his or her charge if that person is "unable by reason of detention, age, illness, mental disorder or other cause, to withdraw himself from that charge," and "is unable to provide themselves with necessities of life", and "the failure to perform the duty endangers the life of the person to whom the duty is owed or causes or is likely to cause the health of that person to be injured permanently." That is a very high standard, because it requires death or a permanent injury to be the foreseeable outcome.

Bill C-295 would create a specific offence under section 215 of the Criminal Code where a person is an owner or manager of a long-term facility and fails to provide necessities of life to residents of the facility, and where "the failure to perform the duty endangers the life of the person to whom the duty is owed or causes or is likely to cause the health of that person to be injured permanently".

We have some concerns about even that test, but the point is that bringing the attention of Canadians and members of the House to the deplorable conditions in the long-term care sector in this country is a valuable and worthy exercise of our time in this place. Anything that we can do to address that is needed.

We think that Canada's New Democrats have a much better and more structured approach to this problem. We want to end for-profit long-term care and bring long-term care homes under the public umbrella.

Long-term care is part of our health care system. When seniors are in hospital, they are in a health care system. Very often after that they are transferred to a long-term care home and suddenly they drop off the health map. That is incomprehensible and it endangers these people. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the reality that for-profit companies cannot be reliably counted on to protect our loved ones and keep workers safe.

We also believe that the victims of negligence in Canada's long-term care facilities deserve justice. That is why, due to the confidence and supply agreement, the one that the Conservatives scoff at, the New Democratic Party was able to force the Liberals to commit to tabling a safe long-term care act, to ensure that seniors are guaranteed the care they deserve no matter where they live.

I was in this House for nine years of the Conservative government. It never passed a long-term care act. With the current government, in the seven years since the Liberals have been in power, they have never passed a long-term care act. It took the New Democrats to come to this House and demand that on behalf of Canada's seniors. That is a positive step that we look forward to enshrining in this place.

Although Bill C-295 is a step in the right direction, it of course will not solve the problem. Rather than addressing the issues through a private member's bill, Canada's New Democrats expect the Liberal government to honour the confidence and supply requirements through government legislation. We will be present for that.

Finally, the Liberal Party promised in the last election to invest \$6.8 billion in long-term care, \$1.7 billion to ensure personal support workers are paid \$25 an hour and \$500 million to train personal support workers. That money has not flowed yet and New Democrats are calling on the government to honour its commitments and start putting money into the long-term care sector so that every senior in this country, no matter where they are, gets access to safe, quality, long-term care as their age and their contributions to our society so dearly benefit and deserve.

• (1835)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a quick point of order, I just wanted to bring to your attention that during the last debate, we saw the member for Avalon walking around picking up papers off a desk. We asked him what he was doing and he confessed that he was trying to make life easier for the pages so they would not have to spend all this time picking up—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond on a point of order.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I think my point of order has a little more substance than the one we were just treated to by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I just want to point out to my colleagues that during his speech, the member for Vancouver Kingsway was shuffling his papers near his microphone. Some people may not realize it when they are speaking in the House, but these sounds are very disruptive for the interpreters and people sometimes forget to pay attention. I just wanted to point that out. I did not want to interrupt his speech for that, but I think it is important to remind the members about this, in order to help the interpreters.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I noticed the same thing. Indeed, members must take care when they are holding their papers near the microphones. It can be very disruptive.

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, the greatest riding in the country.

I want to take a quick moment to thank the member for Vancouver Centre for this very important private member's bill, this very important piece of legislation. I am glad to hear that many of the folks in this room who have been speaking tonight are in support of this legislation.

Today's debate is about elder abuse. What is elder abuse? According to the World Health Organization, abuse of older people is:

...a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect.

Currently there is no standard definition in Canada. It can mean different things to different people, depending on their life and ethnocultural experience.

The government is committed to strengthening Canada's approach to elder abuse. This includes creating a policy definition. The creation of a policy definition would provide a common understanding of the issue. Having the same understanding would help raise public awareness and support cultural change in hopes of preventing elder abuse. This would also help the Government of Canada to better target its programs and policies directed at addressing the topic.

