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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 2, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 2, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 13 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 29th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill S-6, an act to implement the convention between Canada and the Republic of Madagascar for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. The committee has studied the bill and has agreed to report it without amendment.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1040)

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

(*Division No. 1305*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bendayan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gameau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardie	Hébert
Hehr	Hogg
Housefather	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Khalid
Khera	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Menicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver

Government Orders

O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
Young	Zahid— 148

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boucher
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Cannings
Caron	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Davidson	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Egliniski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fortin	Gallant
Genuis	Gill
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Hoback
Hughes	Jolibois
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Martel
Masse (Windsor West)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	O'Toole
Pauzé	Poillievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Richards	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Vecchio	Viersen
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 105	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**[*Translation*]**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-91, An Act respecting Indigenous languages, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question of the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.) moved that Bill C-91, An Act respecting Indigenous languages, as amended, be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1120)

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

(*Division No. 1306*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beech
Bendayan	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block

Boissonnault
Boulerice
Brassard
Breton
Caron
Carrie
Chagger
Chen
Choquette
Clarke
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davidson
Deltell
Dhillon
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseauit
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gourde
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Hogg
Housefather
Iacono
Joly
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Kusie
Lamoureux
Laverdière
Leitch
Liepert
Lloyd
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Soeurs)
Monsef
Motz
Nantel
Nater
Nicholson
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rayes
Richards
Robillard
Rogers

Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Champagne
Chong
Christopherson
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dzerowicz
Egliniski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (Central Nova)
Gallant
Genuis
Gill
Gould
Graham
Hardcastle
Hébert
Hoback
Holland
Hughes
Jolibois
Jones
Julian
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Kwan
Lapointe
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martel
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Poilievre
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Reid
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado

Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shiple
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Tabbara
Tassi
Trost
Vandal
Vecchio
Virani
Waugh
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Young
Zahid

Speaker's Ruling

Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
Stetski
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vandenbeld
Viersen
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Yip
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 254

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL REVENUE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 10, 2019, by the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope concerning allegedly misleading statements by the Minister of National Revenue.

When raising his question of privilege, the member for Chilliwack—Hope explained that the Minister of National Revenue had told the House more than once that the Canada Revenue Agency had hired 1,300 new auditors since 2016 but that certain Quebec newspapers reported this to be inaccurate, stating that the true figure was just 192. The member went on to explain how the minister's statements breached privileges since they were knowingly and deliberately misleading and made with the intent to deceive the House, in his view.

[Translation]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader countered that the minister's statements, inside and outside the House, were in fact accurate and consistent. The parliamentary secretary cited the auditors hired from 2016 through 2018 to justify the minister's claim that 1,300 auditors were hired by the Canada Revenue Agency. From his perspective, the parliamentary secretary claimed that this was a dispute as to the facts rather than a legitimate question of privilege.

Government Orders

[English]

By now, members are only too aware that, in most instances, when members are accused of misleading the House, the Chair has ruled that it is a dispute as to the facts. Given the gravity of such a charge, the Chair must be able to establish with certainty that the statements made were undoubtedly false, misleading and intended to misinform the House.

[Translation]

Members must recognize that what may appear to be misleading and false is often a matter of perception subject to context and interpretation, factors that are inherent to debate. On this, Speaker Milliken stated on December 6, 2004, at page 2319 of Debates:

Disagreements about facts and how the facts should be interpreted form the basis of debate in this place.

• (1125)

[English]

Consequently, absent any compelling evidence to the contrary, I do not find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established in this case.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Mélanie Joly (for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism) moved that Bill C-91, An Act respecting Indigenous languages, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages.

[English]

I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded ancestral lands of the Algonquin people.

Before getting into the details of the bill, I would like thank our colleagues, particularly the members of the heritage committee, who worked very diligently to get this bill through the committee stage, as well as those who are not committee members, such as our friends from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, for their dedication and hard work in supporting this bill.

I am also pleased to speak about the need for Bill C-91. As members are aware, Bill C-91 has been co-developed by three national indigenous organizations, namely the ITK, the AFN and the Métis National Council. It is in direct response to a number of very important things that have happened both in Canada and internationally.

First and foremost, it is in direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report's calls to action 13, 14 and 15. I will elaborate on that later.

It is also a direct result of our commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As members are aware, Bill C-262 is now in front of the other House. It was adopted by this House and is something our government and the Prime Minister have committed to implementing.

There are many ways to look at languages, but however we look at them, they are one of the most important elements of our lives, one of the most important aspects of connection to the people, the land and their way of life.

In Canada, there are currently 90 indigenous languages. As we mark UNESCO's International Year of Indigenous Languages, we have to understand that, sadly, 75% of those 90 languages are on the verge of extinction. That is quite shocking. For some languages only one or two speakers are alive. I was recently in London, Ontario, and met with some elders from the Oneida Nation. They have 48 speakers of their language. Sadly, those 48 speakers are all over the age of 65. Not a lot of young people are speaking the Oneida language. That language is probably at risk of becoming extinct within the next generation. It is something that is quite urgent. Given the history of failure on the part of successive governments to protect languages, I think it is long overdue that we entrench this into law once and for all.

When we speak about how we got here, it was through a process of colonization on the part of the government in the last 152 years formally as a country, but since settlers first came to North America. We know that over the decades, languages were eroded, primarily I would argue because of programs put together by the government. Of course, one of the most important aspects of it is the effects of residential schools on generation after generation of indigenous people who have lost their language. We know that residential schools played such an important role in that.

I want to quote from the Prime Minister's speech at the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly on December 6, 2016, where he stated:

We know all too well how residential schools and other decisions by governments were used as a deliberate tool to eliminate Indigenous languages and cultures. If we are to truly advance reconciliation, we must undo the lasting damage that resulted.

• (1130)

I just want to walk colleagues through an experience I had this past month.

I went to Moosonee and met with Tony, who is a residential school survivor. He is in his sixties and is originally from the Moosonee area. When he was about five, he was taken to the St. Anne's Indian Residential School, along with his siblings. They were there for about 10 years. During that time, the entire way of life he was used to was taken away from him. He basically lost his language and lost his spiritual connection to his people. He was unable to reconnect with his family, because his sisters and brothers were separated in separate dorms. He was simply unable to connect with his family when he got back. He went through a very difficult process in establishing himself. He is now a very successful businessman. He has four children. He was trying to tell us how important language is to him, but sadly, he is unable to speak the language and pass it on to the next generation. I think that is the critical moment we are facing today.

Government Orders

Another comment was from a Tlicho elder and language specialist, Mary Siemens. She talked about the connection between indigenous languages and cultural identity. She said:

Our culture depends on our language, because it contains the unique words that describe our way of life. It describes name-places for every part of our land that our ancestors traveled on. We have specific words to describe the seasonal activities, the social gatherings, and kin relations.

That is a profound quote that describes the connection she has to the language and culture.

I want to walk through some of the major elements of this legislation. First and foremost, this would be a framework. It would be a living document. We have been putting together a framework that would look at indigenous languages in a holistic way. It would be dynamic and would allow for a distinctions-based approach to the protection of indigenous languages. It would not be an Ottawa-based solution to the challenges of indigenous languages. It would be a framework that would allow indigenous communities, based on the notion of self-determination and respect for each of the nations and language groups, to define what was important to them and define how those languages would be protected. The bill would be required to be reviewed every five years in this House as well as outside. It would adapt as languages grew and as situations changed so that support would continue as we continue the reconciliation journey together with indigenous peoples.

Just to put it in context, when we have a language like Oneida, where we have only 48 language speakers, and we have languages like Cree, which has many more speakers, the needs and the ways to protect these languages are different. What may be important for one group may not be the same for others. I think the framework we have put together really contemplates that. It would allow for this level of flexibility to ensure that it was distinction-based and that it enabled each and every community to establish an action plan for themselves.

I want to talk about one of the other major aspects of this bill. That is the establishment of a national commissioner of indigenous languages. This is something that is very important.

● (1135)

For the first time, we would entrench in legislation a commissioner who would oversee indigenous languages. The commissioner would be supported by three directors, and together they would work with indigenous communities and nations to develop programs and processes that would allow communities to advance their requirements.

When we look at the framework for the indigenous languages commissioner, we have a concrete plan that would be a starting point. It would not be an end point; it would be a starting point that would turn the tide on the loss of these languages.

From that, there would be support from the federal government, which, as we can see in budget 2019, would be a significant investment in the right direction. We would invest \$333 million over the next five years to support this initiative. This is currently being debated as part of the budget implementation act. As we know, it would be a significant change from the \$89 million over three years we currently have, which is roughly \$30 million a year, for the

aboriginal languages initiative. This significant change in funding would accelerate the protection of indigenous languages.

It is very important that we protect indigenous languages. I bring it back to my personal experience, which I have spoken about previously in the House. I know that the Minister of Canadian Heritage has also spoken many times about languages. For both of us, the primary language we speak at home is neither English nor French. We both came to Canada at a relatively young age. My family speaks Tamil. At home, it is the primary language. Over the last 35 years, there has been a serious conflict in Sri Lanka over one language and the ability of people to use that language and access services in that language. Over 100,000 people have died as a result of it.

The language I speak at home is foundational to my life. It has defined virtually every aspect of who I am, how I live my life and what I do and do not do. If I did not have that connection to the language, I would be a different person today. The struggle I have is that I have two young daughters, who are eight and 10, and I struggle with how to pass it on to them and make sure they speak the language fluently and have the opportunity to learn and understand the culture and the context the way I was able to understand. Regrettably, I actually do not read or write the language, but even then, I am able to understand it and live in that world. It is a struggle I face.

Relatively speaking, this is a language that has incredible international support. It is institutionalized in many universities. It is the official language in countries like Singapore, Malaysia and elsewhere, so it is protected. When we compare that language with indigenous languages, it is a completely different situation. We have failed to support, revitalize, protect and expand indigenous languages, and that is why time is so critical. That is one of the reasons our friends opposite, in both the Conservative Party and the NDP, worked very closely with us in getting this legislation through the committee process as well as through this House.

● (1140)

The urgency of implementing this legislation now cannot be understated. I have visited communities in the last several months that have gone from having six language speakers to five. There are many like that around the country. My colleagues probably have a good sense of that as well.

This cannot wait until the next Parliament. We cannot defer this to the next generation, because sadly, there will not be a next generation that can speak the language or protect and preserve it.

A couple of months ago, I was in Victoria at the Royal British Columbia Museum. It has an indigenous languages exhibit that really speaks to how languages are looked at right now. We are at a point where certain languages are only available in museums. The last speakers were recorded by academics, and they are preserved, but there is really no process or plan to revive and revitalize those languages. That is the primary reason for the urgency of the legislation before us.

Government Orders

Finally, on the overall aspect of reconciliation, Canada has played an important role in keeping these languages in the state they are in today. This did not happen because of indigenous people. This happened because of government policies. Government policies need to change to support this process of revitalization, and that is a major responsibility of the federal government. It is the other impetus for us to support the bill and push it forward.

Our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is critical. It is something that the government and the Prime Minister have accepted, and we are in the process of implementing it. Implementing this legislation is an important step and milestone as we look at actually entrenching the principles of UNDRIP in law.

This loss of languages is dire. It is critical that we revive them and support them through revitalization. It is also important to recognize that over the years, language has been a form of resistance. Even though they lost these languages, we know that some people, late in their lives, even with their last breath, were speaking their language, were speaking their mother tongue, and that was important, because it was a form of resistance.

We need to acknowledge all the language keepers, all the people over the years who have struggled to keep these languages alive: the languages nests, the elders, the communities and the schools where languages are taught. We need to thank them for the enormous amount of work they have done to support these languages to keep them alive. It is an appropriate way to close, because it is their strength and their commitment that will allow indigenous languages to be revived and revitalized and used in daily life. I hope that one day we can celebrate the survival of all these indigenous languages.

• (1145)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the goodwill that went into making the bill, but I think we need to recognize that it is far from perfect.

My colleague talked about the co-development process. It is important to note that one national organization is opposed to the bill. I wonder if the member could speak to that particular issue. To me, co-development, when presenting something to Parliament, should mean taking a consensus approach.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for her hard work in support of the bill.

This legislation was, indeed, co-developed with three national indigenous organizations. The member is right. At this point we still do not have full consensus from all three organizations. However, we are very hopeful. We continue to have conversations in order for that to materialize.

The urgency of time is important. Over the last two years, we have consulted with over 1,200 individuals and organizations, and at this stage, we really do need to get this done.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was glad that the parliamentary secretary mentioned fluency and the danger presented by the fact that many of these languages are on the verge of extinction in Canada. Those languages are at the core of culture and reconciliation.

In my riding in the Okanagan Valley, the territory of the Syilx people, the language spoken is Nsyilxcen. There are fewer than 50 fluent Nsyilxcen speakers left in Canada. One program in Canada, of very few, is teaching people to be fluent in it. It is trying to bring the language back from the edge of extinction. I think the only other two programs like this in Canada teach Mohawk and Squamish.

These programs take a lot of effort, time and money. I do not see any significant funding earmarked through the bill or in the government's budget for programs like these. We have left this to the very end, and we need serious funding to do this across the country.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, across the country there are some very important programs like the one my friend mentioned. There are some very unique experiences, and work is being done by communities to preserve language.

With respect to the budget question, \$335 million has been allocated in budget 2019 over a five-year period. This is a significant improvement from the \$89 million over three years that our government put in place, and a vast improvement from the \$5 million a year provided by the previous government to support indigenous languages.

This is a step in the right direction, and as the framework develops and unfolds, the government will provide significant support to advance languages.

• (1150)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to reflect on some of the comments my colleague made about how government policies or cultures from the past that tried to impose one language have affected both indigenous Canadians and new immigrant communities.

He talked about the importance of language for culture. Sometimes there are ideas, sentiments and experiences that do not translate very well. They can be explained in one culture and in one language, but it is very difficult to put those ideas together in a different language.

Just to develop that, I wonder if my colleague can share examples of that from his own experience as a Tamil speaker to help us understand that with respect to ideas and experiences, translating words is not simply automatic. There may be something in the original language that is not understandable outside of it.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, obviously the context in which heritage, multicultural language and education are taken in Canada is quite different from that of the need to protect indigenous languages. It is fair to say that many of the multicultural languages that are here have enormous international strength and receive support from other countries and institutions, whereas indigenous languages simply have not had that, do not benefit from it and, in fact, in terms of the speakers, are quite limited. In that sense, the responsibility to revive a language does not rest with a community of 1,500 or 2,000 for multicultural languages; it rests with 30 million to 50 million people. Therefore, contextually it is different.

Government Orders

However, the struggle, in terms of the emotion of not being able to understand the language and the real fear of losing it, lies with most people who are living in areas dominated by another language and other language groups.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, can the parliamentary secretary comment on what Canada has actually lost as a result of not having properly preserved indigenous languages throughout the years and, arguably, at times throughout our history worked to oppress them?

What are the benefits of properly preserving these languages going forward, in terms of the cultural identity of Canada?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, we can never imagine what we lost with respect to languages over several generations and spanning over 152 years as a country. The loss of language is also attached to the loss of many people. I think the best way to describe it is with what the former chief justice of the Supreme Court said, which is that what happened in Canada was cultural genocide, and it occurred as a result of federal government policies.

We can never recover from it, and I do not think that many people who have faced this type of struggle and violation could ever recover from it, but it is important that we start the process. That is why, overall, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action are important, and that is why language revival is so essential.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a fluent Dene speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to still do that. I was involved in the committee process, and many witnesses who came forward talked about improvements and the importance of making this the best legislation ever for Canada, yet there are so many disappointments.

I have one important question to ask the government, which I have asked outside of here. The amendments we brought forward were based on the witnesses who came forward wanting to make some amendments to strengthen the legislation. The proposed legislation is just a small step. It does not look at the whole, at the big picture.

Why has the government not taken into consideration the amendments and the hard work the witnesses have done in coming here and speaking to members of Parliament and the committee?

• (1155)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, that is not correct. In fact, many amendments that were put forward were adopted and are reflected in the report that came from the committee. The legislation before us, as amended, has come a long way from the initial legislation we put forward.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand and speak to Bill C-91, the indigenous languages act, at third reading.

It is important for people who might be watching to note that we just had a vote at report stage, and there was unanimous support in this House to move this bill forward. That in itself speaks to how important this particular bill is.

Having said that we see it is important to move the bill forward, the expression “The pursuit of perfection often impedes improvement” is very appropriate. This is by no means a perfect bill. There

are many things that will still be looked at in more detail in the Senate. I certainly perceive that we will be seeing more amendments coming forward. It was seen as a really important step. It was seen as something that we should all support, at least as a movement in the right direction. It is an improvement, for sure, but does it get us where we need to go? Absolutely not.

I was just talking to my colleague, who was at a dinner last night with the ambassador for New Zealand. There was a delegation here from New Zealand. I understand there was some drumming and a welcome in Cree at this particular dinner. What was more interesting was when he described to me how the entire delegation that came, MPs from all parties, spent over a minute or so talking in Maori. All the people in that delegation had some grasp of the indigenous language of that country.

I thought that was a very interesting story. I know we have a few indigenous language speakers in this Parliament, but we are a significantly long way from anything that resembles what my colleague described. Obviously, with its many languages and their many dialects, Canada is in a very different position.

This bill is important. Many witnesses came to the heritage committee and shared how vital the protection and revitalization of languages was for them. As they spoke, they shared research in terms of the importance of language; they shared lived experiences, and they shared suggestions for how we could make this bill better. I would like to thank them all for taking that time to come to committee to share their thoughts about this bill. We know that some of the suggestions were taken into account. At this time, others would be difficult. This needs to be an evolving process; it needs to be a bit of a living tree, and it is certainly a framework.

To go back a little, in the debate at second reading I shared a personal story. I would like to share another story in terms of what I witnessed back in the 1980s: elders who were very fluent in their language at that time, and how destructive some of the government policies had been, not only in terms of the residential schools and the loss of language.

I can remember visiting an elder who was very fluent in her language and being told that I was not supposed to visit this elder because she was no longer one of them. She had married a white person who had passed away. I thought that was strange, because she was of the community; she spoke the language and she was emblematic of the culture of the community. However, the government had decided she was no longer a status Indian, because she had married a white person who had since passed away. She could not ever retrieve that status.

• (1200)

It was a really unusual circumstance. That was one of the first times I saw the impact of government policies. As a nurse I was not supposed to visit an elder, because at the time I was called “the Indian nurse” and in the communities I was allowed to be responsible only for people who were status Indians. We all ignored those rules, and those rules certainly made no sense.

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If we look at all the elders at the time and their fluency in speaking and we compare them with the children who had returned home from the residential schools, who at that time were in their fifties and sixties, we would see that very few of them could converse well with their parents with the language skills they had, and many of the elders were very limited in their English. Imagine how difficult that was for the communities.

To look back, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was part of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which recognized that the school system had a profound, lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language. At that time, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper and the previous Conservative government acknowledged these harms and delivered a formal apology in the House of Commons to the former students and their families and communities for Canada's role in the operation of these schools.

Again, this was a time when Parliament came together. We were government and we delivered the apology, but I remember NDP members were instrumental in that and I also know that the Liberals welcomed that particular day.

At the time, he said:

The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes and often taken far away from their communities.

Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.

Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools, and others never returned home.

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

As we all know, the commission did its work across this country and delivered its calls to action. Calls to action 13, 14 and 15 specifically looked at the issue of language, and that is part of the reason we are seeing unanimous consensus in the House to move forward with this bill.

This is an important bill. We have said it is not perfect. I am going to talk about some of the challenges and concerns that I continue to have about the technical pieces of the bill, as opposed to the more aspirational component.

My number one concern is about something I have never seen before in all my time as a parliamentarian. Committees hear from witnesses, who make suggestions. Then we have the opportunity propose amendments to the legislation to improve it or to fix errors. Amendments typically are introduced in time for all members of the committee to reflect on them and make decisions about whether these amendments make sense, where they are supportable, or whether they might have other implications.

We went through that process. Many amendments were submitted. They were submitted from independent members as well, and there was a good opportunity to reflect on what those amendments would mean in the context of the whole bill. Then there was clause-by-clause consideration, when we looked at the clauses as they existed and the amendments that were proposed.

The current government table-dropped 23 amendments. In all of my time as a parliamentarian, in considering many bills in clause-by-clause study, I have seen independents table-drop amendments and other parties have table-dropped amendments, but I have never, ever seen a government having to drop 23 amendments to its own bill with no time for consideration. Essentially, we had to make a decision on the spot, on the fly, in terms of the ramifications of these amendments.

● (1205)

That is what I consider to be an incredibly sloppy practice, and it is a serious concern. As the Senate looks at this amended bill, I am hoping that it will be able to catch any challenges that were left there as a result.

The other thing that is particularly interesting about the bill is something that Canadians might not be as aware of. There are two bills before this Parliament that are in some ways partner bills. One is the bill we are talking about today, and the other is Bill C-92, which is the indigenous child welfare legislation. In both these bills—and for the first time ever, as was confirmed by Ms. Laurie Sargent from the Department of Justice—Parliament has decided to speak to the recognition of section 35 rights in legislation, as opposed to going through a court system.

As Conservatives, we have often said that we should be the ones legislating and the courts should be interpreting. To some degree it is very appropriate that in consultation and collaboration with indigenous peoples in this country, we try to do some work in relation to section 35 rights.