To support the development of the policy definition, in the summer of 2021, the government held nationwide consultations, seeking feedback from experts, stakeholders and Canadians on a definition. Activities included an online consultation and targeted round table discussions. The Government of Canada is taking concrete measures to prevent and combat elder abuse.

In addition to cofacilitating the regional round tables on a federal policy definition of elder abuse last year, since its inception in 2017, the national seniors council has provided multiple recommendations to the Government of Canada and has examined issues related, notably, to elder and financial abuse.

Their first report on the issue was published in 2007 and led to inform the Government of Canada's awareness campaign on elder abuse. In March of 2019, the council hosted an expert round table and a town hall on financial scams and harms targeting seniors perpetuated by strangers or by someone they know. The council concluded its work on this topic with the release of a "what we heard" report, summarizing the discussions as well as a number of federal initiatives that currently address the issue. The report was published on the Government of Canada website in August 2019.

The Government of Canada also participates in the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for seniors forum, which works to discuss issues of importance to seniors, advance issues of common concern and focus on concrete collaborative projects. For this work cycle, one of the key priorities established by the forum is addressing abuse experienced by seniors during the pandemic and beyond. This is key in our fight against senior abuse and critical to ensuring that we collaborate with our provincial and territorial colleagues to develop policies that reflect the needs of seniors and ultimately promote their full social inclusion.

Most recently we launched the 2022-23 New Horizons for Seniors program call for proposals for community-based projects. This call for proposals closed November 1, 2022, and included a specific national priority for projects that help to prevent elder abuse. For members' awareness, the 2021-22 New Horizons for Seniors program call for proposals for community-based projects resulted in providing almost \$13 million in funding to 607 organizations that identified that their project would have a focus on the national priority of preventing elder abuse and fraud. Of the 607 organizations, 419 projects have programming on elder abuse awareness as a key objective.

Through the New Horizons for Seniors program, the Government of Canada is investing in projects that address one or more of the program's five objectives, which include expanding awareness of elder abuse. In 2020-21, Justice Canada approved more than \$800,000 through its victims fund to support public legal education information projects with nine organizations across Canada. With this support, these organizations produced clear, accurate and informative material on elder abuse and neglect, specifically designed to reach seniors and those responsible for their care.

● (1840)

I should also mention that budget 2021 invested \$50 million for the Public Health Agency of Canada to design and deliver interventions that promote safe relationships and prevent family violence, including elder abuse and other forms of violence, such as child maltreatment and intimate partner violence, that put Canadians at a higher risk of experiencing elder abuse later in life.

Our top priority remains to protect Canadians' health and safety. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted long-standing and systemic challenges in infection prevention and control, staffing, infrastructure, and quality of care in long-term care homes across Canada. Canadians were really concerned and so were we.

We immediately knew that something had to be done, so we took action. To keep older Canadians safe and improve their quality of life, the federal government has been working collaboratively with provinces and territories, while respecting their jurisdiction over health care.

Through the 2020 fall economic statement, we invested up to \$1 billion for the safe long-term care fund. This funding supported the provinces and territories in protecting those living and working in long-term care settings, as well as improve infection prevention and control measures.

Some of the other actions to support provinces' and territories' long-term care facilities during this time included creating volunteer inventories to support the public health response, including in the long-term care sector; deploying the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Red Cross to long-term care homes to respond to urgent needs; and accelerating training for up to 4,000 personal support worker interns to address critical labour shortages in long-term care facilities and home care.

Through budget 2021, an additional \$3-billion investment will further support provinces and territories in their efforts to ensure that standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made. This includes improving the quality and availability of long-term care homes and beds, as well as workforce stability measures such as wage top-ups and improvements to workplace conditions. Palliative care is also a vital service for people living with life-limiting illness, often elders, and those delivering that care.

We are committed to improving the quality and availability of palliative care for all people in Canada. Budget 2021 provided nearly \$30 million to help advance the government's action plan on palliative care and build a better foundation for coordinated action on long-term and supportive care needs.

I promise that we are committed to continuing to work with provinces and territories to ensure the quality and availability of palliative care for everyone in Canada, including people living with life-limiting illnesses, caregivers, stakeholders, and communities, as well as those who are most vulnerable.