The unanswered question is still about our Constitution, which is absolutely a work that includes our provinces and territories. For the federal government to be addressing section 35 in a language bill makes sense, because it is not going to impose on the provinces; however, in Bill C-92, the child welfare bill, the government is again defining some section 35 rights but is also going to be asserting to the provinces some paramouncy. It has been unwilling, so far, to talk to the provinces about that. When we are talking about putting some definition to some issues in the Constitution, not having conversations with the provinces is going to lead the government to some real challenges, particularly in the next piece of legislation we are going to be debating. I am very concerned that the government has taken such an approach.

I do not think I have ever seen things so bad in my time as a parliamentarian in terms of provincial-federal relationships. Things seem to have broken down, and I hope we can retrieve the situation. To propose legislation on which conversations have not even been had with the provinces is a challenge we need to deal with.

As I was going back in my notes, I noticed another interesting thing. This bill was originally tabled on February 5. At that time, the Minister of Heritage gave his speech, and I congratulated him on his speech and on this particular piece of legislation. However, February 5 was a very interesting date: it was the day a Globe and Mail article gave the first inkling of the SNC-Lavalin scandal.

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I can remember the article had just come out, and I asked the minister a question about that, of course, and for the next two months we never did get satisfactory answers to any of those questions. What we learned in that particular article and in the two months that came afterward was that the government speaks many fine words about its commitment to indigenous relations and reconciliation, but that far too often its actions fall far short of what is expected.

I know that the former attorney general of Canada, who is now sitting as an independent, feels particularly concerned about what the government is doing and where it is going in terms of its commitments and in terms of the indigenous file.

• (1210)

We also saw how willing they were to throw a female who was the first indigenous attorney general in Canada under the bus. How quickly they did that, just two months later, to someone who was well recognized and well respected. We need to call them out on that particular piece.

Bill S-3, a bill about gender equity, is another piece of legislation that was tabled in the House that is related to this file. We had department officials come to our meetings. It sounded as though they had responded to the court decision in a reasonable fashion, yet the first witnesses and then other witnesses were able to point out serious flaws in the bill that the department officials had not noted. The minister had said everything was fine and that the government was taking care of the court decision, but the bill was so bad that they had to pull it and go back to the starting point. Then they had to pass a flawed bill, and we have been hearing recently that there are still concerns that the issues around gender equity have not been resolved.

Those are my particular concerns over the legislation that the current government has tabled. We have Bill S-3, which was flawed and had to be pulled back. We have Bill C-91, which required 22 amendments to be table-dropped. In the case of Bill C-92, there are only six weeks left in this Parliament. The Liberals made significant commitments that they have not been able to meet, so they are in a rush, and particularly with Bill C-92, the child welfare legislation, they are trying to rush things through.

When I started my speech, I talked about things not being perfect but moving in a good direction. However, there might come a time when, in the Liberals' rush to get things done, things will be so flawed that they will just have to backtrack, as with some of their other bills. Unfortunately, we will have to see if they can get through it in time.

In conclusion, it is heartening to see unanimous consent in this House. It is heartening to see the work that has been done, although it is only a step. I am optimistic that there will be new technologies. One of the witnesses talked about how artificial intelligence can help with some language preservation.

We need to work soon and we need to work hard, so we are very happy to support this bill in terms of moving it to the next step.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I want to first reach out to the member across and say that I was equally

frustrated by amendments being brought by members at the last minute. I acknowledge that it was in fact a very frustrating part of the process. I understand her frustration about that, and she is correct that members should not be bringing amendments at the last minute. That was very frustrating.

The timing of the process issue was very frustrating, but the substance of many of the amendments did improve the bill, and the amendments were based on the evidence that I thought we had heard from the witnesses.

One amendment that was particularly important was to try to build in a broader vision as to what we consider to be indigenous languages. That responded directly to one witness, who talked to us about indigenous sign language, which is something I was not even aware of. For me, it was one of the most interesting parts of the evidence we heard, and it let us see things in a very different way.

Maybe the member opposite could talk about that part too, about how there was an expanded vision of what we might consider as language and how that was adopted through the amendments, as late as they may have been introduced.

• (1215)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, out of 23 amendments, there were some that were appropriately made, but late to the game. The bigger issue is that, as we know, legislation is complicated and sometimes when a change is made to one section, it has ramifications. There were many amendments at the last minute, and maybe some were good, but the committee was voting for things without being able to look at the full scope of the legislation. I would never say that all of the amendments would not improve the bill, but certainly there were significant concerns. As I indicated in my comments earlier, I would not be at all surprised if this bill comes back from the Senate identifying some of the mistakes that might have been made.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to clarify. This legislation is very important to me, as a Dene speaker, and to the people in my riding and across Canada who fluently speak Dene, Cree, Michif and other languages. I find the committee process frustrating. I will ask the member what she thought when I and my colleague put forward the amendment that the language commissioner should be indigenous, which was voted against by the governing party. What is her feeling on that?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of debate around the office of the commissioner and the role of the commissioner. To me, it makes sense that the indigenous language commissioner would be indigenous. There was also a lot of debate about how many hours the commissioner would work, which seemed beyond the scope, and what role the commissioner would play. I perceive that this might be one area that will be reflected upon as we see what works, what does not work and how the government moves forward with it.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on my colleague's experience, it is very important to recognize the fact that first nations are so important for our country and how sensitive it is to work with the first nations people.

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[Translation]

As the member mentioned, something very special happened here in the House of Commons a few years ago. On June 8, 2011, for the first time in Canadian history, a first nations chief was able to address the House in response to the apology made by the prime minister at the time, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper.

From my colleague's personal experience, what impact did that apology have on first nations?

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the residential schools apology, which all parties in this House welcomed, was an absolute historic day in the House and in Canada. Out of that, we have the calls to action, many of which are significant. All Canadians need to look at the apology and reflect on the legacy of the schools.

• (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation encourages us to recognize the importance of language. Over the last few years, we have consistently talked about reconciliation. There are 94 recommendations or calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and this is one of those calls to action, just like the foster care legislation, of which I am a very strong supporter, and Bill C-262. There are many calls to action by parliamentarians and it goes far beyond that. We all have a role to play when it comes to reconciliation. Whether it is someone walking down Selkirk Avenue or living in Amber Trails, someone sitting in this chamber, or leaders of indigenous communities and leaders outside of indigenous communities, we all have a role to play, and this piece of legislation is important for many different reasons.

I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts on the importance of this being part of the 94 calls to action in the reconciliation.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we have 94 calls to action. We believe that many are very significant and important. When the current government, or the leader of the third party at that time, stood up in the House and symbolically adopted all 94, without any analysis of them, that created some concern. However, there are many recommendations we have supported in this House. Of course, there are a couple that we think need more analysis or conversations.

In my speech, I talked about the provinces and how there are times when we cannot leave them out of the conversation. We cannot leave third parties out of the conversation. Therefore, I think there is work to be done, and it is work that is getting done.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to give my hon. colleague an opportunity to say a few words on the government's characterization that we did okay because we passed some amendments. For some of us, some of the amendments that were not passed were extremely important and would have really improved the bill, including making the indigenous commissioner an indigenous person, making sure the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is actually in the text of the bill so it is binding, and being able to refer to the sixties scoop as a detrimental policy for indigenous people. Those were voted down.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, apart from the 23 amendments, there were many other amendments proposed, some by the Conservatives and some by the NDP, that were rejected. I probably need to go back to my first comment, that this is a step in the pursuit of perfection that impedes improvement. I think we need to get to the next step. It will be something that continues to evolve over time.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by recognizing my community for the support they gave me, my parents, my siblings and my cousins, Dean, Debra, Desi and Dallas. I especially want to recognize my late cousin, Danielle Herman, also known as Superstar.

I rise today in a somewhat surprised and spontaneous way to speak once again to Bill C-91, an act respecting the languages of first nations, Métis and Inuit people. As a Dene language speaker and someone who grew up on a trapline, speaking Dene and learning from the land, I know how important this legislation is and how important it is to get it right.

Let me begin by saying that I only found out about 15 hours ago that this bill would be debated this morning. I only found out last night that we would be doing third reading of this bill, well outside the 48-hour time frame that it would take to get a Dene interpreter into the House so that I could speak my language.

When I am speaking with constituents back home, I try as often as I can to speak our language, because it is as much an act of resistance as it is of community. When we speak our language, we share our experience, our histories and our stories. When we speak our language, whether it is Dene or Cree or Michif, we remind ourselves that we survived residential schools and that we keep speaking, even though Canada did not want us to.

To speak here today in a language that I learned for the benefit of others, without enough opportunity to get an interpreter so that a large portion of my constituents can follow a debate on a bill that directly affects the future of their own language, to speak without interpretation is incredibly disappointing and is evidence that, once again, first nations people are expected to do business only on the terms of their colonizers. The government describes this bill as an act of reconciliation, but the actions that go on behind the scenes are the farthest thing from reconciliation.

Throughout the first two readings of this bill and the long committee meetings, I and my fellow members of Parliament repeatedly heard two things about this bill. First, we heard that the bill is not perfect. The Minister of Heritage told us this. The leaders of indigenous organizations told us this. ITK repeatedly said that this bill is not good enough for the unique needs of the Inuit. Language speakers and educators told us that they do not understand what this bill would mean for them. Rather than offering a meaningful response to the very real objections that indigenous language advocates and the NDP put forward, the government has consistently given the second response we heard repeatedly. The answer has been that despite its imperfections, Bill C-91 is an important first step toward the much bigger project that is the protection and restoration of indigenous languages.

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We have been told that it is crucial for the government to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 13, 14 and 15. We have been told that while the government acknowledges there is much more work that needs to be done, this bill points the government in the right direction.

Let me be clear. We cannot claim victory for only taking the first steps toward good legislation on indigenous languages, just as we cannot say that we are bilingual for being able to count to 10 in a new language and we cannot say that we completed a marathon after only the first kilometre. As an indigenous person who has repeatedly been told that the government is turning the page on indigenous issues, or starting fresh, or taking a new step, or going in a new direction, or whichever euphemism the government is using this week, I think I speak for the vast majority of indigenous people who will not settle for beginning again. We do not want the promise of a better tomorrow if it is not followed by concrete action and funding. We do not want the promise of better legislation tomorrow, because we have no guarantee of a willing partner.

When the Minister of Heritage appeared before committee to present the bill, he told us that he would be open to amendments. Many of the elders, organizations and language educators who consulted on this bill told us that there were conversations had and recommendations that they made that were not reflected or included in the final draft of this bill.

• (1225)

Many of those same elders, organizations and language educators came to committee to share their stories, advice and recommendations. In good faith, and knowing it was the will of those who know better than us, the NDP, the Green Party, the Conservatives and the member of Parliament for Nunavut proposed a number of amendments to improve the bill at committee. They were virtually all rejected.

I want to take some time now to tell this House why the amendments we proposed on behalf of others were so very important. On a number of occasions, the NDP and the member for Nunavut tried to include language that recognized the distinct language needs of the Inuit, based on the recommendations the committee heard from the ITK and its president, Natan Obed. One of the most startling facts we heard was that Nunavut actually has more English-speaking teachers than it does English-speaking students and that the English and French languages receive more funding than Inuit language education programs.

Inuit people wanted a bill that worked for them, and the ITK made a number of thoughtful and balanced amendments, but they were rejected entirely by the government.

The member for Nunavut, with his community in mind, put forward an amendment that would have allowed the government to enter into agreements with provincial and indigenous governments, in regionally specific cases, to further the language needs of those regions. His thoughtful amendment would have opened the door for federal services to be offered in indigenous languages based on a nation-to-nation understanding of what communities need.

In a territory where the large majority of people speak Inuktitut, it is a crucial act of decolonization to have access to government

services in the language the people speak. Instead, services are available in French or English, and too many people do not have access. The government, by rejecting this amendment, has failed to meet the needs of the Inuit people.

This amendment was part of an ongoing conversation we have been having about the status of indigenous languages in Canada. As the House well knows by now, decades of oppression by the Canadian government and residential, boarding and day schools have told our language speakers that they and their languages have no place in Canada.

What we are seeing now is a resurgence of our languages, one where we are free to speak them in our homes and communities. We are seeing more and more young people engage with their traditions, learn the languages their elders and parents speak and practise their languages in their schools and on the land. We are seeing our elders step forward to teach their languages, many no longer afraid of what might happen if they are seen sharing their knowledge. We are seeing language speakers start camps and summer programs to teach their language. Along the way, language speakers are told by the government that they are doing good work for their people.

However, governments, both provincially and federally, are not supporting the work of language educators and youth with funding or resources to grow our languages or preserve them on our own terms. In Saskatchewan, for example, the province just announced that high school students will now be able to take classes in Dene and Cree, which sounds like a really good initiative. Unfortunately, language educators know too well that language education needs to be funded throughout childhood. Language education needs to begin in kindergarten. Meaningful education takes place in every grade, in every lesson and throughout one's life.

What we are not seeing is the recognition of the status of our languages. Without the status of our languages, we will not see the right investments made in education. We will not see the right investments made in preservation. We will not see the right investments moving forward.

I understand that there are practical concerns about status the government is concerned about, but to seriously consider those concerns is a profound act of reconciliation and decolonization the government did not want to consider, because claiming success for small steps is easier than being courageous and taking big ones.

I dream of the day when indigenous people in Canada can walk into government services buildings in their own communities and have the ability to speak their language, but that day is yet to come.

Government Orders

•(1230)

One of the other big concerns I have heard from my constituents is about the role of the indigenous languages commissioner. I understand that overseeing the funding, restoration and preservation of indigenous languages requires some bureaucracy, and this legislation would create that bureaucracy, but language educators and indigenous organizations do not know what the language commissioner's powers would be, how they would affect their day-to-day operations or how funding models would be established. All we know so far is that language educators would presumably need to go through an extra layer of government through yet another new application process to get funding.

What we also know is that elders and language educators know what is best for their own communities. The creation of another level of government that educators would have to go through is troublesome for two reasons. First is the more principled reason that the government should be funding language programs directly instead of accepting the high overhead costs of a new government agency. Second is that educators would now be under the direction of a languages commissioner, who may have the ability to say if certain ways of learning and preservation are not good enough, without knowing a particular language or cultural group and its needs.

If we value the input of educators on the ground, we need legislation that would keep the people at the front of the legislation. As it is written, it is unclear to me and to educators what the act respecting indigenous languages would actually do for indigenous language.

Furthermore, we proposed an amendment at the heritage committee that would ensure that the indigenous languages commissioner and the directors of that office would be first nations, Métis or Inuit people. It is so important that the languages commissioner be indigenous. It is only through having the lived experience of an indigenous person, knowing what our communities deal with, the history of our people, the resistance we have put up against the Canadian government and the daily experience of what it is like to live in this country that the indigenous languages commissioner could operate.

We wanted to enshrine that minimum lived experience and understanding in this position, knowing how important it would be. What we were told at committee was that asking as much was unconstitutional but that the government would do everything possible to make sure that an indigenous person would hold the position of commissioner. What I hear from the Liberal government is that it wants to protect the Constitution but act in a way that goes against it. The government wants to uphold a colonial document but use words to say that it is on our side despite it.

My big concern, and the concern I have been hearing from so many of my constituents, is that the position of languages commissioner may become a political appointment for someone who means well but does not fully understand our experiences.

At virtually every committee meeting with the Department of Canadian Heritage, Indigenous Services or Crown-Indigenous Relations, these branches of government are represented by non-

indigenous people. While these ministers and professionals are educated and well meaning, there will always be a barrier to full understanding of our communities and what our communities need, because their experiences in life are so profoundly different. We had an opportunity with Bill C-91 to make sure that the barrier would be lifted and that the languages commissioner would be an indigenous person and would have a better understanding of our unique needs, but that opportunity was shut down for a mix of political and colonial reasons.

Last, there is the question of funding. A lot has been said publicly about how this legislation would just be one phase of the Liberal government's plan for indigenous languages and that funding would come later. However, there is a direct correlation between the mandate of an organization, which would be created by this bill, and the funding of an organization, which was noticeably left out.

It is unclear how the government would assist with education funding, and it is on this basis that language educators are confused by the bill. Would funding be given through a projects-based approach? How would that funding work, and on what basis would funding be given? Would existing educators be supported, or would they have to start over? Would priority be given to innovative teaching styles through apps and the Internet, or would our known ways of learning on the land and in small groups be the priority? How would sign languages be included in this funding model? How would this funding work for children who attend public and private schools across the country?

•(1235)

Would the languages commissioner work with provinces to fund educational initiatives from kindergarten to high school graduation? How would that work for communities that have more than one language group, such as in northern Saskatchewan, where Michif, Dene and a few dialects of Cree are all spoken in one community? Would students be forced to choose which language to learn, or would the opportunity exist to learn all languages available to them?

What about residential school survivors, survivors of the 60s scoop and the thousands of survivors and their descendants who have lost their languages at the hands of the government? We tried to include these specific groups through amendments to the preamble of the bill, but they too were rejected. How will their right to their languages be recognized, supported and taught? How will we empower survivors to regain what was taken from them and their families?

If it is not clear at this point, the bill creates a lot more questions than answers. It would be nice, if not expected, to at least know some of those answers before the bill passed through the House so that we could let indigenous people and indigenous language speakers determine for themselves if the bill would be a success.

There is a lot of pressure to support the bill. The government is running out of time to complete its mandate before the election this fall. I know that indigenous leaders are doing their best to make sure that the bill has the support it needs, because it is, at the end of the day, a step forward. However, there is exponentially more pressure to make sure that the bill, which would affect such a large aspect of our way of life, is done correctly.

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While the bill would be a step forward, to what goal and to what end are we walking toward? Is the goal one of half measures that would marginally improve indigenous language education in Canada, or is the end goal one of fundamental change to Canadian society that fully respects the needs of indigenous languages, recognizes their place in our culture and creates a generation of indigenous youth who speak the same languages that generations of people before them spoke?

When I think of the bill before us, I do not think about how it will affect the outcome of the next election. I think about people like Marsha Ireland, Kevin Lewis, Graham Andrews, Cheryl Herman, Vince Ahenakew, Cameron Adams, Julius Park and so many others who have worked so hard to teach and ensure their language in northern Saskatchewan.

To conclude, it is the people and culture we have to keep in mind when we think about the bill. When I think about the future of all indigenous languages across Canada, we have to do what is right and not just what is politically convenient.

● (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the contribution the member has made to the debate. What comes to my mind is the recognition that many of the answers the member is looking for could probably be best had after we have seen the legislation pass, because, in good part, it would obligate the government to continue working with indigenous leaders and community members to answer some of those questions. I do not believe that it is just the government that has to provide all the details of those answers.

I would suggest, as the member opposite herself has recognized, that the bill would be a significant step forward. As part of that forward movement, we have to recognize that there is always an ongoing level of discussion with indigenous people and look at ways we can take advantage of the legislation we are attempting to pass.

Would the member not agree that those ongoing discussions are a very important component of what will hopefully be the law?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, this is very important legislation that affects all indigenous people across Canada. It affects first nations, Métis and Inuit from coast to coast to coast.

We have been told by elders, language educators, leaders and others that it is important for the government to act now. We have done enough talking. We talk, research is done on indigenous people and then more research is done. Recommendations may come forward, but we wait 10 more years.

The government is very good at saying one thing, but when it comes to real action that makes changes to indigenous people's lives, it is playing games, just as it did with respect to this debate. I was not given the chance to have an interpreter here when delivering my speech because I was not given enough time to ask for one. I have the right to use one, but the bureaucracy and the government prevented me from doing so.

● (1245)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's commitment to this. She talked about two things on which I want to follow up.

First, usually there is respect in the House and we have the opportunity to prepare for debate. As the member and I know, sometimes we get a notification at 6:30 at night advising us what the House will be presenting the following day in debate. We have something called the Thursday question, which lays out the House's schedule. It allows members the opportunity to prepare their remarks.

Some of my colleagues really wanted to speak to the bill, but calling them at eight o'clock in the morning does not give them time to do what they would like to do to participate in a reasonable and fulsome fashion. That is the first issue to which I would like her to speak.

Second, the process by which the committee dealt with many amendments was very ad hoc and did not provide the opportunity for members to exercise proper due diligence with respect to them.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to yet again clarify things from my perspective as a Dene speaker from northern Saskatchewan who has lived off the land and still practises the language at home on a regular basis.

What I hear from elders not only my community, but throughout my riding and Canada is that they want to be included and they want the opportunity to speak in their languages. Again, the government does not give them that opportunity.

I received notice of debate last night. The government did not give me 48 hours' notice so the translation office could call my interpreter to get here on time so I could deliver my speech. That is not supportive or inclusive, and it does not make changes for indigenous people.

The second piece relates to the amendment I spoke about regarding the language commissioner. It is important for us to support that it be an indigenous person. It is one thing to say that we will talk about this when the times comes, but the experience of indigenous people is that when the time comes, things get changed again. There is no support coming from the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise. I really want to say what a privilege it was to work with my colleague during the committee's study of this bill.

As the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I came to Ottawa with certain beliefs and goals with respect to various issues. I discovered just how dysfunctional the relationship with indigenous peoples is. Major changes are needed.

Government Orders

I noticed how irritated my colleague was that the government again chose a regrettably paternalistic approach in the lead-up to passing a consequential bill, not to mention the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action. Parliamentarians must look to the wisdom and experience of this leader and her community, for they are intimately familiar with the reality of these people. That is why I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this.

[*English*]

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent opportunity to be a member of Parliament. It is a privilege and an honour. As a member of Parliament, I expected when I came to the House of Commons, that I was an equal to other members of Parliament, the over 300 members. However, because I speak in the indigenous language, I still have to figure out a way for me to speak the language.

I would have thought, and other Canadians would think, that when indigenous people come to the House of Commons, they will have equal time to speak their languages, like the English and French languages, but we do not have that opportunity.