We know that better care throughout the entire health care continuum, especially supporting home and community care and long-term care, is a key component of addressing elder abuse. We also know that seniors want to stay in their homes for as long as possible when it is safe to do so.

We created the age well at home initiative, which provides practical supports to seniors who want to continue living in their own homes. This \$90-million incentive, from budget 2021, helps community-based organizations provide practical support to help low-income and otherwise vulnerable seniors stay in their home, again, for as long as possible.

Elder abuse is an important human rights issue, as well as a social and public health issue. Elder abuse can undermine an older person's quality of life, autonomy, dignity and sense of security. All Canadians and levels of governments play a role in preventing elder abuse. That is why we have been taking action to ensure Canadians can age with dignity and respect.

Adjournment Proceedings

Older adults are among the fastest growing demographic groups in Canada. Data from the latest Canadian census shows that from 2016 to 2021, the number of persons aged 65 and older rose 18.3% to seven million Canadians. According to population projections, in 2051, one-quarter of the population could be 65 and older. That is why it is all the more important that we take concrete and effective prevention efforts to address elder abuse.

In the future, our actions will become more and more important as we progress in our work to better target our programming and policies directed at addressing elder abuse.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton West for a very short minute.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would have had longer, I am sure, if the member for Kingston and the Islands had not stood on a point of order, and probably the most ridiculous one I have heard in seven years here in the House.

Now, I am glad that at least one member of the Liberal Party is bringing forward some legislation that would help seniors. It had been promised in the government's throne speech, but of course we have not seen anything.

I am very proud to be speaking in support of the bill. Before I joined the House as the member of Parliament for Edmonton West, I lived in Victoria, where I was very proudly vice-president and then president of the greater Victoria Eldercare Foundation, Victoria's and Vancouver Island's largest seniors foundation, assisting six seniors homes.

Apparently my time is up already, but I just want to give a quick plug to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have a full nine minutes once the bill comes back for debate.

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

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• (1850)

[English]

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the overtaxed residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I asked this government if Canadians could expect any tax relief.

Taxes on fertilizer and fuel are making food more expensive. The government's plan to enact the biggest excise tax in Canadian history will punish the hospitality sector before it has had a chance to recover from the government lockdowns.

Seniors are asking how they are going to be able to afford to heat their homes this winter, and what was the government's response? The member for Winnipeg South stood in the House and questioned why Conservatives had not spent taxpayer dollars to fly on a junket to a luxury resort town in Egypt. Canadians are worried about freezing in their homes, and the government complains that Conservatives are not enjoying Egyptian beaches.

In case there was any confusion about how the Liberals really feel about the great white north, just look at the Minister of Labour. Last week he said he was sick and tired of people complaining about the cold winter. It is almost as though the Liberal caucus has a bet to see who can be the most arrogant and dismissive of Canadians.

It is obvious from their responses in question period that the Liberals would rather be sitting on a sunny beach, sipping margaritas and mai tais. It is ironic that the member for Winnipeg South would talk about the COP27 meeting instead of taxes, unless it is an admission that COP27 is all about ways to crank out new taxes.

Less than a month ago, during these same adjournment proceedings, I asked the Liberals how many envirocrats and climate groupies would be going to COP27. Did they answer? Of course they did not. They never answer the question. We ask now how many people they sent to COP27, and they answer that zero Conservatives attended. They attack us for not attending, yet refuse to answer how many Liberals attended. COP27 is just a distraction from the carbon tax being imposed on Atlantic Canada.

The Liberals' new fuel standards regulations clearly state that the cost will be borne disproportionately by rural Atlantic Canadians, yet Liberals claim that nobody uses home heating oil any more. The Liberals are clearly gaslighting Atlantic Canadians, then charging them a carbon tax on that same gas.

Before any of the Liberals get up to spread more misinformation, I challenge them to read their own regulatory analysis. This is not Conservatives saying it, and it is not the Parliamentary Budget Officer. These are the Liberal government's own words. It said:

It is estimated that provinces in Atlantic Canada would be more negatively affected by the proposed Regulations. This is largely because the Atlantic provinces use more [light fuel oil] for home heating than other provinces.