Again, I emphasize the importance of this legislation, but the government has taken the approach of paternalistic and colonization in the way it has gone about it. It is disrespectful to indigenous people that we have to make amendments to accommodate them instead of the other way around. The Liberals have so much to learn.

• (1250)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that the member was unable to deliver her speech in Dene is unfortunate. I have to underline the irony of talking about legislation on indigenous languages and not allowing indigenous speakers to speak their indigenous languages.

Yesterday, we saw a House that could co-operate, that could set partisanship aside, that allowed me to table a bill on indigenous languages among procedural happenings in the House. We saw the sides come together. I was able to table legislation that included some very important amendments that were brought forward and were not passed by the government.

I wanted to make that point and allow my colleague to comment on those amendments and on the opportunity we have today to not just take a small step, but actually make a difference in the lives of people.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, language is identity. That is who we are as indigenous people and the government is playing with that. Shame on the Liberals for doing that.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *miyotôtâkewin tatawaw*. That is Cree for "Guests, you're welcome, there's room here". If my great-grandmother Lucy Brown Eyes, a full-blooded Cree woman, had been able to be elected to this place, she may well have extended the same greeting in the House from the peoples of Treaty 6.

In keeping with indigenous tradition, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinabeg. It is a great honour to be here today to rise in support of Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages.

Along the way, we as Canadians forgot the welcome and partnership that indigenous peoples offered to original European settlers. A colonial and superior mindset began to dominate the land and, over time, misguided and discriminatory policies served to turn indigenous peoples into the other.

The official government plan was to assimilate indigenous peoples. Reservations, residential schools, stripping children and elders of their language and separating families became the norm. Intergenerational cycles of grief, trauma, substance abuse, suicide, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and societal marginalization ensued.

In the 1990s, Canada paused and held the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I spoke with one of my mentors, who was a commissioner of that very royal commission, Dr. Peter Meekison, just last night. Despite many clear recommendations to improve the lives of aboriginal peoples, successive governments were slow to act.

As part of the 2007 Indian residential school settlement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to listen to survivors and make recommendations to the government and Canadians. The commission met until 2015. I remember the last public meetings, which took place in 2015 in Edmonton. I was moved then and I remain moved today.

The work of the TRC informed this government on our steadfast commitment to reconciliation. Signing on to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ending boil water advisories on reserve, empowering indigenous families to keep their children in their care, closing the gap on education funding and implementing Jordan's principle are but a few examples of our commitments.

With the indigenous languages act we are debating today, we are responding, in consultation with indigenous peoples, to calls to action 13, 14 and 15 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

• (1255)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It appears we do not have quorum in this chamber. The hon. member opposite is giving a wonderful speech and it is a pity his people are not here to hear it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am afraid we do not have a quorum. The bells will ring to call some members in.

And the bells having rung:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe we have quorum again.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre may continue.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, this is a major milestone in our journey of reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

I am a proud Franco-Albertan, and over the years, I have even learned to speak Spanish.

Government Orders

[English]

The dynamic and growing francophone, Francophile and francocurious community of Edmonton, Alberta, centred around Campus Saint-Jean and La Cité Francophone, fundamentally changed my life. I am here as the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre in large part due to my ability to live and love both of Canada's official languages.

What members may not know is that despite my French last name, I grew up in a predominantly English-speaking household.

[Translation]

I spoke French with my grandma and grandpa, and with my aunts and uncles too.

[English]

However, at home, we spoke English.

As a 15-year-old student, I applied for and was honoured to be chosen to attend the Forum for Young Canadians in Ottawa. My then 15-year-old self was struck by the fact I could not communicate with fully 40% of the delegates, interesting and dynamic students from Quebec and New Brunswick. They assumed, by hearing my last name, that I could speak French.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Again, I do not think we have quorum; I call for quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We do not have a quorum. We will have to ring the bells.

And the bells having rung:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We now have a quorum.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre may continue.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that people looked at my name badge, saw my name, and assumed I could speak French. I could not. I could not even string five sentences together.

I was so struck that it sent me on a journey of identity and a lifelong journey of acknowledging and shaping that identity. I resolved that summer to double down on learning French. I chose later to study at Campus Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta to learn, and as I said earlier, love the language. That decision changed my life.

I think of the young indigenous people in my riding, our province and across the country, who are Cree, Dene, Blackfoot or Mohawk and who do not have access to language learning opportunities like I did. They often face the same struggle of identity and the same need to connect to the traditions, teaching and spirituality that the plunge into one's language affords.

The connection to history and the ability to share and pass on teachings in one's ancestral tongue are fundamentally important. In fact, they are a basic human right, yet indigenous languages in Canada are disappearing. Elders are dying, and with them the knowledge of their mother tongue. Our future depends on the survival of our language; so it is for indigenous peoples.

According to UNESCO, at least three-quarters of the 90 indigenous languages spoken in Canada are at risk of disappearing or are vulnerable. While we cannot change the past, we can and must work together for a better future. The time to act is now, and we will do so with the indigenous languages act.

• (1300)

[Translation]

Our government fulfilled the promise that the Prime Minister made to indigenous peoples to introduce a bill that would help them reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen their languages.

[English]

This legislation would provide the mechanisms to recognize indigenous language-related rights; support the reclamation, revitalization, strengthening and maintenance of indigenous languages in Canada; support and promote indigenous languages; provide long-term, sustainable funding to reach these goals, and establish an office of commissioner of indigenous languages. It is why, as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage earlier in my time here on Parliament Hill, I was so taken by this work and collaborated with colleagues so that we could see this day arrive.

The legislation before us was co-developed between Canada and national indigenous organizations, and through intensive engagements with indigenous specialists, knowledge keepers and experts. I would like to thank and recognize the extraordinary work done by the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council. Their insights into the invaluable role that elders play in language acquisition and preservation is critical. We heard clearly, and agree, with the deep sense of urgency to act, particularly with respect to elders and their role in revitalizing indigenous languages.

The 2005 Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures noted an urgent need for immediate action to stem the loss of languages. It goes without saying that there is a need to provide support to indigenous communities and governments to help them act immediately.

To put this in perspective, in the first nations context, for example, one in three seniors reported having an indigenous mother tongue in 2016. By comparison, about one in 10 first nations children aged 10 to 14 had an indigenous mother tongue. Some languages have few remaining speakers of the grandparents' and great-grandparents' generation.

While no indigenous languages in Canada are considered safe, it is important to state that language vitality across first nations, Inuit and Métis varies broadly. For example, among the Inuit, a higher percentage of seniors also reported having Inuktitut as their mother tongue, compared to younger generations. However, Inuit have the highest percentage of mother tongue speakers across all age groups, compared to first nations and Métis.

Less than 2% of the Métis population reported the ability to speak an indigenous language. A higher percentage of Métis seniors reported an aboriginal mother tongue and the ability to speak an aboriginal language, compared with their younger counterparts.

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report stated that communities and educational institutions should be prepared to draw on valuable resources from indigenous communities to facilitate the teaching and transmission of indigenous languages.

This is not to say that indigenous languages are completely gone when there are no speakers left. Languages can be revived through the efforts of documentation and archiving. Even in this case, elders will be the most valuable asset to help build resources for their languages for generations to come.

There is also Bert Crowfoot of the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society, who saw the importance of preserving language 36 years ago when he made the decision to safeguard audio and film content on old reel-to-reel tapes, VCR cassettes and old 16-millimetre film and floppy discs that contain storytelling, interviews and music in the Cree language. Today he is helping to direct a project called Digitizing the Ancestors to create a searchable digitized archive. It will be a resource to help future generations to learn Cree by hearing voices from the past.

Young people, too, are working hard to reclaim and revitalize language and culture. Jeremy Dutcher, a classically trained artist from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick, recently won the 2008 Polaris Music Prize and the 2019 Juno Award for indigenous music album of the year. Jeremy's album, *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*, features traditional Maliseet songs, recorded a century ago, obtained from the Canadian Museum of History.

The First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres reiterated the importance of elders in their indigenous languages legislation engagement report, stating that elders guide their work and support their community base and national role as language advocates and language experts.

I am proud to share two examples of reclamation action that are close to my heart.

The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute at the University of Alberta aims to stop language extinction through cultural education and expression. This exchange, in turn, often addresses historical traumas, mental and physical health, and both social and academic struggles for indigenous youth as they learn intimately about their history and traditional culture, sometimes for the first time.

In addition, the Royal Alberta Museum in downtown Edmonton, which is dedicated to preserving Alberta's rich history, proudly displays many of its exhibits in several indigenous languages, including Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Nakota and Michif. Further indigenous stories are interwoven throughout all six human history galleries, and this lets all Canadians learn about deep-rooted history and tradition from Alberta and across Canada.

Today on CBC, I learned that an enterprising music group from Cape Breton took Paul McCartney's song *Blackbird* and is now able to sing it in Mi'kmaq.

This bill would allow for the flexibility required to support the various states of language vitality. In some situations, that may mean supporting elders' participation in language planning, activities and programming. In other situations, enhancing access and an

opportunity for elders to learn their language from their cohorts is equally important. This is based on the concept that language revitalization should be multi-faceted, meaning that it may involve more than one approach to address various segments of the community, ranging from early learning to adult immersion.

In closing, I will state that every year, sadly, indigenous communities lose more elders. It is time to act. I envision a near future in which indigenous and non-indigenous people, young and less young, can have the opportunity to learn, explore, promote and protect the languages of the ancestral peoples of this land. Our commitment to reconciliation and our fundamental values of fairness and inclusion demand nothing less of us than to pass and implement the indigenous languages act.

I remember chatting with my great-grandmother, Lucy Brown Eyes, when I was about five. She would have been about 88. She said, "These hands used to skin hides. Now they make apple pies. Some day the land will return to us, and with it, all of our languages."

We owe it to indigenous peoples and all Canadians to get this right.

• (1305)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spoke to this at second reading as well. Two things that really help to maintain language are having a community and having a culture. Both of those things have been impacted by our history in Canada in terms of our indigenous peoples.

However, one of the things that has really helped indigenous communities in northern Alberta is their participation in the oil and gas industry, and the wealth it has brought there. When the communities have the wealth, they become communities again; their culture begins to thrive and their languages are able to be maintained.

How does the hon. member across the way view the impacts of the cancellation of the northern gateway project in terms of helping maintain language in northern Alberta?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his interest in this file. Economic benefit is part of the foundation of anyone's life and livelihood. To be able to be in a safe place to learn one's language, one needs to have a sound economic foundation. We know all too well in my city and in my riding of Edmonton Centre the challenges and triumphs faced by urban indigenous peoples.

I can say that I am proud of the work this government is doing, and not only on indigenous languages. I am proud of the deep consultations and accommodations that are going on to ensure that we are able to build the Trans Mountain pipeline in exactly the right way.

Government Orders

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commented earlier about the irony that we were discussing an indigenous language bill but members were not given the opportunity to give their speeches in indigenous languages. I shared the example that the government and parties in the House yesterday co-operated so we could do something better together, but my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River was unable to give her speech in Dene. That is ironic and hypocritical.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her steadfast work on this issue.

It is our government and, indeed, this Parliament that authorized and made sure that parliamentarians could speak in indigenous languages. One of my colleagues from Montreal has spoken in the House in Mohawk, and my colleague from Winnipeg has spoken in Cree. We are committed to making sure people are able to speak indigenous languages.

We all understand that the timing in this place is fluid and that we are approaching the end of this Parliament. What is critical is that this indigenous languages act be passed so that it can benefit indigenous people and all Canadians for seven generations and more to come.

• (1310)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock wanted to ask another oil-related question, which is very pertinent to indigenous languages. We appreciate those types of questions.

Indigenous languages are very important, and I hope we will have the opportunity to debate this, perhaps in indigenous languages, in the House at some future date. I hope there can be some concordance among House leaders to ensure that indigenous members can debate the indigenous languages act in an indigenous language, which is very important. I know we are just before an election, there is a bit of fever and people are getting a little excited, but it is symbolic, nonetheless.

I hear a lot of agreement with this bill. I know the Conservative member for Peace River—Westlock is very much in favour, as is the member for Edmonton Centre, who has worked very hard on this bill. This is a very symbolic and important moment in Canadian history, because it is the fulfillment of what it means to be Canadian and the fulfillment of our nation as truly one of the greatest nations in the world. However, we still have work to do to get there and ensure that we can all express ourselves in the way we feel most comfortable.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for his work. Not only is he an impressive drummer, but I aspire to be able to speak Cree as well as he does some day.

There are tears in my eyes, because this is the right thing to do. It should have been done decades ago, but we cannot rewrite the past. What we have control over is now. There is the opportunity for all House leaders to come together, to get a shortened timeline, to see this legislation pass and to go back to our ridings, hold our heads high and say we will work with indigenous peoples to promote, protect and preserve indigenous languages. That is one of the

reasons I am in Parliament and one of the reasons I am in favour of this legislation.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, Chief Isaac Laboucan-Avirom from the Woodland Cree First Nation has come out strongly in favour of keeping northern gateway going. His own community has struggled over the last number of years to keep its people employed. He is a Cree speaker himself and says if they cannot make a living in northern Alberta, the entire community falls apart, and with it the culture and language. What does the member have to say about the cancellation of the northern gateway pipeline?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have an economy that is built in many sectors. Ten years of Conservative ignorance of the environmental movement and policies put in place by the previous government, verified by the Federal Court, are what quashed northern gateway. If he wants to draw a direct line between indigenous communities and their survival, he needs to look no further than the Harper government.

We are here now to talk about indigenous languages and making sure that indigenous communities can preserve, protect and promote their languages. That was our mandate. That was our mission. That is why we are here today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Inuit communities are worried that this bill does not contain anything specific to their people. In Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, there is not a single Inuktitut school. This makes it hard for young people to learn their own language.

When I was a kid I did not speak English. My family moved to Ontario and I was able to attend École secondaire Étienne-Brûlé, a francophone high school in Toronto, and to live and learn in my own language. However, my brothers, Michel and Claude, did not have the same opportunity because there was no francophone school in our area for their level of education. There was no francophone school in our area. I fear that Inuit children in Iqaluit will have the same experience my brothers had in Ontario, since the bill does nothing to address this issue.

Why does this bill not contain any provisions specifically for Inuit communities?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. Obviously, we had similar experiences when it came to learning both official languages.

I can confirm that the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK, played a very important role in developing and creating this legislation. The ITK agrees with the 12 fundamental principles.

I should point out that we can always do more to improve life in indigenous communities. Today we are discussing the issue of languages, and everything that follows from this bill will benefit indigenous peoples, including those in Nunavut.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very important work on the heritage committee.

Government Orders

Could the member explain how important it is for indigenous cultures to maintain, preserve and protect languages? We often heard very painful and heart-rending testimony about how when people were cut off from their language, they were cut off from their culture and traditions. Could he please explain to us the importance of protecting one's language?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague also for her work on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

This project was co-created with indigenous national organizations and colleagues from all sides of the House.

Language is a bridge to culture. It is a portal into traditions. It is a portal into who we are. It is a fundamental characteristic of identity. Imagine living our entire lives using a second, third or fourth language. Imagine not knowing what our cultural, spiritual or linguistic traditions are because a government agent or a government agency has said that we or our grandparents are not allowed to speak that language.

It is fundamental that we work with indigenous communities so they can make the link back to their spiritual ancestors, to their land and speak the language of their ancestors. We can use this and work together on it as a key pillar of reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise once more to speak to Bill C-91, the indigenous languages act. I will share my time today with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

Indigenous languages across Canada are certainly diverse, unique and richly intertwined with our cultural mosaic, which makes our country such an amazing place to call home. The promotion of indigenous languages, and indigenous history and culture more broadly, is something we should all seek to promote as part of our national character.

As I mentioned during my speech at second reading of the bill, support for the promotion and teaching of indigenous languages has rapidly grown in my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood and in particular in my city of Saskatoon.

During my nine and a half years as a school board trustee in the city of Saskatoon, the teaching of indigenous languages to new generations of young people was a priority that was taken very seriously by everyone around our board table. I was very proud to take part in the expansion of the indigenous language training program in the Saskatoon Board of Education, which gave more young people the opportunity to study indigenous languages and connect with the rich and vibrant cultures attached to those languages.

The teaching of indigenous languages enriches our education systems and it gives students a valuable and unique learning experience. As I have previously noted, instruction of indigenous languages is growing in my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood and in our city of Saskatoon. The expansion of teaching of indigenous languages is certainly enriching the learning experience of more and more young people in our city.

Confederation Park Community School offers language instruction in Cree for about 280 students from pre-K, all the way up to grade 8. They are involved in this learning process. The students benefit from the Nehiyawiwini Cree language and culture program and are able to immerse themselves in the study of the indigenous language as part of their education background.

Additionally, Westmount Community School provides a Metis cultural program that includes Michif language instruction for students there, again from pre-K all the way up to grade 8.

Charles Red Hawk Elementary School offers Cree language instruction from pre-K all the way up to grade 4.

Mount Royal Collegiate, Princess Alexandra School and King George School provide Cree language instruction in our school system.

Saskatoon public schools offer instruction in three indigenous languages: Cree, Michif and Dakota. Furthermore, Dakota language and culture lessons are part of Chief Whitecap School and Charles Red Hawk School.

St. Frances Cree Bilingual School offers Cree education to over 440 students in pre-K to grade 5 and another 150 students in grades 6 to 8. This school has seen tremendous growth in our education system since the launch of its Cree language program, way back in 2009, when, by the way, there was only 133 students enrolled in the program. Look how it has grown since then.

The demand for education in indigenous languages has proved to be incredibly popular. Hundreds more students are now being taught indigenous languages in our schools as a result.

More and more people in Saskatoon are seeking the benefits of indigenous language education and, as a result, St. Frances Cree Bilingual School is now serving students in two different locations, on McPherson Avenue, where they have pre-K all the way up to grade 5, and at Bateman Crescent, where they have grades 6 to 8.

Instruction of indigenous languages is continuing to become available for even greater numbers of students who know the inherent value of indigenous languages for both their learning and for their communities.

At Oskayak High School in my neighbour riding, Cree language instruction is offered in grades 9 to 12, where approximately 70 students are taking Cree language instruction.

● (1320)

Moreover, the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools division offers core Cree language instruction for some 348 students from pre-K all the way up to grade 8 at St. Mary's Wellness and Education Centre.

These statistics bear repeating, because they show just how important indigenous languages are within our current education system.

Young people and their families recognize that the promotion and the revitalization of indigenous languages is something that is incredibly valuable as a cornerstone of indigenous culture and a vital piece of Canada's multicultural mosaic.

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We support Bill C-91. The legislation represents a pragmatic, reasonable and necessary approach toward strengthening and supporting indigenous languages across the country.

The bill responds to three of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action. The promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages is one step in the long path that we all must take toward reconciliation, as we move forward from a dark past.

A former Conservative government created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the 2007 Indian residential school settlement agreement. We recognized the devastation and the terrible harm that was inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of this country. We recognized the profound intergenerational damage that the indigenous language and the cultures suffered as a result of the residential school system. From the dark past, we must grow together in the spirit of reconciliation. The Conservatives know that the preservation of indigenous language and culture is part of the way forward.

On another matter, last night I had the great privilege to see the screening of the movie *The Grizzlies*. This movie has been talked about in Canada for the last month since it was produced.

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity a couple of years ago to travel up north to Nunavut. However, for those Canadians who do not have opportunity, this movie will give them a snapshot of what life is like for those living in the north and the wonder of the northern landscape.

The movie explores the challenges faced by youth who live in the north. They are straddling the traditional way of life with the modern while dealing with the fallout of colonialism and residential schools. It is an uplifting film about a difficult and sometimes very tragic experience for indigenous communities up north.

Through this film, we experienced how facial expressions, for example, and gestures, traditional storytelling, music, singing and drumming were all vital to traditional language and culture. We are educated by witnessing traditional language and culture in the everyday lives of the characters and we can understand why language and culture are so critical and must be honoured and protected.

I hope each and every MP will take in *The Grizzlies*. It was shot in Nunavut. It is a story about suicides in Nunavut, which is the highest area of suicides in the country. Sport brought the community together.

However, more than ever, this movie depicts a number of things, such as song and singing. There was an instance where an older brother was singing to a younger brother in their language, putting him to sleep. It is a movie that all Canadians must see. It deals with not only the issue of suicide but language and culture.

A lot of us do not get the opportunity to go to Nunavut. This movie is one that all Canadians should see. It is very moving. I certainly would recommend it.

The movie talks about what we are talking about today: language and about culture. We often do not get a chance to talk about Nunavut in the House, because a lot of us do not have the opportunity to go up there. It is an emotional film. Many members

from ITK were in the theatre last night. There was a lot of crying, but at the same time, it brought a great culture to our country, the music and the language.

I am happy to support Bill C-91.

● (1325)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his speech and interesting stories.

I was at the UN last week with the member and a number of my colleagues at the indigenous peoples forum. The national president for the Métis National Council, Clément Chartier, spoke there. He spoke about how we need to ensure that we save the indigenous languages of Canada. No other government has done more to advance the ideals of reconciliation, and this bill goes a long way. He was talking at a specific session related to indigenous languages.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on the UN forum and what he heard while he was there as well.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. He certainly was a guiding light for me at the forum in New York. It was the first time for me to be at the UN and listen to the issues. It was a very informative three days that I had in New York.

We talked to many people in our province. The Métis are starting to get organized. Glen McCallum, as president, and Mr. Chartier have done a lot of work with the Métis in the province of Saskatchewan. They have rich traditions, as the member knows. We often just deal with them once a year in Batoche and then forget about them, but what I heard in New York from the leaders, certainly from the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and of Canada, as we have gone full circle, is that this bill would help them immensely.