It later said:

This may be most acute for seniors living in the Atlantic provinces, where they account for a higher share of the total population compared to other Canadian provinces and are also more likely to experience some of the highest energy expenditures in Canada proportional to income.

The carbon tax is bad for everyone, but it is worse for Canadians in rural and remote communities. It is worse for Canadians on fixed incomes. For seniors living on fixed incomes in rural and remote communities, it could very well mean the end. Faced with a choice between heating and eating, at least rural Canadians had the option of hunting. Now this socialist government and its urban, vegan, elite base of voters want to take that away too.

The government has been clear. It does not care about the costs it imposes on Canadians, and it is tired of hearing people complain about it. Will the parliamentary secretary disavow the Minister of Labour's statement, or is he also tired of Canadians complaining about being left out in the cold?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to address the question of pollution pricing.

Our government knows that putting a price on pollution remains the most effective way to fight climate change while making life more affordable for Canadians. Not only does pollution pricing ensure it is no longer free to pollute anywhere in Canada, but for eight out of 10 Canadians who receive the climate action incentive payments, the federal pollution pricing system actually puts more money back into their pockets.

Climate action is no longer a theoretical political debate; addressing it is an economic necessity. The reality is that Canadians are confronted every day with more extreme events, such as floods, hurricanes and wildfires. A few months ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer published an analysis showing that climate change has negatively impacted and will continue to negatively impact the Canadian economy. Responsible governments can only grow the economy and make life more affordable for Canadians if they have a responsible climate plan. The member opposite, respectfully, has neither a credible plan for the environment nor the economy.

However, I would also like to reassure my hon. colleagues that our government understands that many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet and that many are worried as our country's economy faces a period of slower economic growth due to the global challenge of high inflation and higher interest rates. Still, inflation in Canada is high and we know that Canadians are feeling it when they go to the grocery store, fill up their tanks and pay their rent. The good news is that there is no country better placed than Canada to weather the coming global economic slowdown and thrive in the years ahead. Our country has an AAA credit rating, has the strongest economic growth in the G7 so far this year, and the lowest deficit and net debt-to-GDP ratios in the G7. In fact, we have strengthened that advantage over the pandemic. Also, our unemployment rate continues to be near its record low.

Adjournment Proceedings

We do appreciate that this will continue to be a difficult time for a lot of Canadians. It is a difficult time for our families, friends and neighbours. That is why the government is supporting Canadians who are most affected by inflation. For example, by doubling the GST credit for six months, we will deliver \$2.5 billion in additional targeted support to roughly 11 million individuals and families, including more than 50% of Canada's seniors. I thank the member opposite for supporting that measure.

Canadians will even start to see some more of these targeted measures this week. On Thursday, December 1, Canadians can begin applying for the Canada dental benefit. That means the parents of kids under the age of 12 will be able to claim \$650 per child for visits to the dentist.

We are also moving forward with new measures introduced in our fall economic statement a few weeks ago. For example, Bill C-32 would make the federal portion of all Canada student loans and Canada apprenticeship loans permanently interest-free, including those that are currently being repaid. We are making major investments in housing affordability, and our key benefits are indexed to inflation. We have a world-class child care program and have cut costs by more than 50% just this year, and we have reduced taxes for the middle class and for small businesses.

We will continue to work hard to make sure that life is more affordable in Canada and to grow an economy that works for everyone.

• (1855)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, with every word the parliamentary secretary just uttered, he emitted carbon dioxide. If Canadians could charge a carbon tax on Liberal speeches, we would retire the national debt. Sadly, the Liberals never pay the price for their verbal pollution.

This climate cult is intoxicated on green Kool-Aid. It fervently believes the end is near and we must repent for the sins of capitalism. Only by adopting the communism which the current Prime Minister openly admires can we be saved by the ravages of a warmer climate.

The Minister of Labour is obviously tired of reality not conforming to his climate creed. He is not truly tired of Canadians complaining about the winter; he is tired of winter undermining the precepts of his climate cult. Canadians are tired of the current arrogant, entitled government.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I think Canadians can count on this government to continue supporting those who need it the most through targeted and fiscally responsible measures while running a tight fiscal ship. In the months ahead, we will continue to work hard to build an economy that works for everyone, to create good jobs, to make life more affordable for Canadians. Our government believes that our country is the best place in the world to live, work and thrive, and we will work hard every day to make sure we keep it that way.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague for spending his evening with me on this very important matter. Last month, on Oc-

tober 24, I raised the issue of increasing EI premiums, particularly at a time when in Canada, Canadian workers and small business owners are just fighting to stay afloat.

I know there has been some debate in this place back and forth on whether it is a direct payroll tax increase. We are going to put that aside because we know that even the Prime Minister, then the member of Parliament for Papineau in 2013, described it as such. What is important is that the definition does not matter. What matters is the impact that workers and small business owners from across my riding and the country are worried about.

In this place, we have discussed the headwinds that workers are facing: rampant inflation, skyrocketing costs of living, the continued record setting of new highs by food banks, and so on. Therefore, instead I want to read into the record the other side of the equation, which is the state of our small businesses, which employ over 88% of all Canadian workers in the private labour force. I am afraid to report that it is grim.

Last week, I met with people from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business who provided an update that, as I had feared, showed that Canadian small businesses continue to fight for survival. Nearly two-thirds have pandemic debt, with an average pandemic-related debt amount of \$145,660. One-sixth of small business owners have considered permanently closing.

Therefore, I want to put into context what that means for workers. If we use Statistics Canada's definition of a small business as being any business with fewer than 100 employees, and the most recent employment figures by Statistics Canada, it shows that almost 6.2 million Canadian workers are employed by small businesses. That means that if one-sixth of small business owners have considered permanently closing, over one million Canadian workers are at risk.

Surely, then, considering the macro and microeconomic situation that our nation is in and the inflationary environment that workers and small business owners are facing, would my hon. colleague not agree that now is not the time to raise EI payroll taxes?

• (1900)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's small and medium-sized businesses are the heart of our economy. They define our communities, our main streets and our neighbourhoods across the country, in big cities and small villages. Helping them innovate is good for Canada, and that is why our government has addressed and continues to address barriers that are preventing them from growing.

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With Bill C-32, we are proposing to cut taxes for Canada's growing small businesses, which will help them continue to grow and create good jobs. We are also working with payment card networks, financial institutions, acquirers, payment processors and businesses to lower credit card transaction fees for small businesses. We want these fees to be lowered in a manner that protects existing reward points for consumers and does not adversely affect other businesses.

We believe an agreement can be reached, but should it be the case we are not able to come to an agreement, we will introduce this legislation at the earliest possible opportunity in the new year and move forward on regulating credit card transaction fees.

We have already published draft legislation amendments to the Payment Card Networks Act, and I invite the member for Spadina—Fort York to read them and provide feedback.

We all want Canadians to have good jobs, but it is also important to keep a good social safety net, and employment insurance is certainly one aspect of it. EI is a tool that helps provide resources for people in their time of need.

I would like to remind the member for Spadina—Fort York that it is the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, not the government, that sets the annual employment insurance premium rate according to a seven-year break-even rate, as forecast by the EI senior actuary. It does this every year and has done so since 2016.

The commission is a tripartite organization representing the interests of workers, employers and government. It is mandated to represent and reflect the views of its respective constituencies. The employment insurance premium rate will be \$1.63 per \$100 of insurable earnings in 2023. That is 25¢ less than it was in 2013 when it was \$1.88 per \$100 of insurable earnings, and notably, this was under the management of the current Leader of the Opposition.

In June 2013, the national unemployment rate was 7.2%. It is now 5.2%. Over two million more Canadians are now working compared to June 2013, including 500,000 more since the beginning of the pandemic. The seven-year break-even mechanism ensures stable and predictable premium rates for Canadian workers and employers. In fact, annual changes to the premium rate are subject to a legislated limit of just 5¢. The mechanism is also intended to ensure EI contributions are only used for EI purposes.