I talked about what we are doing in some of our schools in Saskatchewan, and we fully endorse the bill. I thank the member for bringing up the question here this afternoon.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at times it feels as though there are two parallel Conservative universes. The member who supports the bill talked about the importance of revitalizing indigenous languages and the profoundly negative consequences of residential schools. On that, I totally agree. However, from 2012 to 2015, Stephen Harper's Conservative government slashed \$60 million from indigenous organizations.

To give a specific example, in the previous Parliament my community needed a document translated into Inuktitut to help maintain the health of Inuit women. I personally went to see the health minister at the time, Leona Aglukkaq, and she refused to help me. I am therefore having difficulty reconciling the two images.

I would like the member to explain to me how it is that the former Conservative government could do that, while the Conservatives now appear to think differently.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, we are also looking forward to having the former minister of health back in this House in October 2019. She is our nominated candidate for Nunavut, and we cannot wait to have her back on this side helping the Conservative vision in this country. She certainly has done a lot for the people of Nunavut and Canada on speech, on tradition and on indigenous languages. We cannot wait to have the former minister back again with us.

Let us not forget that, under our previous government in 2007, right here in the old place, Stephen Harper was the one who took the lead on truth and reconciliation. It started there in 2007, so Conservatives have been on board all along.

It is funny that the current government waited until February 5 of this year to table this bill. We are weeks away from adjourning here. Bill C-91 should have been brought to the House two and a half or maybe even three years earlier. The Liberals have done so much for the people that we are here now rushing Bill C-91 and Bill C-92 through the House, because they have done little or nothing in the last two and a half to three years.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, the most dangerous words ever spoken are “We are the government and we are here to help.” That is the sentiment that I want to cover today. I do not see anything wrong with the bill, and I am happy to support it.

I want to talk about the underlying premise that the government is here to help. I do not think we should put the federal government in charge of a whole lot of things. In Canada, we have a bit of a crisis with the woodland caribou, which is on the species at risk list. The only places in Alberta where the caribou have gone extinct are Jasper and Banff. Those are two places in Alberta that are entirely the jurisdiction of the federal government. If we want something to be extinct, we should put the federal government in charge of it.

I am concerned when the federal government says not to worry, that it has this under control and it is going to save indigenous languages. This is a step in the right direction, but I am not necessarily convinced that it is the federal government that is going to save indigenous languages. I say that because, over the last number of years, the government has made it more and more difficult, particularly for first nations in northern Alberta, to make a living, to build community, to build families that can survive and to allow people to live in their traditional territory. We see a large influx of people moving to the cities, in great part due to the fact that the economy in northern Alberta is struggling.

In no small part is that due to the fact that the northern gateway pipeline has been cancelled. The member for Edmonton Centre said that it was because the Conservatives did not do this or that right. We definitely had our challenges with the Supreme Court, and every time the Supreme Court said we had not done something right, we went back and tried to correct it. However, we were pursuing getting pipelines built in this country, and in fact we built four major pipelines when we were in office. Those things brought prosperity to northern Alberta.

Chief Isaac Laboucan of the Woodland Cree First Nation has been on the record several times saying that we need to get pipelines built in this country in order for him to maintain his community, its

culture and language, and its way of life across the board. It is when folks have jobs, when they are able to pay their bills, that their community is built and thriving. He showed me on Google Maps where his ancestral lands are. The foundation of his grandfather's house is still there today. The foundations of a small clump of houses can be seen on Google Maps, just north of where his people currently live, so they are very much connected to their history. He is a Cree speaker, and many people within his community speak Cree.

His inability to provide jobs for the people who live in his community means that they are moving away. It means that the number of people in his community is dwindling, and it means they are moving to Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatchewan or B.C. in order to find work.

In the past, the forestry industry was active around his community, and many of his people drove logging trucks, ran logging equipment or built roads for the logging industry. That allowed them to make a living right where they live. They also have an oil field service company. They are building roads for the oil patch. They are managing oil and gas wells in the area. They are looking at getting into the solar industry and putting up acres of solar panels.

They are very much involved in the economy, and that is what allows them to continue to flourish. That allows them to go out hunting. When they have money to put gas in their snowmobiles, that allows them to run their traplines. That allows them to start a family, to buy a home, to do all that needs to be done to build a community. In this place, we like to silo a lot of things and say that we are going to maintain culture, and then maintain language, and then maintain community. Those are artificial divisions. The reality is that for people who live in a community, culture, language and community are indivisible. They are three different ways of describing one thing, and that is our society or our culture.

● (1335)

I commend the government for bringing forward an indigenous language commissioner. The member for Edmonton Centre was just here, saying that he had tears in his eyes because we were finally doing something to protect indigenous languages in this country. However, although this is a good first step and is notable, the federal government has not suddenly become the saviour of indigenous languages in this country. This is a step within a process.

It is interesting to me that the member is in favour of protecting indigenous languages with an indigenous language commissioner, yet he is happy to shut down pipelines, preventing folks in northern Alberta from making a living and maintaining their culture and way of life.

The fundamentals of maintaining a language are the same whether they relate to indigenous languages or other languages. In my constituency, about 7,000 to 10,000 people speak Cree, about 10,000 people speak German and about 6,000 to 7,000 speak French. All of these communities struggle to maintain their languages. There is no doubt about that.

Government Orders

However, they are vibrant communities, despite what Ms. Bombardier from Quebec says. These are the communities of Falher, McLennan and St. Isidore. These are French-speaking communities, and they are vibrant. Their economies are flourishing, and there is no threat to their French-speaking ways. The signs in these communities are still in French. There is no threat to this because they have the ability to create community and culture and to speak their language, since the economic underpinning of all of this is there.

That is why I say that it is not just indigenous languages that are struggling in Canada. Without the economic underpinning, people's culture, way of life and community are under threat, if people are unable to finance them and to survive under the economic situation in their particular area.

I mentioned the same thing at second reading, and it was interesting to me that there was not a lot of reflection on the fact that we have to get the economy right for our indigenous people in order for them to maintain their families, culture, language and communities. All of those things are immensely important.

Lastly, I would like to note that perhaps it is somewhat easier for the communities in my area to maintain their language because of the fact that they are more northern and remote communities, and they are not right next to major urban centres. When I say all this, there is some lack of understanding on my part as to an indigenous community that is completely surrounded by an urban centre. I do understand and acknowledge that this is something outside my realm. However, I do think that the fundamental thing, in order to maintain community, culture and language, is to get the economy right.

To get the economy right in northern Alberta, we need pipelines. We need pipelines so that we can get our product to market. We need pipelines so we can get our oil off the railway and our grain on the railway to get it out. We need pipelines so we can get oil off the railway and get our lumber to market on the railway. We need pipelines. We need pipelines. We need pipelines.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat of a historic day in terms of the legislation that we are debating. It is part of the calls for action in the reconciliation report. There is a great deal of interest in seeing this legislation ultimately pass through the House of Commons and get to the Senate. I would suggest that there are three or four recent substantive pieces of legislation that really have a significant sense of hope that is out there. This is one of those pieces of legislation. The foster care legislation is yet another example. When we reflect on that legislative package, in the hopes that not only does it pass here but that it also passes the Senate, it will provide hope for many Canadians in all regions, indigenous and non-indigenous people alike.

I appreciate the concerns in regard to the member wanting to route this back into a pipeline debate. However, I wonder why he would choose this particular issue to raise the issue of pipelines. Economic development is something that is very positive. It is encouraging. There is no question about the diversity of our economy, but we also

have to take into consideration environmental concerns. Why would the member want to have that sort of a debate when we are trying to advance this very important issue today?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, that brings me to what I think is very cynical about the government bringing forward this bill at this particular time. We are in the last days of this Parliament. We have been here for three and a half years, and the very fact that now suddenly this is a major priority and we must push this through seems to be a little disingenuous. It seems to me that this is much more of an election piece, much more of a campaign piece than an actual, genuine concern about languages.

To go back to my original point, I do not think it is fair-minded of the government to be introducing this bill at this particular time.

• (1345)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech given by my colleague. Just as a preface, since 2014, there is a new play called *New Blood*, which is a phenomenal high school student production that I wish could come to Ottawa. It has been in southern Alberta. I think it goes to the heart of what this indigenous languages piece is about.

Having been on the committee, there were many witnesses who talked about grassroots things they were working with on languages. Indigenous people had severe concerns and fears that the money would not get to the education level that it is needed. On the Siksika reserve, for example, they are doing immersion but they expressed concern that this money is being directed to major organizations. They are very concerned that the government money that would come from this would not do what it is intended.

What would my colleague's response be to the concern of indigenous people in the education system?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I go back to the opening of my speech where I said that the most dangerous words in Canadian society are "We are the government and we are here to help." That is always the problem when the government gets involved. Getting the money to where it really will make an impact is always a challenge. That is why I am much more free market about it. It will allow people to make money so that they can support their communities, so that they can support their culture and so that they can support their language. If we get the fundamentals right, their languages will survive. As the French language in northern Alberta has survived and as the German language in northern Alberta has survived, so too the Cree language will survive in northern Alberta.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages.

There are over 70 indigenous languages spoken in Canada. Over a quarter of a million first nations, Métis and Inuit speak their indigenous languages well enough to carry on a conversation. The most spoken languages are Cree, with almost 100,000 people speaking it; Inuktitut, with almost 40,000; Ojibwa, with almost 30,000; Ojibwa-Cree, with almost 16,000; and Dene, with 13,000. While these numbers are significant, there are languages that have been lost or are at risk of being lost unless something significant is done to retain the cultures and understanding of the languages of the indigenous peoples.

Government Orders

I am happy to say that in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap, something significant is being done to preserve the indigenous languages of the Secwepemc and Słatsin Okanagan nations. One example of this language restoration and preservation is the Shihiya School, which is operated by the Słatsin band near the border of the Shuswap and Okanagan territories. It offers preschool to grade 6. It basically follows the provincial curriculum, but it is also integrating the Słatsin language and culture into its programs.

Another example, one I have more experience with because I have had the opportunity to visit it, is the Chief Atahm School, which is an indigenous immersion school at the western end of the Shuswap Lake area. This school was established through the vision of parents and leaders of the Adams Lake Indian Band, the Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band and the Neskonlith Indian Band, which are all part of the Shuswap territory.

I have had the privilege of touring the Chief Atahm School, and have seen some of the work that has been taken up by the parents and elders of the area. The work being done is inspiring and amazing, and it is largely being done on a voluntary basis. The school has highly skilled educators working collaboratively with parents, former students, elders and technicians to put together the curriculum. The entire teaching process, page by page, image by image, illustration by illustration and story by story is being put together from scratch.

The people involved have learned how to do this, and from what I saw, they are doing an incredibly good job of it. There are elders who show up almost daily to help out. These are elders who are in their nineties, and are the few remaining people who can speak and understand the language fluently. They are working on computers side by side with technicians and illustrators. These elders could never have imagined the technology being used now to retain the language they learned, which was passed on generation after generation through stories, dance, drumming and through some incredible means. Now they are able to tell those stories and pass them on digitally, which is something they would have never imagined, as well as in written and illustrated form in booklets. These are truly amazing pieces.

The school also takes the students out to the fields and streams, which is an immense part of learning and understanding the language and the culture. When I was there, I asked if the languages were similar to Roman or French languages. They are not. The languages are based on experiences, places and geographical areas. They are often based on different times of the year. One word or sound in one language may not mean exactly the same thing in the language of a neighbouring band. It may be similar, but slightly different.

• (1350)

We learned that with the renaming of the Tsútsweew Provincial Park, formerly the Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park, on Shuswap Lake. Apparently, in one language “Shuswap” means a place of many waters but another neighbouring area thought it referred to a place of many fish. There are such subtle differences being discovered by the recording, digitization and restoration of this language into modern forms and it is really interesting to see how that is done.

When the school takes the students out to the fields and streams it is also teaching them to harvest off the land. The students are harvesting fish, plants and wildlife. In fact, a deer is brought onto the school grounds and the students are taught how to process all of the meat and the goods off the deer. A smokehouse was also built. The students learn what the language really means when they talk about preserving their food for their future and how that is preserving their culture.

The Chief Atahm School has indigenous and non-indigenous instructors. It has brought people in from the communities outside of the bands themselves to educate the students. As I said, I was very fortunate to be able to visit the school. I was first there last year. I went back again in March of this year.

The school is doing so well and is so well supported by the community that it will be undergoing a large structural expansion. It is going to expand its inner space and teaching area so that, hopefully, it can include higher grades and all of the age levels potentially right up to university level and beyond. It will all be done through an immersion process. Many of us have heard about French immersion, but this is indigenous immersion into the Shuswap language, which is truly an incredible component. I looked at the books the school has. The students are taught the sounds by the instructors, but the words are written with our English phonetic alphabet. Some of the pronunciations were a real challenge for me. It was interesting to learn how to place one's tongue and how one's voice rolls through one's throat. All of this is part of those subtle differences of all those different languages.

I look forward to Bill C-91 making some difference on the ground for students and people in general so they can retain languages like the Shuswap language elsewhere in the country. We are at risk of losing those languages, which will be even more challenging as those members age.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am going to interrupt the hon. member for a moment. He has been giving a very good speech. I am trying to hear it, but the rumble in the room seems to be going up. I want to remind everyone that business is being taken care of. I am sure everybody will be very interested in what the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap has to say and will focus on him so they hear what he has to say.

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, it really is interesting to see what takes place in this indigenous immersion school. The language is much more than written words on a page or spoken words in a story. The instructors actually take the students out into the field to experience the culture and the processes the languages describe.

We will be going into question period shortly. We have a few minutes left for questions and answers, so rather than make it awkward and stretch this over question period and into another day, I will wrap it up here, and I will take questions and comments until question period starts.

Statements by Members

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap for articulating an important example. What that leads us to reflect upon is that, yes, this legislation is important and, yes, it has had support at report stage. It was a unanimous vote in the House. However, it will be communities that drive the process.

I wonder if the member could talk a bit more about the importance of community-driven solutions and the different stages languages might be at with respect to their development.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the involvement of the community in the development of the curriculum and the illustrations of the books showed how important it was to include communities. This school was driven by the parents of the students. They wanted their children to learn their cultural languages. Involving those communities that way is incredible.

The bill begins to address that part of it, but there is a lot missing. The bill was brought in two years after it was promised. Then, at the last minute, over two dozen revisions were table dropped. It obviously was not well prepared, which is typical of the government, and there was a lack of consultation.

The Speaker: The hon. member is aware that he has eight minutes remaining. Following question period, there could be time for questions and comments, depending on the situation.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have long suspected, and now we know, that the oil companies are driving the Conservative agenda.

Last month, the Conservative Party leader met in private with senior executives from the dirty oil industry. Any chance they were meeting to develop the Conservatives' mystery plan to fight climate change?

Not at all; they met in secret to develop a strategy to win the election and run the energy east pipeline through our province, our farmland and our waterways. Quebeckers take on all the risk while Calgary's billionaires get to enjoy all the benefits.

The first step in getting the dirty oil pipeline is to get the money flowing. It just so happens that in the last quarter, the Conservatives raised \$8 million in generous contributions.

The closer they get to the oil companies, the richer they become. That is how the Conservatives operate. They work for the oil companies and against Quebec. We all know Quebeckers deserve better.

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• (1400)

FLOODING IN LAURENTIDES—LABELLE

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people across the country are dealing with the impact of

climate change. As we know, thousands of people have been hit hard by the flooding in Quebec. For the past two weeks, the riding of Laurentides—Labelles has also been dealing with floods.

We absolutely have to address the issue of cellular communication in rural areas such as Amherst, which had to declare a state of emergency along with other municipalities. Just imagine the flood victims who were isolated, the emergency services that tried to reach them and the worried families, and let us quickly take action before an even more serious crisis occurs.

I also want to tell the people and thousands of volunteers in Montcalm, Piedmont, Ferme-Neuve, Kiamika, Lac-Saguay, Rivière-Rouge, Huberdeau, Val-David, Nomingue and every one of the 43 municipalities in my riding, which have practically all been affected, that the way they have come together and the strength of our communities is remarkable. They deserve our respect, gratitude and support.

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YOUTH APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an event that is very close to my heart will be held next Saturday. It is the 15th youth appreciation day organized by Optimist Club of Ancienne-Lorette.

This event recognizes 70 primary school children for their outstanding efforts this year. I think it is wonderful to recognize those children who are making progress, improving, working hard and putting in a lot of effort.

I have been very fortunate to attend this event for the past four years. I am always moved to see how proud the children and their parents are.

I would like to thank the many volunteers from the Optimist Club of Ancienne-Lorette, the teachers and principals who support this great event, the parents who encourage their children's efforts and, above all, the 70 young winners.

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[*English*]

CANCER

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a courageous young boy in Mississauga—Erin Mills. Rayaan Lodhi not only endured a one-year battle with leukemia, he used his experience to create support systems for others fighting this cancer. His courage and strength inspires me and others around him to do more and give more to our community.

Twelve-year-old Rayaan Lodhi is an ambassador for SickKids hospital and has started an organization called C-Squad, which tries to bring normalcy to children's lives after the trauma of cancer through activities and supports.

As Rayaan raises awareness on the ground, our government supports his plight and others like him by investing \$150 million to support cancer research through budget 2019. These investments matter to kids like Rayaan whose lives have been drastically impacted by this illness.

Statements by Members

I thank Rayaan for his contagious bravery and strength and for spreading joy to those around him. He is my hero.

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YOM HASHOAH

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks Yom HaShoah, the day we commemorate the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. We honour the more than six million Jewish children, women and men and so many others murdered by the Nazis, and those who survived.

The generation of Holocaust survivors is slowly leaving this world, and it is even more important now that we never forget what happened. They are warning us that history is repeating itself and now we must fight back against growing anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism. Canada is not immune. B'nai Brith reports a record number of anti-Semitic incidents here in 2018 and a rise of anti-Semitism for the fifth consecutive year, fuelled by online hate.

It takes love and courage to move from hate to understanding, to stop being a bystander and to become an ally instead. It takes extraordinary courage and resilience to learn from past mistakes.

Let us uphold a stronger framework of human rights that will allow us all to say, "Never again".

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the nice weather at our doorstep you have surely noticed more motorcycles on our roads and that is good. As a motorcycle enthusiast myself, I am pleased to see that a growing number of motorcyclists are travelling the beautiful roads of Quebec and Canada.

However, when we talk about motorcycles, we also have to talk about safety. Every year since 2017, I encourage motorcyclists to seek out some of the motorcycle safety days organized throughout Quebec. Even though the motorcycle accident rate is on the decline, it is still important to hold these safety awareness days.

In 2017, 1,923 people died in motorcycle accidents, which is a 4.5% drop, but a 3% increase over the average from 2012 to 2016. It is important to be cautious now more than ever.

I urge new motorcyclists to be extra cautious on the roads. It is not just about their safety, but also that of everyone else who shares the road with them.

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[English]

LILLOOET

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to visit the district of Lillooet in the riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. I thank candidate Brad Vis for joining me for the day.

Nestled in the lee of the rugged coastal mountains, the community offers exceptional opportunities for B.C.'s burgeoning wine industry and agricultural sectors. It is a diverse community with so much to offer.

I was especially pleased to visit the Lillooet Friendship Centre Society, which works to promote educational, cultural and social welfare advancement, while promoting self-reliance and independence. An aboriginal organization, it provides essential services, such as the Chillaxin Youth Centre programs, emergency shelters, mental wellness and addictions programs.

It is the volunteers and committed indigenous leaders at not-for-profits like the Lillooet Friendship Centre Society who provide excellent services toward a better future for those who need it the most.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Edmontonians are caring, entrepreneurial and hard-working. Almost daily, I have people in my riding reaching out to me, stopping me at coffee shops and pausing to chat on their doorsteps about how budget 2019 is making their lives better: like Richard, who thanked me on his doorstep for the Canada training benefit, which will help him take new training courses that will see him advance in his company and provide a better future for his kids; or the young family that stopped to talk about the new first-time homebuyers program. It is excited to finally be able to afford a home closer to its work along the west LRT line, a priority we believe in and have funded.

Innovation is in our DNA. This budget will help our businesses scale and grow, thanks to more funding for western diversification.

When we add the \$20 million for LGBTQ serving organizations, this budget is another example of how we are helping Edmontonians and Canadians coast to coast to coast.

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[Translation]

LES JARDINS-DE-NAPIERVILLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share two pieces of news concerning Les Jardins-de-Napierville, which is highly regarded for being Quebec's top market gardening region.

The Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec has named Gerry Van Winden, the CEO of Veg Pro International, in Sherrington, its "agri-food personality of the year". The largest fresh vegetable producer in the country has made a remarkable impact on the sector by investing in Quebec, British Columbia and Florida.

The region has also been selected to be home to a Laval University research chair that will be working on curbing the degradation of organic soil, also known as muck soils. Fourteen market gardening companies are taking part in the project, in partnership with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Government of Quebec.

Statements by Members

This \$11-million investment will help Les Jardins-de-Napierville, which is located in my riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, remain the pantry of Quebec.

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[English]

COMMUNISM

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, on the steps of the Alberta legislature, there was a disturbing pro-communist rally. The legacy of communism includes mass violence, oppression, the dislocation of hundreds of millions and the deaths of more than 100 million people. Its legacy is an ocean of blood.

My maternal great-grandparents are among those who lost their lives to communism, dying in the gulags in Siberia. My maternal grandparents were forced to flee their native Lithuania. They, among hundreds of thousands, came to Canada to escape communism.