This is a prudent and transparent way for EI premiums to be managed, and I do not understand exactly why the hon. member would be against it.

• (1905)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that EI is an important tool and an important safety net. Saying this is something that is set every seven years is an easy cop-out, but the thing is that seven years ago we did not have the pandemic. Seven years ago, we were not facing the highest inflation rates and the cost of living increases in over 40 years, which is the highest it has ever been in the lifetime of half of Canadians, myself included.

Instead of his saying that this is something that is really not up to them and that it is done every seven years, I want to ask my hon. colleague to try to live in the now and the reality small businesses

and workers are facing today. I will repeat the question: Will the government at least consider delaying the increase to payroll taxes to another time?

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, to be clear, it is set every year on a seven-year average, not set every seven years.

In addition, it is important to reiterate our government is committed to continuing to support small businesses and help Canadians cope with the rising cost of living. I spoke earlier about what we do for small businesses.

Let me remind my colleague about our affordability plan for Canadians, a suite of measures totalling \$12.1 billion in new support to help make life more affordable. This includes launching dental care for half a million kids under 12, helping 1.8 million Canadians pay their rent, doubling the GST credit for six months, enhancing the Canada workers benefit, supporting affordable early learning and child care for young families and providing a 10% increase to old age security for seniors 75 and older. In addition, government benefits that millions of Canadians rely upon are indexed to inflation to help keep up with the cost of living.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question tonight is about the IRGC. The IRGC is the Iranian regime's tool of terror at home in Iran, its tool of terror in the wider region and its tool of terror around the world, including here in Canada. We know that Canadian citizens and people with close connections to Canada have been killed by the IRGC, most notably when the IRGC shot down flight PS752, murdering dozens of Canadian citizens and many more people with close connections to our country.

The IRGC continues to be active, advancing terror around the world. We have seen the images out of Iran of how the IRGC is terrorizing the people of Iran. We also have heard reports of death threats that continue to be made by this organization against Canadians, so Conservatives have a simple proposition in response to this horrific reality, which is that we must do everything we can to shut down the operations of the IRGC here in Canada. That means listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization within the Criminal Code.

We have a statute in the Criminal Code that is designed to allow the listing of terrorist organizations so that we can shut down their operations in Canada, prevent them from fundraising, prevent them from recruiting and prevent any member of their organization from being here or operating here freely.

I put forward a motion four and a half years ago in this place to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. We had a day-long debate. We had a vote on it. Every present member of the Liberal caucus actually voted in favour of my motion to list the IRGC. I thought that was great news. We had the two major parties in the House come together, recognizing that the IRGC is a terrorist organization and voting, in an admittedly non-binding motion, to call on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. It should have been a given, after cabinet ministers voted to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, that they would have gone ahead and listed it as an organization.

In fact, on another issue we had the House unanimously call for the listing of Proud Boys as a terrorist organization, and Proud Boys was listed as a terrorist organization within a couple of months. In this case, it has been four and a half years. The government likes to talk about other things it has done on Iran, but I have been continuously asking the same question over the last four and a half years. The government voted to do this, so why has it not?

In four and a half years I have never gotten an answer. If the government has a good reason for not listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization, it should at least provide its answer and make its case, and we would have that debate. However, we have received no response, and sadly I predict we will receive no response tonight, on that basic question.

Does the government intend to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, which is what it voted to do? If not, why not? Other measures were taken previously. The Conservative government listed the Qods Force as a terrorist organization under the Criminal Code, designated Iran as a state sponsor of terror and ended diplomatic relations with Iran.

Those policies have continued under the current government, but it has not taken any substantial new steps. The latest we have heard is the Deputy Prime Minister explicitly acknowledging in a statement about a month ago that the IRGC is a terrorist organization, but the government still has not listed it as a terrorist organization in the Criminal Code.

Hope springs eternal. I will keep asking the question. Could the government please list this terrorist organization as a terrorist organization in the Criminal Code? If it refuses, could it at least explain why it will not act?