What happened at the Alberta legislature this week should shock the conscience of all Canadians of good will. The promotion of this evil and murderous ideology must be condemned unreservedly.

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● (1410)

SHIRLEY MALCOLM FONTAINE AND BENJAMIN CHEE CHEE

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an inspirational woman has joined her ancestors and husband Earl Fontaine in the spirit world this past week. I would like to acknowledge Shirley Malcolm Fontaine for her contributions to the Manitoba first nations and her lifelong commitment to improving educational opportunities for children.

Shirley was involved in several important initiatives, including the creation of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, which provides the province's leading education, administration, technology, language and cultural services to first nations schools in Manitoba.

Shirley believed in her people and language and had a commitment to bettering our youth through education. I thank Shirley. *Meegwetch.*

Let us also recognize one of the finest artists of Canada, Benjamin Chee Chee. He always refused to be an indigenous artist; he was a proud Anishnabeg. He drew simple lines, usually acrylic on paper.

Highly influential in his time, he said he did not paint the past but the present, the living of today.

We can see his works, like the flock of four geese. They represent the four directions of the unborn, the youth, the adults and the elders all moving in the same direction.

Even though he died in tragedy and is buried in Ottawa, far from his land and people, he still inspires today.

MISSISSAUGA—LAKESHORE COUNCIL FOR SENIORS

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the health subcommittee of the Mississauga—Lakeshore Council for Seniors, which has worked tirelessly on a report reflecting the ideas and concerns of our community. The committee members connected with home care providers, health care administrators and professionals, hospital executives, and seniors in Mississauga—Lakeshore. The council also had the opportunity to meet directly with the Minister of Seniors.

In the report, the council addresses important issues like the need for national pharmacare, wait times for essential diagnostics, hallway care and the negative physical and mental health effects of not being able to age at home. The council further points to the growing proportion of seniors in our population, the high cost of hospitalization and the need to focus on affordable, comprehensive home care. The council also stressed the importance of transparency and accountability in our health care system.

I would like to thank Madeline Edwards, Andrea Lloyd, Frank Stendardo, Probir Chatterjee, Robert Harrick, Roy Cornish and Tim Tibbs for their inspiring work in advocating for the seniors of Mississauga—Lakeshore.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the Liberal leader said that the budget would balance itself in four years, but instead he saddled Canadians with a massive deficit with nothing to show for it but tax hikes and job losses. He said he would be a feminist, but instead he used his power to smear and denigrate strong women who spoke truth to his abuse of power.

He took an illegal trip to a billionaire lobbyist's island, embarrassed himself and our country in India and consistently places more importance on his photo ops instead of the people who pay our salaries.

He spent millions of tax dollars on people who have illegally entered Canada from upstate New York, while those languishing in refugee camps wait years and years to legally come to Canada.

Over four years, through his own actions, Canadians have learned the truth about the Liberal leader. Fake, self-centred and incompetent, he is not as advertised.

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COMMUNITY CARE OF ST. CATHARINES AND THOROLD

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize 100 years since the founding of Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold.

Oral Questions

Community Care is an organization committed to the welfare of others, founded in 1919 as soldiers returned from the First World War. Founding member Leone Taylor said back then that she cooked soup all day and every day because she had 400 families to look after.

Today, 100 years later, 200 volunteers just like Leone contribute every week by serving thousands of individuals throughout our community. Today, led by Betty-Lou Souter, a Niagara Citizen of the Year many times over, Community Care offers 21 programs and services ranging from food and shelter security to emergency services and family supports.

Please join me to congratulate and thank Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold on the incredible milestone of 100 years of service to others throughout the Niagara area.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have toured the municipalities every year since 2011. It makes no sense to me that, in 2019, in a country as rich as Canada, many regions still have only limited access to high-speed Internet. It also makes no sense that there are still areas with spotty cell phone coverage.

People in my riding of Drummond have to deal with those problems. Our rural regions are being neglected, even though there are resources available. For example, the Drummond RCM worked hard for two years on a rural fibre optic network project, but unfortunately the Liberal government did not support it.

The government plans to connect all Canadians by 2030, but that is not soon enough. We need a quick solution to ensure the development of our communities by giving all Canadians Internet access and decent cell phone coverage at a reasonable price.

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[English]

GORD BROWN

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to rise today to mark the one-year anniversary of the passing of my friend, Gord Brown.

Gord was a lover of sports, both as a champion kayaker and as captain of the Conservative hockey team, but above that he loved his family and where he was from.

For 14 years, Gord was nothing short of a tireless champion for the constituents of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. With the loving support of his wife Claudine, who is here today, and his sons Tristan and Chance, he was able to cement his legacy through the revitalization of the eastern Ontario development program, compassionate care measures in Bill C-44, his work for forgotten survivors of thalidomide and the passing Bill C-370 to rename what is now known as Thousand Islands National Park.

Canada lost a top citizen and a great parliamentarian. His boys lost their dad, and Claudine lost her best friend. With the love for Canada that everyone in this place shares, we will be working hard every day to make it better and stronger, just as Gord did.

The Speaker: Hear, hear! It is wonderful to have you here, Claudine.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a life without a home. By next summer, an empty downtown lot in Calgary will be home to an affordable rental apartment building.

With 74 units for people at risk of homelessness, it is the fifth major Calgary housing project to receive support from our federal Liberal government. Importantly, 16 units will be wheelchair accessible, and the building is designed to achieve 41% energy savings.

This project would not have been possible without our government's historic national housing strategy, as well as support from the HomeSpace Society, the Resolve campaign, the Calgary Homeless Foundation and philanthropist David Bissett.

Thanks to their hard work and efforts, countless more Calgarians will be able to stop worrying about trying to have a roof over their head and start building their lives.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another day, another dispute with China, and still no meaningful action from the Prime Minister. The canola crisis has already cost farmers almost \$1 billion, and now pork producers in Quebec and Alberta are feeling the pinch.

When will the Prime Minister understand that refusing to stand up to China has a very real impact on thousands of Canadians?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Chinese authorities informed us that two pork exporters' permits had been suspended.

I want to clarify that this happened for administrative reasons. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is working with the two companies to find a solution. This kind of thing happens regularly, and we expect to find a solution quickly.

Oral Questions

●(1420)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just administrative reasons when there are two Canadians unlawfully jailed in China. Now our canola exports are being unfairly blocked, and we can add the pork producers of this country to those who are paying for the mistakes of the Prime Minister on the world stage.

What is the Prime Minister's response in terms of these attacks on Canadian interests? Absolutely nothing—worse than nothing: the government is still sending Canadian tax dollars to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is run by China.

How many more people and how many more industries will have to suffer before the Prime Minister finally takes action?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is going on with the pork industry is an administrative issue. I am confident that we will find a solution very rapidly.

Conservatives keep playing little politics. I would like the House to know that today we have learned that the Leader of the Opposition is refusing to allow an independent check on the cost of their promises. I think Conservatives are hiding in the same way Doug Ford is hiding very big cuts.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been paying for the broken promises of the Liberal government ever since the 2015 election. That will come to an end in October.

Another area where the Liberal government has completely failed Canadians has been the energy sector. The Conservative record on pipelines has been to see the private sector build four major pipeline projects during our time in office. However, the Liberals have vetoed and killed projects, and now they have purchased a pipeline that they cannot build.

Bill C-69 is the final nail in the coffin. More and more Canadians are speaking out against it. Will they—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is absolutely wrong.

We are the government that gave approval to the Nova Gas line, which has been completed. We are the government that approved Enbridge Line 3, which is almost completed on the Canadian side. We have advocated with the U.S. on the Keystone XL pipeline. We are the government that has put a process in place to move forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in the right way, with meaningful consultation with indigenous communities, something the Conservatives voted against.

*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has done nothing about canola and China for two months, and now we have learned that Quebec's and Alberta's pork industries are being affected.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food confirmed this morning in committee that she has not spoken with her Chinese counterpart, that she does not know what the Minister of Global Affairs is doing and that now is not the time to file a complaint with the WTO.

The crisis is getting worse. The Liberals refuse to even talk about it.

How long will the Prime Minister let producers suffer before he does something?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about this matter and doing something about it for exactly two months now. We are in contact with the Chinese authorities. Our representatives there are in daily contact with Chinese authorities. We have regular meetings with a working group because we recognize that this is an important industry, we respect our partners, we respect the industry and we are working together to find the best way to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that China does not respect the Liberals because they are incapable of standing firm. That is the problem.

In a tweet from 2016, which he has since deleted, the Prime Minister promised that canola producers would have access to the Chinese market through 2020. Now it is 2019, and canola producers no longer have access to China. It is unacceptable that the Prime Minister has failed so spectacularly to keep the promise he made to producers.

Instead of deleting his tweets, will the Prime Minister keep his promise for once and stand up for canola and pork farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that we are standing firm and taking action in a variety of ways to address this situation.

We are working with my colleague, the Minister of International Trade Diversification, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and with the Prime Minister himself. We have immense respect for our farmers and their representatives. That is why, as I have said, the working group is currently looking at the best steps to take.

We are going to continue working very actively, both here and in China, to fix this problem.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, both the Liberals and the Conservatives made it clear that they are more interested in working for rich corporations than they are for Canadians. With Loblaws and SNC-Lavalin, the Liberals have shown whose side they are on, and it is not on the side of regular people.

The current attorney general refuses to investigate the justice appointment leak. He seems to think that vetting judges through a partisan Liberal voter list is A-okay.

Whatever happened to the rule of law? Whatever happened to the promise that the Prime Minister would do things differently?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken significant steps to make sure that we have in place a process for appointing judges that is transparent, that is merit-based and that enhances the diversity of the Canadian bench. The new process is effective. We are at 296 judges appointed or elevated at this stage. The diversity of these appointments is unquestionable. Fifty-five per cent of them are women.

We are going to continue to ensure that our appointment process is merit-based, continues to be fair, continues to be open and continues to attract the very best candidates.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): How many of them are Liberal donors, Mr. Speaker?

The Liberals gave \$12 million to one of Canada's richest companies. At the same time, women's shelters in Canada are shutting their doors. Every day, on average, 590 women and children are turned away from overcrowded shelters that are packed beyond capacity. Many are forced to return to abuse and violence because of a lack of funding from the Liberal government.

If the supposed feminist government is able to find millions of dollars for handouts to billionaires, why can it not provide funds to help women and children find shelter?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just come back from a gathering with the founding members of Canada's shelter movement. An announcement was made about a study we have invested in that is showing where the gaps are and where the opportunities are.

To date, our government has invested in a child benefit that gives women and families more money. The NDP voted against it. We have invested in a gender-based violence strategy with over \$200 million to prevent this tragedy from happening. The NDP voted against it. We have invested in a national housing strategy with a carve-out for women and girls. The NDP voted against it.

Our record speaks for itself. So does theirs.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women across the country who are victims of violence are being refused access to shelters because of a lack of resources and funding.

The Prime Minister is very outspoken about his feminism, but he seems to be much more timid when it comes time to ask questions and take action to improve the status of women.

The government's inaction is putting women in need in a vulnerable situation.

Will the government commit to rectifying this situation and giving shelters the resources and funding they need to do their work?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the national housing strategy, which was announced just 15 months ago.

When this strategy was announced, the YMCA Federation, and there is a very strong branch in my riding, said that this was a big change for women and girls in Canada. The strategy will get 500,000 Canadian families out of inadequate housing and create 7,000 more shelters specifically for women and girls. Five thousand shelter spaces have already been created. We are working very hard, and we will continue to do even better.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that the Prime Minister's Office used a partisan data base to check the history of political donations made by potential judges.

The Prime Minister finds it necessary to ensure that new judges are good Liberals before appointing them. Well-connected friends have privileged access to the Prime Minister, unlike workers who need support.

Can the Liberal government stop thinking about its own interests and those of its friends and start working for Canadians?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government brought in strong measures to ensure that the judicial appointment process is open and transparent and accountable to Canadians. These measures also seek to encourage a greater diversity within the judiciary.

Our new process is effective. We have appointed nearly 300 judges, and the diversity of these appointments is unprecedented. Under our government, 55% of the appointed judges are women. We continue to ensure that the appointment process is merit-based and transparent.

• (1430)

[English]

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 5, 2016, the leader of the Liberal Party received a confidential memo from Elections Canada detailing a long-term scheme by SNC-Lavalin to funnel illegal electoral donations to the Liberal Party of Canada. That list was never disclosed to the public until recently. On August 30, 2016, SNC-Lavalin received a compliance agreement.

There were many meetings with SNC-Lavalin in 2016. Can the Prime Minister let us know if that topic came up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these donations the member is referring to took place between 2004 and 2009. Elections Canada operates independently of government and makes its decisions independently of any government. The Commissioner of Canada Elections did do an investigation in this matter. Two parties in this House were informed. Both parties have returned those donations.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one party hid the list of donations when requested most recently, and it was not this party.

The last time the terms “SNC-Lavalin compliance agreement” and “PMO” came together, we had four months of a drip, drip, drip of information coming out, leading to two resignations of ministers, one early retirement of the clerk of the privy council, and of course, the resignation of the top adviser to the Prime Minister.

Can they just put us all out of our misery and let us know whether the Prime Minister's Office interfered in this matter with SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, these are in reference to improper donations that two political parties made over a decade ago. The Commissioner for Canada Elections did do an investigation. Those donations have now been returned.

When it comes to the plan we have, and we will put it up against the no plan of the Conservatives any day, we know that Canadians are better off today than they were under 10 years of Stephen Harper.

We know that the Conservatives will talk a big game. What we will do is focus on Canadians, and we know that Canadians are better off today because of the Canada child benefit, a measure the Conservatives want to take away.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 5, 2016, we asked the Liberal Party and the Liberal leader for information about \$110,000 in illegal contributions they received. What did the Liberals do? As usual, they refused to disclose the information.

Why does the Prime Minister always wait until he gets caught red-handed before he starts talking and sharing information?

Why does the Prime Minister not just tell Canadians the truth?

Oral Questions

Why does the Prime Minister not answer this simple question: Did people in his office meet with the Chief Electoral Officer—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those inappropriate donations to two political parties were made over 10 years ago.

Under our Prime Minister's leadership, our government has raised the bar for transparency. That is why we passed legislation enabling the Parliamentary Budget Officer to cost parties' election platforms. The PBO's independent, non-partisan work will prevent parties from misleading Canadians and hiding planned cuts.

Unfortunately, only the Conservatives are refusing to have their platform independently costed—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians thought that after the sponsorship scandal the Liberals would turn over a new leaf. What we are seeing today is that the Liberal organization has not changed its culture. The Prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party was found guilty of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act four times. Furthermore, the Federal Court wants to reopen the investigation into his family trip to the Aga Khan's island.

Will the Prime Minister agree to reopen the investigation and collaborate?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the commissioners work at arm's length from the government and the House of Commons. On this side of the House, we respect the work that the commissioners do. The Prime Minister has accepted responsibility and what the commissioner put in his report.

With respect to inappropriate donations to two political parties, we know that the commissioner of Canada elections conducted an investigation and that both parties returned those donations.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was illegal, not inappropriate.

Earlier today I wrote to the RCMP commissioner suggesting an investigation of the Liberal leader's illegal vacation to the Aga Khan's island. Recent confirmation of the RCMP's deep involvement in the planning of the vacation, as well as lingering questions involving the Liberal leader's behaviour in the SNC corruption scandal, underscore the need to assure Canadians that there is only one law that must be followed by all Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister cooperate in any belated criminal investigation into his illegal vacation?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, this matter has been thoroughly studied by the former conflict of interest and ethics commissioner. The Prime Minister has accepted her findings. The Prime Minister has accepted responsibility when it comes to this matter.

The member opposite should very well know that ATIPs are handled completely separately from political staff. I should not have to remind the Conservatives that they were the ones who were found guilty of politically interfering with the ATIP process. It is unfortunate, because they actually rehired the person who was responsible and was found guilty.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal leader considers the exposure of each of his ever-accumulating ethical lapses learning experiences. Members will recall the Liberals' rote answers during the ethics commissioner's year-long investigation, pledging his co-operation, but we all saw, at the justice and ethics committees, just how much the Liberal leader co-operates if he does not like where an investigation is going.

Again, will the Liberal leader co-operate with a criminal investigation by the RCMP or the Ontario Provincial Police?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to officers of Parliament and the independence of the police force, we on this side have the utmost respect for the work they do. We will always cooperate.

It is only the Conservatives who would have to ask that question, because we know that under 10 years of Stephen Harper, they had no regard when it came to officers of Parliament. We know that the Conservatives have chosen a new leader, but they continue with the same approach as Stephen Harper.

What is even more interesting is that the Conservatives will do anything but talk about their plan, because they have no plan. However, we know that they want to cut the tax-free Canada child benefit. That is why today we find that they do not even want to cost their electoral platform, because they want to mislead Canadians, just like Doug Ford did.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the government released its youth policy, which astonishingly announces that “[y]outh are conscious of the negative impacts climate change has” and that they “want to see further immediate action”. It is about time the government noticed, seeing as 150,000 young people have taken to the streets of Montreal demanding action.

In London, the U.K. Parliament wasted no time declaring a climate emergency earlier this week. Canada is asleep at the switch. It is true.

Six months ago, I urged all the parties to come together to implement emergency climate measures without further delay.

Now that their own report says it is important to listen to youth, will the Liberal Party finally sit down with all the other parties so we can work together to fight climate change?

This is urgent. Let's go.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the NDP and the Conservatives want a plan for fighting climate change, I have one for them.

First, we put a price on pollution. Second, we offered an electric car incentive. Third, we are going to phase out coal by 2030.

If the member wants to talk about youth, it was our party that created the first ever youth policy and the first ever Prime Minister's Youth Council. We have created 35,000 work placements through Canada summer jobs and invested an additional \$300 million.

Our party supports youth across the country, and we are going to keep doing that.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister fights for the billionaire class, first nations in Canada are facing one crisis after another. Now we have word that dialysis units were ripped out of Berens River, forcing people to travel to Winnipeg with next to no support. Regardless of their federal responsibility, there has been silence from the government.

When sick patients are forced to travel far away from their families, we are risking their lives. What will it take for the government to move beyond empty words and act to restore dialysis services in Berens River now?

● (1440)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard on closing the unacceptable gap that exists right now between indigenous and non-indigenous communities when it comes to quality health care.

We are in the process of closing that gap. Fifty-two new community-led wellness centres are now serving 344 communities, 218,000 requests under Jordan's principle and we are working with indigenous partners toward arrangements that will continue to support indigenous control of health care delivery.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians might wonder why the Liberals handed over \$12 million to Loblaw's, one of Canada's richest companies, to buy freezers. We have now learned that two Loblaw's lobbyists, both frequent Liberal Party donors, lobbied the Minister of Environment and her staff. Then they met up with those staff again at an exclusive Liberal cash-for-access event with the Prime Minister. What a coincidence.

Oral Questions

When will these Liberals stop giving preferential treatment to their wealthy and well-connected Liberal friends?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Fifty-four proposals were selected through a fair, transparent and rigorous process. There is absolutely no truth in what the party opposite is saying.

What Canadians want to know is why the party opposite will not consent to have the Parliamentary Budget Officer cost its platform. We want to know how much it is going to cost or how much the cuts are going to cost Canadians.

* * *

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal would think it is fair to cost Canadians \$12 million to give away freezers to a billion dollar company that would have bought them itself and call it an environment plan.

It is not just rich Canadian Liberals who can get access to the Prime Minister. An American CEO also found himself at a cash-for-access event with the Prime Minister, where he bragged about getting access to the Liberal cabinet by illegally obtaining a \$1,600 ticket.

Why do those Liberals only follow the rules after they have first been found to have broken them?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, last year we passed Bill C-50 in the House of Commons to ensure that fundraising events hosted by the Prime Minister, ministers, leaders of parties or leadership candidates would be made public and that the list would be disclosed. In fact, the Liberal Party began abiding by these rules even before the legislation received royal assent. However, the opposition did not do so.

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[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister was evasive and short on detail in his scant response to my question.

The Minister of Justice will no doubt be able to give me an answer about the bespoke contract awarded to our dedicated Liberal donor.

A privileged communication between a law firm and the minister of justice on August 4, 2017, turned into a lucrative \$711-per-hour contract. This communication exists.

Can the minister confirm to the House that this letter does exist?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can have confidence in our government's contracting procedure and legal services, which follow a rigorous and responsible process.

The contract in question was managed by the Department of Justice, and the awarding process complied with all of the department's policies.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the letter in question, dated August 14, 2017, references conversations that led to a contract for services that was designed simply to line the pockets of liberal cronies. It is as though the minister of justice did not have any lawyers on staff to provide counsel on the department's directions.

They can drop the charade, because this letter does exist. The minister needs to step up and confirm that the letter exists. Canadians want the truth.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although the Department of Justice approves tenders, some approvals are delegated to the deputy minister or to other senior Department of Justice officials. This contract was approved by the deputy minister of justice and deputy attorney general.

All contracting rules and policies were followed in the awarding of this contract.

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● (1445)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like many northerners, Napoleon Bouvier in Ile à la Crosse does not have access to medical care. Instead of making life easier for northerners, the price of medical care and pharmacare is only going up for people in my riding. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

When will the Liberals invest in health care in northern Saskatchewan so every northerner can live with dignity?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, health care costs are one of the things we have all been concerned about in the country. That is why, as a government, we have launched initiatives to look at pharmacare and how we make health care more affordable to Canadians, whether they live in the north or the south. In particular, we have paid careful attention to northerners.

That is why we have launched the northern strategic plan and the Arctic policy, so we can hear their concerns first-hand and act on programs and services that will benefit them.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently I raised the concerns of breast health experts, who are shocked at guidelines that ignore breast density and recommend against self-examination and timely mammograms. The minister replied that she was not going to do anything because the guidelines were produced by experts. However, the task force relied on outdated data and did not have a single member with breast health expertise.

Oral Questions

If the minister claims her number one priority is the health of Canadians, then how can she sit back and ignore health guidelines that will cause over 400 women to die every year?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having lost my grandmother to breast cancer, this is something I take quite personally. I know the minister does put the health and safety of Canadians as a top priority.

The Canadian task force on preventive health care is an independent arm's-length panel of 15 experts to develop clinical practice guidelines. While our government provided support to the task force, its decision was made totally independently. As such, these are not official government guidelines.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ontarians know that an un-costed Conservative platform means Conservative cuts, cuts to health care, education and even libraries. That is why our government passed legislation to permit the Parliamentary Budget Officer to review—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We need to hear the question. The Chair has to know whether it is within the rules and so forth. I need to hear the rest of the question to determine whether it is within the responsibility of the government. Members will have to allow me to hear the question.

The hon. member.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, that is why our government passed legislation to permit the Parliamentary Budget Officer to review party platforms during election campaigns. That way parties cannot mislead Canadians and hide their planned cuts from them.

Could the government House leader give the House an update on how our legislation has empowered the Parliamentary Budget Officer to give Canadians more transparency during election campaigns?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Brampton North that Canadians deserve to know what political parties are proposing and the costs to them. That is exactly why the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer can now cost a party's platform.

Unfortunately, it is only the Conservatives who are refusing to have their platform costed. The only reason that can be is that we know the Conservatives are following the lead of Doug Ford and want to keep Canadians in the dark. We know the Conservatives do not support the tax-free Canada child benefit. We know they do not support the increase to the GIS. We know they do not support home care and other services. These are probably programs that are on their chopping block.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, first nations, trade unions and provinces have warned that

the Liberals' no more pipelines bill, Bill C-69, will block resource development. Yesterday, it got even worse.

The Liberals will steamroll provinces, giving themselves unprecedented power over highways, passenger trains, recycling plants and of course provincial resources, like wind, hydro and oil.

Not since the eighties have federal Liberals pit Canadians against each other over resource development and put the whole Canadian economy at risk. Will the Liberals kill Bill C-69?

● (1450)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, we will not kill Bill C-69. It is in the Senate. I was very pleased to testify today to talk about the importance of Bill C-69. Unfortunately, under the previous environmental assessment regime brought in by the Conservatives in an omnibus budget bill, the Conservatives gutted environmental protections and good projects cannot go ahead in a timely way because they all end up in court.

We know we need a better system and better rules to develop our resources in a way that protects the environment, that has proper consultation and accommodation with indigenous peoples and that ensures good projects go ahead.

We will continue to move forward and work with senators.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Liberals will make it so that nothing is ever built again. They are not helping the environment. They are not helping indigenous communities. They are not helping resource development.

Eight provinces and three territories oppose Bill C-69. Hundreds of indigenous businesses and communities are against it. Economists, investors, big companies, family businesses and municipalities oppose it. The hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have lost their jobs because of the Liberals are against it.

Will the Liberals approve TMX on June 18 and kill Bill C-69?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a process to consult with indigenous communities to move forward on the Trans Mountain expansion in the right way. We have said that once the consultations are complete, a decision will be made by June 18.

However, it is interesting to note that if the Conservatives had been really serious about the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, they would not have voted to de-fund and kill the process that would lead to a decision. They should know about that.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chinese leadership has called the Prime Minister a name that is so insulting that you have ruled it unspeakable in the House. I will put partisanship aside and say that I will not stand for that kind of treatment of the Prime Minister.

In retaliation, will the government do the right thing and cancel the quarter-billion dollar gift to the China-controlled Asian Infrastructure Bank?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget was presented over a month ago. Clearly, the Conservatives are making a desperate attempt to avoid talking about it. They are too busy talking about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which seeks to create greater inclusive prosperity around the world with investments from France, Germany, Australia, India, Italy and South Korea.

The only thing the Conservatives have to offer us again today is the old Stephen Harper approach, which was about turning our backs on the United Nations and other multilateral organizations that make this world a better place.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The Globe and Mail says that the Asian Infrastructure Bank is part of “China’s One Belt One Road policy of expanding its international influence through infrastructure.” This means pipelines, roads and bridges will be built in China with Canadian tax dollars.

Yesterday it was revealed that buried in a previous omnibus budget, the amount of money available to the government to give to the bank was actually \$480 million, not the \$250 million previously admitted.

What is the maximum amount Canadian taxpayers will be forced to pay to China’s Asian Infrastructure Bank?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are talking about \$250 million over five years. About a year and a half ago, we announced our plans to join with France, Germany, the U.K., India and Australia on this initiative.

We believe that organizations like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are important multilateral institutions that contribute to global inclusive prosperity as well as Canada’s prosperity.

* * *

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a 68-year-old man with an amputation was not allowed to bring the batteries for his scooter on an airplane, ruining his once-in-a-lifetime trip to celebrate his wedding anniversary. He went to great lengths to have the paperwork approving the batteries in advance, to no avail.

The problem is that this will not be fixed under the proposed accessibility act, as it exempts Canadian transportation.

Will the minister stand and tell people with disabilities and their families what the Liberals will do to fix it so this never happens again?

• (1455)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question which in fact, unfortunately, is based on error. I can assure all Canadians that transportation is a priority under the accessible Canada act, which gives an extended mandate to the CTA to ensure that accessible transportation regulations come into force immediately.

I thank my hon. colleague, the Minister of Transport, for being the first to adopt accessible Canada regulations for transportation.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, life is increasingly unaffordable for people on Vancouver Island. Just like the Conservatives before them, the Liberal government is siding with the richest corporations, while people pay the price. The good times just keep rolling for corporate lobbyists.

The Liberals maintain the Conservatives’ billion-dollar subsidies to oil companies, cater to SNC-Lavalin and throw money at Loblaws.

People deserve a government that is on their side, so when exactly are the Liberals going to grow a backbone and stop bending to the will of large and powerful corporations?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to remind the member that if he had paid close attention to a recent release from Statistics Canada, he would have seen that in the short three and a half years we have been in power, we have reduced poverty by 20% in Canada. If we talk about child poverty, it is 40%, through investments like the Canada child benefit, like investments in housing, like investments in vulnerable seniors. These are all measures both parties on the other side voted against.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, China has blocked Canadian canola for reasons that are both false and baseless, but the Prime Minister is yet to launch a trade complaint. China has also unlawfully detained two Canadians, and Canada has no ambassador to help with the negotiations.

Will the Prime Minister stop letting Canada get pushed around, appoint an ambassador to China and launch a formal trade complaint to resolve the canola crisis?

Oral Questions

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say most importantly that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in close contact with the families of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. This is not about grandstanding or scoring points; it is about working persistently, carefully and resolutely to bring them home safely.

We rallied an unprecedented number of countries around the world in support of Canada's support. Examples are Australia, the EU, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Spain, Denmark, the United States and 140 international scholars and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that China is now refusing shipments of pork from the plant in Red Deer, a plant that employs more than 1,600 people. The same company has another plant in Canada. It has also had its export permit for pork suspended.

Canadians can no longer afford to pay the high price of the total Liberal incompetence and bungling on the world stage. When will the Prime Minister finally stand up for Canadian farmers and their families by putting an end to these politically motivated trade actions?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were informed yesterday that the Chinese authorities suspended the export permits of two Canadian pork exporters.

We were clearly informed that this is an administrative issue, something that happens on a relatively regular basis in various industries and countries. The Canada Food Inspection Agency is monitoring the situation and we expect it to be quickly resolved.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian citizens are being mistreated in Chinese prisons. Our canola farmers have already lost one billion dollars. Now pork producers are being targeted by China. Over the last four months, despite our requests, the Liberal government has refused to make senior-level calls. Liberals have ignored calls to send a special envoy, they have delayed announcing or nominating a new ambassador, and today they said they will not bring a trade action.

China thinks our Prime Minister is weak, and he is proving them right. When will Liberals appoint an ambassador?

● (1500)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of International Trade Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to remind members opposite of what the Premier of Saskatchewan had to say yesterday about the plan we announced to support canola producers. He said, “the federal government has shown that they do support western Canadian agriculture” and he said, “we are going to support the

federal government in these decisions from this day on, as we have always indicated we will.”

The Canola Association supports us. The premier of Saskatchewan supports us. Growers support us. The industry supports us. It is only those Conservatives who do not support us.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservative government made no attempts to address the impact that greenhouse gas emissions from transportation can have on the environment.

There is no question that climate change is real or that we must act now. Could the Minister of Transport please update my constituents from Sault Ste. Marie on the progress made to make environmentally friendly transportation options more affordable?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie for his tireless work in combatting climate change.

We know as Liberals that Canadians want to do their share in fighting to reduce greenhouse gases. That is why we announced for the first time, as of yesterday, a federal incentive for those willing to invest in a zero-emission vehicle.

Unlike the Harper-Ford Conservatives who want to make pollution free again, we in the Liberal Party believe it is important to take care of the environment for our children and for future generations.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Immigration thinks that his government is doing a good job on the immigration file, he is mistaken.

The government failed to deal with the problem with the safe third country agreement. It relinquished Canada's sovereignty by signing the global compact for migration. It failed to reform the temporary foreign worker program, it has not reimbursed the provinces for its mistakes, and the list goes on.

Does the minister still believe that we are not good Canadians or is he ready to have a civilized discussion on the subject?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have finally seen the merit in consulting Canadians, but they did not listen to what Canadians have to say about immigration in this country.

The Conservatives think that immigration is a bad thing, but we, on this side of the House, know that immigration is a positive force for Canada's economic growth. Take, for example, our global skills strategy, which helped create 150,000 jobs in this country. We know that immigration is important for the economy and for communities across Canada.

Oral Questions

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, labour shortages in rural areas are disastrous for many businesses, but the government still has no plan to do anything about it.

Everyone agrees that immigration is one solution to the problem, but the complex application process and processing delays are unacceptable. The Government of Quebec has opened offices in the regions. Two years ago, I asked the Minister of Immigration to follow suit and open an office in Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Are rural residents second-class citizens? Why won't the minister provide them with the same level of service as everyone else?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that immigration is key to economic growth across Canada, including in Quebec. We know that client service is important and that we need staff all over the province to help solve this problem.

We are working hard with Quebec to resolve the province's labour shortage. Immigration is important to economic growth in Quebec and in Canada as a whole, and the government will keep working to achieve better results.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have seen recently in communities across the country, the effects of climate change are real. They are devastating to our communities. Canadians want to know that we take these threats seriously and that we are making the investments necessary to prepare for and mitigate the effects the next time disaster strikes.

Could the Prime Minister or the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities please update this House on the investments the government is making to tackle climate change, particularly in British Columbia?

• (1505)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the effects of flooding in my own riding, and Canadians have seen that across Canada. There is nothing to laugh about when people are being flooded in Canada.

Climate change is real. That is why in 2017 we launched the disaster mitigation fund, a \$2-billion fund across Canada to help communities to prevent and adapt against flooding. That is why last week I was in the Fraser Valley near Chilliwack and the Shuswap village to announce a \$45-million investment to protect communities and families. We will continue to invest in Canadians.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians support immigration when it is fair, orderly and compassionate. However, right now, there are serious examples of unfairness and injustice in Canada's immigration system.

Anytime anyone asks the Liberals to address these injustices, they are met with thinly veiled accusations of racism or lies. This is wrong. This cheapens the debate on how to fairly manage immigration and harms racialized communities.

Will the Prime Minister finally address his failure to manage Canada's immigration system, or will he continue down this tired, destructive path?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after three and a half years, the Conservatives finally saw the merit in consulting with Canadians. Sadly, they did not listen. Conservatives are twisting themselves into a pretzel to hide their secret plan to stifle economic growth by cutting immigration in this country.

Looking solely at our global skills strategy, it has helped create 150,000 jobs across this country. Taking our economic growth plan into consideration, whereby 900,000 jobs have been created across this country, Canadians will see that immigration is a key ingredient. We agree with that. Business agrees with that. Communities agree with that. The only people who do not are the Conservatives.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, families in Quebec are working around the clock to save their homes. Some have already lost everything. People who were evacuated are wondering if they still have a home to return to. In the meantime, the Minister of Public Safety is not sure if he will directly compensate the victims of the flood that continues to rage on.

Can the minister commit to compensating homeowners who might potentially be forced to move out of flood-prone areas?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the programming that exists and has existed for many years, called the disaster financial assistance arrangements, the compensation measures to cover losses as a result of flooding are, first and foremost, designed by the provinces. The provinces then submit claims for cost-sharing under the terms of the program.

As the claims get larger, the federal share gets higher. It starts out at 20% and could rise to 95%. The cost-sharing formula already exists.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer.

Government Orders

So far, the Government of Quebec has given the Canadian Red Cross \$1 million to directly help the victims with their basic needs. I am still talking about the floods since that is the issue at hand. The Government of Quebec gave \$1 million without delay.

We are calling on the federal government to do the same today. That would directly, tangibly, and immediately help those who are in great need, the people on the ground.

If Ottawa can find \$12 million to help Loblaws, then surely it could find \$1 million somewhere in the budget.

Can the minister commit to matching Quebec's donation to the Red Cross?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross performs a very vital function in responding to national disasters. It is a very valuable partner with all levels of government in dealing with the real human needs that come out of these circumstances.

The Government of Canada is in close discussion right now with the Canadian Red Cross about the benefits that could apply, not just in one province but in several provinces, in the current disaster. We will have something further to say on that within the next couple of days.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at this time, there should be no petty politics when it comes to flood victims.

We have seen the public's generosity on several occasions during different disasters that have occurred in Canada and Quebec.

People need immediate assistance now. There are urgent needs and there is no time to lose.

Will the Minister of Public Safety immediately match the Quebec government's donation to the Red Cross?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I answered that question very directly in the previous answer. This issue is under active discussion now with the Canadian Red Cross.

From the national perspective, we obviously want to deal with the circumstances in Quebec appropriately, but we also have Ontario and New Brunswick to consider, and there is also flooding in Manitoba. We want to make sure that we have covered all of the bases to treat Canadians everywhere with generosity and compassion, and we will.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the uncertainty over the agenda and future work of the House, can the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tell us about the business of the House for the rest of this week and next week?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will resume debate at third reading of Bill C-82, an act to implement a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting.

Tomorrow we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-92, an act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

[Translation]

Next Monday we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

I hope I will have more to tell you tomorrow.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MULTILATERAL INSTRUMENT IN RESPECT OF TAX CONVENTIONS ACT

The House resumed from April 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-82, An Act to implement a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this afternoon and speak to an important piece of legislation, Bill C-82, which is a further step in our government's agenda and plan to build an economy that is fair and where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

A fair tax system forms the foundation for a stronger middle class and a growing economy, instills confidence in Canadians and helps create opportunities for everyone. It is important not only as a matter of fairness but as a means of safeguarding the government's ability to invest in programs and services that help Canada's middle class, including residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and Canadians working hard to join the middle class.

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, residents work hard and pay their taxes diligently—

• (1515)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that the House is in progress, so I would ask them if they are having conversations to please go out to the lobby.

The hon. member can continue his speech.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, in the riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, which I am privileged to represent, the residents work hard and pay their taxes diligently. They want assurance of our tax system and its fairness, assurance that everyone is paying his or her fair share.

Government Orders

As a government, since being elected we have invested over a billion dollars in the Canada Revenue Agency to ensure that we have a system that works for all Canadians and that our country can have confidence in this department. As we all know, tax season has now come to an end. Millions of Canadians have filed their returns, and they can be assured that our government is putting in the resources necessary for a timely, efficient, fair service for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Tax fairness is something that is important to me and to our government. In addition to Bill C-82, with budget 2019, which followed a wide-ranging review of federal tax expenditures introduced in budget 2016, our government has brought forward a number of changes to make our tax system fair, efficient and transparent, and to ensure that tax expenditures do not unfairly benefit the wealthiest Canadians rather than the middle class and those working hard to join it.

I am proud to announce that our government's actions are expected to recoup over \$4 billion annually in revenues that have been reinvested in the Canada child benefit, in seniors and in those Canadians who need it the most. In my riding, the Canada child benefit delivers benefits to over 16,000 kids monthly, nearly \$5 million to over 9,000 families.

We know that in late February, Statistics Canada, in its annual income survey, noted that we have lifted 825,000 Canadians from coast to coast to coast out of poverty. We have seen a reduction of nearly 20% in poverty rates across Canada. At the same time, over the last three years, we have created over 900,000 new jobs, a majority of them full-time and in Canada. That is attributed to the hard-working entrepreneurial spirit that people have in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and across Canada, and we have helped lay the foundations for this strong period of growth that continues today.

In addition, in budget 2019 we will limit the usage of the stock option deduction, a measure that benefited only 2,330 individuals who claimed approximately \$1.3 billion of employee stock option deductions. We will limit the use of the employee stock option deduction to ensure that it is only used in new start-ups and young firms.

Before I left the private sector for the public sector, to run and be elected as a Liberal member of Parliament, one of the things I advocated for was an adjustment to the employee stock option deduction that was and had been in use for many years. I already knew that it was unfair, that it was something that was not necessary for our economy to grow, and that it did not benefit middle-class Canadians. I am happy that our government came through and put this measure in the current budget.

In addition, as a reminder, the first thing our government did when elected was cut taxes for nine million middle-class Canadians and, yes, ask the 1% to pay a bit more. The second thing we did was cut taxes on small businesses by lowering the small business tax rate to 9%, which represented a \$7,500 tax saving annually for small businesses. In my riding, there are over 4,000 small businesses that potentially can reduce their taxes this year by approximately \$7,500. They can use this to reinvest in their human resources, in their capital equipment and in greater dividends for themselves, for personal use.

We have introduced policies, including in Bill C-82, that ensure that our economy is strong, that our tax system is fair, efficient and transparent, and that all Canadians and all wealthy Canadians are paying their fair share. These measures by our government will help strengthen confidence in Canada and encourage investment. They will help support Canadian businesses as they grow, expand into new markets and create more good, well-paying jobs with great benefits.

Ensuring taxpayer fairness is a complex process requiring ongoing engagement with a wide range of partners both at home and around the world.

• (1520)

I would like to add that for a number of years, I sat on the Accounting Standards Board's User Advisory Council here in Canada. Members can rest assured that I am quite aware of the intricacies and the difficulties of ensuring a fair and transparent accounting system and a fair, transparent and efficient tax system and of coming up with norms and regulations that are uniform internationally, which we have done and that are contained in Bill C-82.

The bill would ensure that corporations do not shift profits from a jurisdiction with a high tax rate to a jurisdiction with a low tax rate or, in some instances, shift profits from a jurisdiction where there are tax rates to a jurisdiction where no tax rates exist and they would have zero tax payable. We want to avoid that situation. Residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and across Canada depend on the programs and services that we as a government deliver, and we need to ensure that those government programs are funded equitably by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The bill being considered today is another step forward in this process. It proposes to implement a multilateral instrument, or MLI, in respect of conventions for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. When we refer to fiscal evasion, it is exactly what I mentioned earlier: profit shifting from one jurisdiction to another to lower one's tax bill and to avoid paying taxes. In other words, with Bill C-82, our government would not only be making Canada's tax system a fairer one, it would also help to escalate the fight against aggressive international tax avoidance.

Government Orders

Bill C-82 proposes to allow Canada to implement treaty-related measures to counter a practice known as base erosion and profit shifting, or BEPS. As this chamber has already heard, BEPS relates to strategies by which wealthy individuals can use loopholes to shift profits to low-tax or no-tax locations to avoid paying taxes. The multilateral instrument this bill seeks to enact is a product of a worldwide initiative involving over 100 jurisdictions, including Canada, again demonstrating Canadian leadership on the world stage to get done what is needed and what is right. It is the first multilateral convention to modify the application of bilateral tax treaties. It allows signatory nations to implement measures developed from the OECD/G20 project to counter the practice of base erosion and profit shifting and to do so in a timely manner. We are not talking about forward many years; we are talking about the near term.

Just as importantly, the MLI allows signatories to work more effectively together in the fight against aggressive international tax avoidance. In addition, the MLI contains provisions to improve dispute resolution under Canada's tax treaties.

While some of the provisions of the MLI are required, others are optional. The mandatory provisions meet the minimum standards established by the OECD, as agreed to by all the signatory jurisdictions, and each signatory is free to choose among the provisions that are optional. Our government proposes to adopt a number of the optional provisions of the MLI upon ratification in addition to the mandatory ones.

There are three provisions in particular I would like to reference that would prevent or reduce opportunities for inappropriate tax avoidance, which, again, is shifting profits from one jurisdiction to another. They look at transfer pricing and a number of measures wealthy individuals or some corporations utilize to reduce their tax bills, such as moving resources to a foreign jurisdiction so as to not pay taxes where the revenues are generated.

First would be a 365-day holding period for shares of Canadian companies held by non-resident companies. It would ensure that the lower treaty-based rate of withholding tax on dividends would not be available in the case of short-term share acquisitions.

Second would be a 365-day test period for non-residents who realize capital gains from the disposition of shares or other interests that derive their value principally from Canadian immovable property. It would aim to prevent non-residents from obtaining a treaty-based exemption from Canadian taxes on capital gains in inappropriate circumstances.

Third would be a provision for resolving dual-resident-entity cases to prevent potential double taxation, which would also help to protect against a company's ability to manipulate its tax residence to avoid or reduce its taxes.