• (1910)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I speak today in this House in solidarity with and offering my full support to the brave men and women of Iran who are rising up against this brutal regime. For too long the Ayatollah, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the so-called morality police have repressed the Iranian people for their own gain. The brutal killing of Mahsa Amini was a spark in a long history of repression and violence the Iranian authorities have imposed on their own people. Now people from across Iranian society have risen up to demand freedom, justice and accountability.

I want to make it clear to Iranian Canadians and Iranians abroad that the people of Canada and the Government of Canada stand

Adjournment Proceedings

with them as they fight back against the shameless disregard for human rights. Our government, along with our international partners, is committed to holding Iran accountable for its actions in accordance with international law. I would like to reiterate the robust measures Canada has imposed against Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, in response to these recent incidents, as well as long-term actions against Iran's systemic human rights violations.

Canada has imposed vigorous sanctions against the Iranian regime, the IRGC and their leadership under the Special Economic Measures Act, or SEMA. These sanctions, which explicitly target the IRGC, also target several sub-organizations, including the IRGC air force and the air force missile command directly. This freezes all assets in Canada that belong to listed individuals associated with the Iranian regime, the IRGC and their leadership. Contravention of these provisions can carry heavy criminal penalties.

Our government has also listed Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under the State Immunity Act. By doing that, together with the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, victims of Iran's human rights abuses will be allowed to take the Iranian regime to court for damages relating to terrorism and its support of it. However, this, of course, is not enough. Once Bill S-8, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, becomes law, it will align the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, IRPA, with the Special Economic Measures Act, SEMA, to ensure all foreign nationals subject to sanctions under SEMA will also be inadmissible to Canada.

Furthermore, on Friday, October 7, the Prime Minister announced that Canada will work toward pursuing a listing of the Iranian regime, including the IRGC leadership, under the most powerful provision of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This means that 10,000 officers and senior members of the Iranian regime, including its top leaders, will be permanently inadmissible to Canada. We are doing this in a targeted way, making sure to punish those who are involved in these activities while ensuring we do not negatively impact those Canadians, our neighbours, who may have been forcibly conscripted into the organization a long time ago, despite having no affiliation with the regime today. Working with the international community, moreover, the UN Security Council has now passed a number of resolutions to impose sanctions on Iran, which come into effect under Canadian law through the United Nations Act.

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I will end as I started by letting all Canadians know, especially our Iranian Canadian community here at home, that we will not waver in our commitment to keep Canadians safe, countering terrorist threats in Canada and around the world and holding the Iranian regime accountable for its heinous crimes, human rights violations that are oppressing the freedom-loving people of Iran. We remain unwavering in our commitment to keep Canadians safe, including by taking all appropriate action to counter terrorist threats both in Canada and right around the world.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that response in this whole situation is a sad demonstration of the farce that is the government's approach to human rights. We have a parliamentary secretary reading out his lines that, yes, the government stands with the people of Iran, that it wants them to know it stands with them, but, substantively, the government refuses to do the core thing that the Iranian community is asking, which is to shut down the operations of the IRGC here in Canada.

I note as well that the person answering the question is the parliamentary secretary for finance. This is not even his file. The government representatives for public safety and foreign affairs could not even be bothered to answer the question. I have some sympathy for the parliamentary secretary. He has been asked, as the parliamentary secretary for finance, to read out a response that has nothing to do with the files that he is working on. That tells us how seriously the government takes the need to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

If the issue is concern about forcible conscription—

• (1915)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I am happy to be here talking about this issue today. It follows up dozens of meetings I have had with Iranian Canadians in my own community and I have been following this particular issue especially closely.

Listings under the Criminal Code provide the legal and institutional framework to implement measures to freeze and forfeit terrorists' property and help investigate and potentially persecute someone for certain offences. Listing under the Criminal Code is just one instrument in Canada's international domestic counterterrorism strategy tool box in ensuring the safety of Canadians and holding the Iranian regime accountable. Canadians can have confidence in the continuing efforts of the Government of Canada to hold the Iranian regime, the IRGC and their leadership accountable for their actions.

The Iranian people have bravely stood up against the brutal dictatorship with a simple message that has resonated around the world: women, life, freedom. To the women and men of Iran demanding their rights and freedoms, we see them, stand with them and will continue to take action.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:17 p.m.)

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