Additionally, Canada would retain the option to adopt additional provisions of the multilateral instrument after ratification.

By implementing the optional provisions I mentioned, together with the required minimum international standards, Canada's ability to protect its tax base would be enhanced and would support the international effort to tackle base erosion and profit shifting.

● (1525)

Overall, the multilateral instrument is an international approach that makes it possible to implement necessary changes in a timely and efficient manner. It is an important tool in combatting aggressive international tax avoidance, and it would benefit both Canada and our international tax partners. Again, there are approximately 100 countries that have signed on to BEPS.

I am glad to see Canadian leadership on that front. That is what we have demonstrated as a government time and time again in the last three and a half years since we were elected and given the privilege of serving this great country and the 37 million residents that inhabit it.

The multilateral instrument this bill proposes to put in place, with its provisions designed to address aggressive tax avoidance, represents another step in our government's efforts to ensure tax fairness for Canadians. Again, we have lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians, nine million of them, with an approximately \$20-billion tax cut, and have asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more. We know that the recent report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer looked at that tax cut and actually put a stamp of approval on it, saying that what we attempted to do in terms of lowering taxes for middle-class Canadians and ensuring that the 1% paid a little more actually worked. There was a net benefit for our economy.

We made a promise to middle-class Canadians that we would lower their taxes and make sure that everyone paid their fair share. While we have introduced a middle-class tax cut and reduced the small business tax rate, Canadians need to have confidence that the system will, at the same time, help grow the economy and ensure that the benefits of growth can be felt by everyone.

For many years, economic growth could not be defined as inclusive. For the last three and a half years, we have seen what inclusivity of economic growth means. It means lifting 825,000 Canadians out of poverty. It means creating 900,000 new jobs, the majority full time, the majority private sector. It means the lowest unemployment rate in over 40 years. It means wage growth, real wage growth, which we have not seen in Canada for many years. It means that Canadians are optimistic about their future.

We do face challenges in certain sectors, and our government is there to address those challenges, working in partnership with those sectors and those industries. That is the good work we were elected to do, and that is the good work we will continue to do.

I encourage all hon. members to support the proposed legislation, Bill C-82, which would implement such an important tool for tax fairness.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, I support this legislation as well. It is one of the few Liberal initiatives that actually makes some sense. I have called it in the House before a tax treaty for tax treaties. That is really what it is.

The member talked about many other things that had very little to do with the contents, so I am just going to ask him a question on that point. Originally the Liberals promised that the so-called increase on the top 1% would pay for itself. That is actually the wording they used, “pay for itself”. That is not what the Parliamentary Budget Officer found. He found that the top income earners in Canada were paying a higher share of total income being collected, which was not the point.

Would the member agree with me that the effect of the tax changes the Liberal government introduced gave a bigger tax cut to every single member of the House of Commons than it did to those earning \$45,000 or less?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and friend, the member for Calgary Shepard, who I have the privilege of sitting on the finance committee with.

What I will say is that when we look at our overall tax system and the way it works, and if we look at the elasticity of tax in terms of the way the Parliamentary Budget Officer wrote about it in the report, our tax cut worked. We allowed nine million middle-class Canadians to receive a tax cut. They used that income to invest and save. We also adjusted the top tax rate. There was some front-loading in the first year, which many had anticipated. What we are seeing is that upper-income earners are still responding with their labour supply. They are still responding. We are still seeing growth in the economy. We are still seeing growth, I would say, in incomes.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report was, in my view, an endorsement and a validation of our policy of reducing taxes for middle-class Canadians and asking the 1% to pay a little extra.

• (1530)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding of North Island—Powell River, there are some serious concerns regarding the fisheries. For many years, successive governments have not supported restoration and local community hatcheries. That has put a lot of the community members I represent in great financial difficulty.

When we look at this legislation, we have to recognize that the gap between the richest Canadians and low-income Canadians is growing. In fact, the 100 richest Canadians now hold as much wealth as the bottom 10 million Canadians combined.

In the last two elections, the Liberals promised to cap how much could be claimed through the stock option deduction. However, they backed down on that promise more than once after they took power. Why did the government decide to do this? Why not keep that promise?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record that I grew up in northern British Columbia, in Prince Rupert. My mother and her five sisters worked at a cannery. That is how they made their income. I worked at a cannery. Unfortunately, many of

those canneries no longer exist, as the industry has changed quite a bit.

I note that in budget 2019, we have put in approximately \$100 million for the restoration of the salmon industry. I would love to follow up with the member on the exact details.

In budget 2019, our government aligned our stock option rules with those of the United States. We will still allow the stock option deduction for small firms and new technology firms, because we need those innovators in Canada. Many firms that come into existence do not generate cash flow right away. Stock options are a form of payment in terms of compensation for their employees. For existing and mature firms, we have eliminated the tax deduction beyond \$200,000.

This is real progress and real change.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear some endorsement from the other side regarding some aspects of our budget.

It is important for people to know that informed consultation goes on in the decisions we make with regard to the finances of the country. Certainly, the great experience my friend from Vaughan—Woodbridge has had in that field speaks to the integrity of our process.

How much intense consultation was there regarding the issues we brought forward? I know there were some controversial consultations early on. They were changed somewhat because of the input we received from people like the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge. Could the member tell us about the consultation process?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I come from a very humble, middle-class background, having grown up in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. However, through a lot of work, I had the privilege of working on Bay Street and Wall Street for over 20 years.

Our government does listen and consult when it puts forward changes in how businesses operate and in our tax system. This has been a fundamental principle since our government entered office.

Bill C-82, a multilateral instrument, went through vast consultation with our international partners. Bringing this legislation forward would ensure that shifting profits from one jurisdiction to another would not occur. It would lessen that opportunity. It would ensure that Canadians continued to have confidence in our tax system's ability to fund the programs and services they utilize and need on a daily basis. It would allow us to take a step forward on a national pharmacare program and to take a step forward on the Canada child benefit, which we have done by indexing it two years ahead of time. We have brought in measures such as a \$1.7-billion tax cut for seniors through the guaranteed income supplement exemption amount.

Many measures we have brought forward we have been able to do through consultation with Canadians, similar to what we have done for Bill C-82.

Government Orders

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a question was raised a few minutes ago in regard to the issue of income inequality. One of the things that I like to think we have done very successfully in government to address that issue is increasing the tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%, while at the same time decreasing the tax on Canada's middle class. We also put in a boost of income through the Canada child benefit and things such as the guaranteed income supplement.

Could my colleague and friend provide his thoughts on how that actually assists in ensuring that there is more equality?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, if we look at all the policies we have implemented and where Canadian families are today, we see that an average family of four is \$2,000 better off today than it was three and a half years ago. We know that has been done through a middle-class tax cut, which was funded by increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. We know those are progressive policies. We know that all Canadians need to pay their fair share of taxes. However, we know that Canadians in the middle class deserve a break. We understand there are affordability issues. We have addressed some of those affordability issues in the budget with regard to youth and students, with regard to seniors and with regard to housing affordability.

We have also asked a very fundamental question. We have asked the wealthiest 1% of Canadians to pay a little more, because we need it for the betterment of society. We cannot allow our society to further go down the path of income inequality. We have stopped that and we have improved that. We have seen the results as, again, over 825,000 Canadians, in all 338 ridings across this country, have been lifted out of poverty. It is a great success and we should all be proud. It is a 20% reduction of our poverty rate. Those are the measures behind it, which have reduced inequality in this country and are giving more and more Canadians hope. We as a government need to be proud of that record.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, God is an honest payer, but a very slow one, as the Yiddish proverb goes. It means that for all the good things we do during our life, the treasures await us in heaven, which is a very common thing many Christians believe. The National Prayer Breakfast was this morning, so I thought I would begin with a Yiddish proverb that many know.

However, it also applies to taxes, because what we expect from Canadians, Canadian corporations and those doing business in Canada is to pay their taxes honestly and not to engage in aggressive tax planning and tax avoidance schemes, which this bill proposes to make more difficult by implementing a multilateral tax treaty. In this House, I have previously called it a tax treaty for tax treaties.

Those who are listening in or those who are in the gallery may be wondering what BEPS is, because many members have mentioned it. It is base erosion and profit shifting. I am going to provide a definition and I am hoping that everybody will be able to follow along.

The definition from the OECD is an example, so it is easy to figure out. Company A, which resides in the Cayman Islands, wants to provide a licence for the use of intellectual property to company C

in South Africa. South Africa, however, has not concluded a tax treaty with the Cayman Islands and would thus be entitled to apply its domestic withholding tax rate on outbound royalties.

Hopefully, everybody is getting what I am getting at here.

However, a European country has concluded a tax treaty with South Africa that reduces its withholding tax rates on royalties. This country does not itself levy a source tax on royalties. Therefore, company A establishes a letterbox company in this European country and diverts the royalty payments through the letterbox company to reduce the tax withheld by South Africa. In this example, the principal purpose of establishing this arrangement, including the letterbox company, is to obtain the lower withholding tax rate available under the tax treaty between South Africa and the European country.

This is what we call base erosion and profit shifting. It is something that very large corporations routinely engage in and have been accused of in the past. It is sometimes called "the green jersey". I have heard it called "the single malt", depending on the jurisdiction it comes from. Typically, it heavily impacts high tax rate countries, such as Canada, the United States and others. Low tax rate countries are impacted as well, as they lose a lot of their ability to raise taxes on behalf of their citizens, because they are not able to track the money as it moves around. The companies are not honest payers in those situations, nor will they be slow ones in the future, unlike the Yiddish proverb I mentioned. We want to ensure that large corporations, large multinationals and individuals doing business in other countries are paying their taxes honestly and that they are not slow to do so but pay them on time and when they are expected to.

This is a tax treaty for tax treaties. I support this piece of legislation, because we want to ensure that our tax system is both fair and efficient, and that we are able to collect the taxes owed to the government. We know how much difficulty the Canada Revenue Agency has had collecting that information. Hopefully, now it will be looking at what the tax gap is.

I want to draw the attention of the House to article 28 and article 29 of this tax treaty, because that is the only part of the legislation I had concerns with at committee. This tax treaty will not return to Parliament to determine whether we continue with certain reservations or not. What this tax treaty is proposing to do is take Parliament out of consideration after the bill is passed by this House and by that other place as well. What will happen in those situations, with the many reservations the Canadian government has indicated to our multilateral partners, is that if in the future cabinet were to decide that we wish to participate in them, that particular matter will not return to the House and will not be taken up for consideration.

I think that was a matter brought up by Patrick Marley at committee with respect to articles 10, 12 and 13. He mentioned that, because of that, he had some concerns that perhaps Parliament would lose its ability to impact the tax treaty choices and specific implementation provisions in the future, perhaps when some members of this House are no longer here, or I am no longer here, and the contents of the treaty would not be well known.

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That is literally the only part of the treaty that I have concerns with. Outside of that, I think the generalities of it are the MLIs, ensuring that our multilateral partners are harmonizing the rules with us and that we have the same rules applied across many different countries. This would ensure that we are able to collect the taxes that are owed to the Canadian treasury. We would also be able to ensure that tax avoidance and aggressive tax planning are reduced to an absolute minimum.

• (1540)

There are many examples of these types of companies that engage in it. Some of the largest ones, like the one that produces the smart phones in our pockets, typically have trademark and copyright subsidiaries that simply trade in the trademark. There is no actual business being conducted in the different jurisdictions; they simply charge a royalty for its use.

Starbucks is a great example. I have used it before and I am still waiting for their lobbyists to call me and complain that I used it as an example.

Starbucks engages in this practice by charging a royalty on its logo and its name, which it puts in a different jurisdiction. Then its Canadian, American and other subsidiaries—holding companies, sometimes—pay a royalty to the other place that does not charge any taxes on the royalty. That is the type of base erosion we are trying to avoid and do away with.

Before I continue, I will mention that today, May 2, is a special day. As I do on almost every May 2, I want to wish a very happy birthday to my father-in-law and my wife, who were both born on the same day. If I did not do that, I would not want to go home tonight and could not guarantee I would return next week. I say a very happy birthday to both of them.

May 2 is also a special day for those who, like me, are of Polish heritage. Constitution Day is the day the original Polish Constitution was created. It is the founding document of many European constitutions, including the American constitution. Guaranteed rights are set out in it. The principle of “no taxation without representation” comes partially from that original document, a principle that again is found in documents like Bill C-82, the tax treaty of tax treaties. That same principle applies here as well.

We are trying to ensure that the taxes owed to the people of Canada are paid by the corporations and individuals who owe them. I simply do not see a reason that we should not be enforcing as many of the provisions as we possibly can.

Many of our OECD and G20 partners will be participating, although the United States of America will not be participating in this multinational convention. However, we have many tax treaties with our neighbours to the south that will ensure they meet their obligations to us and we meet our obligations to them. They will ensure that taxes owed in both jurisdictions are indeed paid.

We know that the partial goal of the government with this document and with budget bills is to collect the difference between what is owed and what is actually collected. Many officials at committee said their hope is that they will be able to close that tax gap and collect the taxes they have not been able to collect. It is estimated that roughly \$23 billion in profits that should have been

declared in tax in Canada were shifted to a lower-tax jurisdiction. That is a large sum of money, but it would not be the full \$23 billion; it will be a fraction of that amount. It is all part of the government's attempt to find and scrounge every single last dollar to pay down the deficit.

Kudos to the government. It is about \$20.3 billion off the target it set for itself in 2015, and it will still be off its target well into 2040.

I was at a town hall yesterday, and several constituents asked me whether the Canadian government was ever intending to reduce the deficit to zero and start paying down the national debt. I had to tell them that unfortunately, no, that is not the case, that there is no such intention in any government document at this point. It simply tracks how big the deficit and the national debt will be. For the first time this year, the Government of Canada owes over \$700 billion on behalf of taxpayers. If we include crown corporation debt, it goes to over \$1 trillion. After the next few terms, we are expecting to see another \$250 billion to \$300 billion added to the national debt, and that number excludes crown corporations.

Initiatives like this try to seek justice on behalf of Canadians by trying to collect the taxes owed in other jurisdictions, an important part of closing the tax gap. I will be supporting this piece of legislation, as I did at earlier stages of the bill and at committee. My only concern, which I am putting on the record so that future parliamentarians will see it, is provisions in articles 28 and 29 that shift the responsibility from Parliament to cabinet to decide which reservations can be done away with. Those will be done by orders in council. My understanding from officials at committee is that a simple order of cabinet would do so. It is a defect in the bill, but the defect is not sufficient to cause me vote against it. I invite all members to vote in favour of it.

• (1545)

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 the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words about this bill.

Is it too late?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes, it is too late.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I wonder if we might be able to canvass the House to see if we can have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so we can begin private members' hour?

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

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Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1550)

[English]

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

The House resumed from February 4 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Timmins - James Bay.

Motion No. 174 calls for the government to establish a national suicide prevention action plan, with concrete steps and timelines. Government can and should take a leadership role in working to reduce the number of Canadians lost to suicide each year.

Suicide has impacted my family personally. My niece, Mikki Everett, died on November 21, 1994. She was 15 years old. Our family still is not clear whether her death was accidental or deliberate, but the impact her death had on all of us continues today. Her mother Heidi was never able to return to work. One never stops wondering why or what could have been done to prevent it.

Mikki was a joy to be around. We took her on family vacations and our kids adored her. We shared the same birthday, and my daughter Kellie honoured Mikki by giving my granddaughter, Lalita, middle names of Micheline Dawn in Mikki's memory. We still miss her today. Her death was almost 25 years ago. Has anything really improved around suicide prevention since then?

One area we are starting to see some improvement in is reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. This is a positive step in ensuring that people feel more comfortable seeking the help they need.

I would like to read an excerpt from a column written by Anglican Reverend Yme Woensdregt from Cranbrook. He shared how he came out on the other side of depression and offered advice for those who find themselves struggling, using words of wisdom from a source members may recognize, Piglet from *Winnie-the-Pooh*:

"Piglet?" said Pooh.

"Yes Pooh?" said Piglet.

"Do you ever have days when everything feels ... Not Very Okay At All? And sometimes you don't even know why you feel Not Very Okay At All, you just know that you do?"

Piglet nodded his head sagely. "Oh yes," said Piglet. "I definitely have those days."

"Really?" said Pooh in surprise. "I would never have thought that. You always seem so happy and like you have got everything in life all sorted out."

"Ah," said Piglet. "Well here's the thing. There are two things that you need to know, Pooh. The first thing is that even those pigs, and bears, and people, who seem to have got everything in life all sorted out...they probably haven't. Actually, everyone has days when they feel Not Very Okay At All. Some people are just better at hiding it than others."

"And the second thing you need to know...is that it's okay to feel Not Very Okay At all. It can be quite normal, in fact. And all you need to do, on those days when you feel Not Very Okay At All, is come and find me, and tell me. Don't ever feel like you have to hide the fact you're feeling Not Very Okay At All. Always come and tell me. Because I will always be there."

A piece of advice shared both by Piglet and Reverend Yme is knowing that one can reach out for help during times of crisis. We need to ensure people can both ask for and receive the help they need when struggling with thoughts of depression.

Clinical depression is more than just a bad day. Depression can be persistent and can interfere with every aspect of life: relationships with family and friends, participation in hobbies, performance at school and work and physical health. Left untreated, depression can worsen, leading to substance abuse, obesity, self-harm or suicide.

Despite recent efforts to reduce the stigma of mental illness, there remains much work to be done. Many people still suffer in silence and three-quarters of those who die by suicide have no contact with mental health services in the year before their deaths.

This statistic shows that we need to do a better job of identifying individuals and groups at elevated risk and conducting proactive education and outreach activities to help prevent tragic losses of friends, family members, co-workers, neighbours, classmates and children.

Motion No. 174 proposes measures that will improve our understanding of suicide and, in turn, our prevention efforts. These are steps we need to take because too many lives are being lost every day.

According to British Columbia's minister of mental health and addictions, more than 500 people are lost to suicide every year in the province. Nationally, the most recent statistics available indicate approximately 4,000 Canadians die by suicide each year. That is about 11 people every day lost, and the circle of grief expands well beyond that.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. With each person lost, lives are broken and we lose so much potential in our communities.

• (1555)

Suicide is especially prevalent among men in rural areas. We need to understand the factors at play in at-risk populations to respond appropriately. Adopting Motion No. 174 would begin the work of filling in knowledge gaps and establishing best practices.

We also need to ensure that those who take the brave step of seeking help are taken seriously and have access to mental health services they need in a timely manner.

One of my staff members in Ottawa lost her cousin, Christopher, to suicide last fall on World Mental Health Day. In the month before he died, he attended the local emergency room three times with suicidal thoughts. Each time he was sent home and not connected with mental health services in the community. He was 26 years old and wanted to be a writer. He was an only child, and his loss has left a terrible hole in the lives of his parents.

Christopher's story is sadly not an unfamiliar one as mental health crises are too often dealt with in emergency rooms not equipped to provide the treatment people need. Canadians across the country continue to face lengthy wait lists while they are in crisis, unless they have the means to pay out of pocket for help. Barriers and delays in accessing mental health services put the lives of people at risk not only due to suicide, but to overdose as well.

Canada is facing an opioid crisis and many people who struggle with mental health issues fall into addictions after trying to self-medicate. The tainted supply of street drugs puts those with concurrent mental illness and addiction at a high risk of death while they wait for access to treatment.

One of my staff has a close family member who suffers from mental health and addiction issues. He has been admitted to the hospital several times following suicide attempts. The family has been trying to access publicly funded treatment services, but have faced endless barriers and delays while his situation continues to deteriorate. My staff member says that it has come to the point that every time her mother calls at an unexpected time, she is afraid it will be to convey the news this family member has died by suicide or overdose.

The NDP has called for increased federal funding so those who are struggling with addiction can access treatment on demand. One important part of Motion No. 174 is the requirement to conduct a comprehensive analysis within 18 months on barriers Canadians face in accessing appropriate health, wellness and recovery services, including substance abuse, addiction and bereavement services. It also requires an analysis within the same time frame of the funding arrangements required to provide the treatment, education, professional training and other supports required to prevent suicide and assist those bereaved by a loved one's suicide.

While we work to reduce the number of Canadians lost to suicide, we also need to ensure those left behind have the supports they need to cope with the aftermath. Survivors of suicide loss face trauma and grief, often mixed with complex feelings of guilt, confusion and sometimes anger. The impact of suicide reaches beyond the immediate family and can affect an entire community. One death by suicide is sometimes followed by another and clusters have been seen among adolescents and in some indigenous communities.

I attended the funeral of a Cranbrook resident who died by suicide. During the eulogy, we were asked to remember this person by the individual's entire life, not just the few seconds before it ended. That was an important message, but without appropriate supports it can be challenging for loved ones to process their feelings and navigate the aftermath in a healthy manner. That is another reason why I support Motion No. 174. It calls for an analysis of bereavement services for those impacted by suicide.

One other group we must keep in mind in this discussion is the first responders who are exposed to the tragedy of suicide and must navigate interactions with families during an extremely difficult time. First responders are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress injury, which may elevate their own risk of dying by suicide. We must ensure first responders have training on best practices for responding to mental health crises and suicide and that they have the support needed to deal with the trauma they face on the job. We need

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to properly support all of our men and women who serve us in uniform who are at an increased risk for suicide.

As parliamentarians, we must do everything we can to prevent lives from being ended too soon due to suicide and the devastation it causes for those left behind.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward Motion No. 174 and I urge all members to support this important motion.

* * *

• (1600)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that Tuesday, May 7 shall be an allotted day.

* * *

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on the issue of suicide prevention. I would like to dedicate this debate to my late nephew, Zach Leger, who needlessly and tragically left us last summer. We love Zach.

I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for bringing the motion forward, and I am pleased to say our government is supporting it. It calls for a national action plan on suicide prevention.

Suicide is a significant public health issue that affects many Canadians of all ages and backgrounds. On average, 11 people die by suicide each day. That is about 4,000 suicide deaths in Canada per year.

Suicide rates are higher than the national average in many indigenous communities and among all Inuit regions in Canada. In fact, suicide was the ninth leading cause of death among all Canadians in 2016. It is also the second leading cause of death after accidents among children, youth and young adults aged 10 to 34. Suicide accounted for approximately 5,028 potential years of life lost in Manitoba alone in 2011.

We know that suicide disproportionately affects certain groups. Approximately one-third of suicide deaths are among people 45 to 59 years of age. Rates of suicide are approximately three times higher among men than women, though women are two times more likely to be hospitalized due to self-injury than men.

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In addition, suicide-related behaviours are reportedly more prevalent in LGBTQ2 youth in comparison to their non-LGBTQ2 peers. Rates of suicide are higher in remote areas as compared to cities and among people that are socially isolated. As I previously mentioned, suicide rates in many indigenous communities are higher than the national average. In my home province of Manitoba, indigenous youth are five to seven times more likely to commit suicide than non-indigenous youth.

Statistics, as stark as they are, only tell part of the story. For every suicide death, many more people are impacted, such as those surviving a suicide attempt or those grieving the loss of someone to suicide. This issue affects far too many families, far too many friends and entire communities. Unfortunately, the stigma associated with mental health means that many people never reach out to receive the help they need.

Suicide is a complex issue. There is no single cause that explains or predicts suicide and a combination of factors is often at play. This may include mental or physical illness or personal and intergenerational trauma, as well as experiences related to loss, injury, exposure, trauma, childhood abuse and neglect.

Current evidence also indicates an important association between suicide and broader socio-economic factors, such as housing, education, employment and income, as well as access to health care and culturally appropriate resources, the social determinants of health.

This is why the Government of Canada is very pleased to support this motion, which provides an opportunity to build on efforts already under way to advance suicide prevention in Canada.

Preventing suicide requires comprehensive approaches with the involvement of all sectors, including governments, non-governmental organizations, indigenous organizations, indigenous nations and communities most affected by suicide. This is particularly important for indigenous communities.

Our government is working closely with indigenous leadership to encourage and promote indigenous-led strategies for addressing suicide prevention in their own communities. We are also working closely with national indigenous organizations to develop unique, comprehensive strategies to mental wellness and life promotion.

• (1605)

In July 2016, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK, launched the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy. This strategy outlines six priority areas: creating social equity; creating cultural continuity; nurturing healthy Inuit children from birth; ensuring access to a continuum of mental health services for Inuit young people; healing unresolved trauma and grief; and mobilizing Inuit knowledge for resilience and suicide prevention.

The Government of Canada, through budget 2019, will provide \$50 million over 10 years and \$5 million per year ongoing to support the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy.

However, the approach and strategy developed by the ITK may not be the appropriate solution for other indigenous communities. We are currently working with the Métis nation to develop a Métis

nation-specific approach that will be responsive to the needs of the Métis as it will be informed by the Métis perspective and experience.

The first nations mental wellness continuum framework was similarly developed to specifically address the needs of first nations communities.

Budget 2019 also committed \$1.2 billion toward Jordan's principle. I was happy to join the Minister of Indigenous Services, along with several other Winnipeg members of Parliament last week, to speak about this investment and our government's ongoing commitment to the full implementation of Jordan's principle.

Through Jordan's principle, first nations children are able to receive the mental health care and treatment they require. This includes land-based activities, suicide intervention and prevention, counselling services, youth engagement specialists and traditional healing methods.

Advancing efforts toward suicide prevention, better treatment and recovery are important for Canada. We recognize the importance of comprehensive and culturally appropriate approaches with multiple partners to address the issue of suicide in Canada.

Moving forward, the government will continue to work closely with partners and stakeholders and be responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of people and communities most affected by suicide. We will continue to work together to build a Canada where we have a better understanding of suicide and its prevention, where everyone has access to the help they need and where all Canadians live with dignity and hope.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour always to rise in this chamber and represent my constituents. On this occasion, it is no exception.

Today I rise to support the motion of a New Democratic colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, which would establish a national framework to combat suicide. I want to assure my colleague that I read the motion line by line. I have no contention with the substance of the motion, although the complexity of the same is significant.

At committee, our colleagues could hash out how the execution of this would take into consideration the collaboration with provinces, our many first nations, the Department of National Defence, etc. In fact, it would be my contention that the issues of suicide and mental health are of such significant concern that a special committee should be considered.

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Only on one other occasion did I use an opportunity in the chamber to relay a personal experience, referring more to the spirit of the bill than the details. I do the same today, as I am convinced that my brief intervention will add significantly to this debate. I do this also because of the overwhelming response I and my family have received from across the country when people have heard me speak out regarding my daughter's suicide and mental health.

On August 12, 2017, my wife Almut and I had just finished having an enjoyable time with my son Lucian, his wife and our grandchildren at his in-laws' cottage a few hours from Thunder Bay. We were boarding a flight from Thunder Bay to Toronto so we could return home to Ancaster. As we were making our way to the gate, I felt my phone vibrate and saw that my eldest son, Christopher, had sent a text to my phone saying that an urgent message had been posted, requesting to have me or my wife, the parents of Lara Sweet, call them immediately. Of course, this seemed bizarre, but any parent would agree that a message of this nature would immediately raise one's anxiety to a very serious level. Since we were at the time just boarding our flight, I asked my son to please call the person and press him or her for information so when we landed in Toronto, we could help Lara as she was living in Oshawa.

We had been through a lot with Lara over the years. We had many great and positive family times watching Lara become a leader in training, an aspiring camp counsellor and a total annoyance to her four brothers. However, Lara had a life-long battle with mental health. She was diagnosed early with profound ADHD and we walked with her through many issues over the years with treatment, counselling, acting out, being arrested by police, searching for her at night, on the streets and visiting her in jail. All this is to that say we were used to responding to urgent and pressing situations with Lara. Our love never diminished one bit through it all.

I did not expect to hear from Chris until we landed in Toronto. I told my wife that we would get an update when we arrived at Billy Bishop airport. To my surprise, while we were still in Thunder Bay, taxiing out to the runway, my phone vibrated again. My son, in a text, informed me that the person who was the author of the Facebook post explained that she was a neighbour of Lara's, that the police were at the townhouse where Lara was renting a room and that Lara had passed away. I was horrified. It was hard to contain the immediate rush of grief, but I knew if I told my wife this information, particularly because I had not had a chance to verify the information as being true, it would be the most difficult two hours of her life before we landed in Toronto. Consequently, I decided to restrain myself, do my best to act normal and call immediately the Durham Regional Police when we landed. That is exactly what I did.

I cannot say to this day how I contained myself; I cannot remember.

The officers were still on the scene. The dispatcher was kind enough to transfer my call to the first officer on the scene who was thorough to ascertain I was who I said I was. He then informed me that Lara was indeed dead and all the evidence pointed to the fact that she had taken her own life, although it would not be conclusive until the coroner's report was complete. Although he told me it would need to be seized as evidence, she had left a note, indicating that she felt she had let people down, that she had relapsed on drugs again and needed to say good-bye.

There have been a lot of difficult things I have had to tell my wife, Lara's mother, but I do not remember anything more difficult than explaining to Almut that Lara was gone. Lara was only 24 years old, bright, caring, with lots of opportunity. Many people wished her well and were willing to do all they could to see her successful. Now we had to face the fact and grasp the surreal reality that we would never see her on this earth again.

● (1610)

Having to go and clean out our child's rented room, notifying all who loved her—and most reacted with overwhelming emotion, so we needed to comfort them—planning our own daughter's funeral, finding the right photos and dress for the casket, are all so disorienting, and the list goes on. The numbness is almost impossible to describe.

At every call that needs to be made—and there are many—one hesitates, wondering what the challenges will be on a particular call. If the call is to the police or the coroner, there is a wait for the detective or coroner's assistant to call back, and most of the time the parent is so immersed in other arrangements that they miss the call. The same goes with all the other many calls and duties. You know you are running on empty, but you just have to keep going.

Fortunately, among all the pain, sorrow and grief, there are amazing events that people of faith call redemptive moments. Family and community come together. We have a large family and a great church family, and all were there to comfort us and help us work through the journey of grief and loss. In Lara's case, there were hundreds of young people who showed up for the visitation before the funeral.

Even though Lara struggled with her own mental health and wellness, she continued on in her Christian commitment and had touched very many lives with her love and compassion. In fact, there is a Facebook page to this day with memories of Lara.

It took months to receive the coroner's report so we could have an idea of what had happened to Lara and confirm it. It was over four months before we could pick up her personal effects, her phone with its pictures from our last times together and the note she left us months before.

People question themselves over and over, even though they know it is not healthy. Nor is there anything they can do now that would change anything by asking, "Did I miss a subtle cry for help that she was trying to make? Did we reach out to her enough? Was I firm enough? Was I strong enough? Was I soft enough with my communication with her? Is there something we could have done early on in her life that would have led her down a more appropriate path, a healthier path? How much mental anguish did she go through on the way to making the decision to give herself a lethal overdose? Did she suffer?"

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Then even months and years later, when thoughts are not even remotely in the space of a lost child, a flower, a song, a colour, a word will trigger what my wife calls a “grief bomb”, and the pain is just as real as if it were that day when the loss happened.

I share this painful and personal story to shed light on the importance of the initiative that the member from Timmins—James Bay is asking the House to consider, approve and undertake. Four thousand times a year someone takes their life in this country. It is true that it is not always someone's child or a youth or young adult, but all too often it is.

I wanted my colleagues to know that their important and thoughtful vote to move this motion to a committee for study could eventually mean that the pain our family and thousands of other families endured could be significantly reduced. A national strategy could bring together all those individuals and organizations that are already doing great work on the front lines to address the mental health and suicide crisis, and bring them together to create synergies and best practices so that so many more people who are struggling could be helped.

I thank the House for the opportunity to share. I ask all hon. members to support this important motion so that we can move forward and help who are in desperate need.

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the member again for sharing his story. It is obviously not an easy one. I think there are many of us here in the House who either know someone or who have experienced it within their lives, and I can sympathize with that. I have had an uncle, a cousin, a cousin's husband, a cousin's child commit suicide, so I really appreciate the tone in the House and the stories that are being shared and the fact that everyone here seems to be on the same page about the need to do something.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I, too, want to express my deep gratitude for the tone in this room. This is a very powerful and very sad discussion to have.

It is a privilege for me to speak to Motion No. 174, which talks about suicide prevention.

We are talking about something that is often very hard for people to talk about, so I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the loved ones living with the reality of suicide, especially in the context of the speech before mine.

The actuality of life when someone we love dies by suicide is simply unimaginable. I want to acknowledge that some communities in our country face higher rates of suicide, including indigenous, LGBTQ2 and military and veterans communities, just to name a few.

In February of this year, a very young man in my family was successful in his suicide attempt. It has been devastating for our community of just over 300 people, our family, and most of all, those who loved him the very most, his parents, sister, uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents.

Suicide shakes the very foundation of the people it impacts. The questioning of how and why is overwhelming. It is something that

most people are unsure how to address. I have heard stories of the loved ones of those who have died by suicide being completely isolated, because people do not know how to speak to that issue, speak to that pain, and therefore, too often, they avoid them. What do we say to people who have lost someone they loved by their own hand?

I have watched this struggle in my loved one's father. The words seem to be blocked at his lips. We know that words have power, and saying them aloud makes the reality that much more real. How does one carry this pain? How does one help? Who does one call? This is why we need a national suicide action plan to help Canadians, a comprehensive plan that would prevent suicide and provide support when suicide happens.

Each month, on average, the Canadian Armed Forces loses one serving member to death by suicide. As a member who represents a military base in my riding, I think it is important that the members of the House hear this. It is an epidemic that continues, despite some positive steps taken to address mental health issues in the forces.

When Bill C-77 passed through the House late last year, I was disappointed that it did not remove subsection 98(c) from the National Defence Act. This subsection makes self-harm a disciplinary offence under the military code of conduct. It concerns me deeply that members of our military could be seriously considering suicide but feel unable to disclose it or ask for help because they could be disciplined. What a way to come forward and tell this horrific truth about oneself. When people are experiencing a state that leads them to thoughts of self-harm, there must be a safe way for them to come forward.

My friend, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, proposed an amendment to remove subsection 98(c) from the National Defence Act in committee. Unfortunately, it was defeated, and the amendment was defeated on so-called procedural grounds. It has been reintroduced in the House in Bill C-426. Based on the feeling in the House, I really hope that this bill receives unanimous consent at all stages when it comes to this place.

When we speak to this issue within the context of Motion No. 174, we see the need for it to be addressed. We do not want any Canadians in this country to feel that they cannot come forward to get the help they so desperately need. The Canadian Armed Forces deserve to have our support. The mere existence of subsection 98(c) continues to be a barrier for Canadian Forces members seeking the mental health assistance they need, and the House has only one more opportunity to fix this. I would love it to be in this Parliament.

Today we are debating Motion No. 174, which was tabled in this place by the member for Timmins—James Bay. I want to thank him for his tireless work and advocacy on this issue and for his dedication in bringing this forward. I am relieved to hear that the government will be supporting it.

I also thank the member because this motion speaks to the isolation I mentioned earlier. When people are successful in their suicide, or when their attempt is unsuccessful, everyone is impacted, and it is often the isolation that is the hardest part to carry. People are unsure of what to say, terrified to touch the pain of that choice, regardless of the result.

• (1620)

This outlines exactly why it is so important to have a national suicide prevention action plan. This issue of suicide must be addressed directly and holistically. The more isolation and silence there is around suicide, the more people will hide their thoughts and not ask for the help they need.

It is imperative that Canada not leave any community behind. We must have a framework, because there are many small and isolated communities, like the ones I represent, that have limited access to services. How do we reach out in a safe way? We all know that when small communities face successful suicides, it can often become an epidemic.

The young man that I spoke of earlier, my relative, is the second in less than a year and a half in our small community of just under 300 people. The impact on that community has been profound, and the fear that another child is going to follow those steps has been something we all watch.

When I think about the Facebook posts that we have seen from some of our youth who are actively questioning the validity of being here, I am reminded again of how important it is as a country that we remember that those children, those people, are so important and that we must address their isolation. We can only do that by having a framework that goes across this country, so that we can work collaboratively.

No one wants to live through this. I think of my brother, who has a serious mental health issue. I think of how strong he has been in his life to face the multiple challenges and how hard it can be when he is put in situations where people do not understand that invisible mental health issue that he lives with every single day. It worries me when people do not understand that and treat him in ways that are profoundly disrespectful.

All of us know what it is to love someone and often feel as though we are fighting for their very existence. I am really happy that we are here to talk about this, to talk about having a system in place to address that.

Recently, we have been doing a study at the Veterans Affairs committee. We are looking at the impact on veterans from the use of mefloquine, which is a medication used to prevent or treat malaria. Sadly, mefloquine has been identified as a medication that can poison the brain. There are many veterans across this country who do not know that they may have the impacts of mefloquine poisoning and that their symptoms may relate directly to that. Some veterans have died by suicide, and there are questions as to whether it was due in part to the undiagnosed impacts of the use of mefloquine. This also must be addressed. That is why this is so important.

I want to acknowledge that I have not touched on every vulnerable community across this country that faces a higher suicide rate. Those

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stories need to be heard, and I hope to see all members in the House support this motion so that this work can be done. I am very glad to hear that so many here will support it, but we need to make sure that everyone does.

Currently, Canada does have a federal framework for suicide prevention, but this framework does not provide funding, goals, timelines and activities that would reduce suicide and does not assign responsibility to jurisdictions. We know that if responsibility is not given, if the jurisdiction is not given, if goals and resources are not given, the work simply does not get done.

I have to say how honoured I am to be in this place when we are discussing one of the most difficult conversations. We are all facing the challenges, being brave to make noise where often there is silence. I encourage all of us and all Canadians to remember to reach out to those people, even when it is hard and uncomfortable. Sometimes we need to stand with people where they are uncomfortable. We have to admit that we are also uncomfortable, but we have to let them know that we are with them and that we support them.

I think this bill will take those steps and I am really thankful that we are going to support it and see change happen in this country.

• (1625)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about the government's support for Motion No. 174, introduced by the member for Timmins—James Bay. Put simply, there are few things more devastating to a family and community than suicide, as we have heard today from other hon. members and yourself, Madam Speaker.

It affects Canadians from all walks of life and in all corners of our land. Every single day, it takes 11 of them from us. That is about 4,000 Canadians lost to suicide every year: our mums and dads, sons and daughters, friends, neighbours, teachers and caregivers. We also know that all too often stigma prevents people from seeking or offering help. At the most difficult moment in their lives, people need help and hope. We can and must do better, which is why addressing mental health and suicide are among our government's top priorities.

I know how important this motion is to people who have been working for years to raise awareness, like Michele Sparling, whose "Shine Out! Shout Out!" hockey tournament supports programming for youth mental health and suicide prevention, and Brian Hansell, who started his convoplate initiative in memory of his son Paul after Paul died by suicide while a student at Brock. I cannot speak this afternoon without remembering my friend, David Sheridan, who died by suicide, and his family's courage in speaking out.

I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

They know middle-aged men are at risk, yet no one talks about it.

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Today, I stand before you to reaffirm our commitment to addressing this challenge head-on. I would also like to shed some light on the many initiatives, investments and partnerships we are currently undertaking, including the federal framework for suicide prevention, which will align with Motion No. 174. This is one issue where I can confidently state that I know everyone in this House shares the same goal of saving lives. Led by a Prime Minister who has courageously shared his own family's experience with mental illness, our government is taking bold and unprecedented action to bring mental health to the forefront.

Two years ago, our government made the largest investment in Canadian history in mental health and addiction services, a groundbreaking \$5 billion. This funding is going to those who need it most, including youth, early interventions and culturally appropriate services for indigenous peoples.

In 2016, we released the federal framework for suicide prevention, with the goal of raising awareness, fighting stigma and saving lives. Its purpose is to better coordinate our government's efforts to prevent suicide, while complementing and supporting the important work being done by others.

What does this really look like? It is connecting people to resources like a pan-Canadian suicide prevention service that offers crisis support by calling, texting or chatting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English and French. Budget 2019 is supporting this crucial service by investing \$25 million over five years.

The impact of suicide is not spread equally across our nation. Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected, including many where the suicide rate, heartbreakingly, is many times the national average. We know that colonization and cultural breakdown have had a devastating impact on these communities, with their lingering effects still claiming lives. In the spirit of reconciliation, our government is working closely with first nations and the Inuit to prevent suicide and save lives. We are investing more than \$425 million each year in community programming to address the mental wellness needs of first nations and Inuit communities. These investments are used to provide essential services to address ongoing crises, improve on-the-land activities and enhance culturally appropriate substance use treatment.

Another group all too often affected by suicide are those who have already made so many sacrifices for us: members of the armed forces and veterans. That is why we have a plan to address it with the Canadian Armed Forces—Veterans Affairs Canada joint suicide prevention strategy, released in 2017.

Public safety officers and first responders have some of the highest rates of suicide in the country. Our public safety officers work incredibly hard to keep us safe, and their work can take a toll on their mental health. That is why I am proud to see our government introduce "Supporting Canada's Public Safety Personnel: An Action Plan on Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries". Our government is committed to providing national leadership to support the mental health of public safety personnel by providing coordination, facilitating collaboration, sharing best practices and funding cutting-edge research.

● (1630)

We need to be informed by the voices of people with lived experience, like those we have heard today, and we will continue to work to prevent suicide. This may be a long, difficult path, but it is one we are committed to walking, hand in hand with indigenous organizations, other governments, community groups and people most affected by suicide.

Together, we can ensure that all Canadians get the help they need. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can save lives.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to advise the member that there was nothing to be sorry about. This is a very emotional issue that touches many of us personally and within our communities. I really appreciate the discussions being had here today.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Confederation.

● (1635)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 174 brought forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay. The motion suggests that the government establish a national suicide prevention action plan with numerous provisions, provisions such as setting up culturally appropriate community-based suicide prevention programs and conducting analyses on a long list of subjects relating to suicide. The motion also includes an annual reporting requirement to Parliament of implementation and progress.

Suicide is a word that has carried with it so much shame and stigma throughout human history. It is a topic we tend not to discuss, acknowledge or deal with. It claims more lives annually than other more openly discussed issues, such as motor vehicle collisions, homicides or industrial accidents. Its relative absence from our common vocabulary speaks volumes.

How many obituaries fail to acknowledge suicide as the cause of death? How many suicides get reported in the media? Not many, perhaps because it is our fear of it, our inability to fully comprehend it. People who die by suicide or attempt suicide usually feel overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless, desperate and alone. In more recent times, we as a society have opened up the discussion mental health, but we do have a long way to go.

Just a few weeks ago, my home town of Calgary was rocked by a suicide, a suicide that was reported by media outlets due to the shock and sadness stemming from it. It was the suicide of a nine-year-old girl. Our community was stunned. How does a nine-year-old girl come to this decision? It is something we just cannot imagine.

When this young girl, Amal Alshteiwi, took her life, we all wanted answers. Why? What would bring her to this point? Many of us believed such a course of action was not even within the realm of a nine-year-old girl's thinking. It is something parents of young children want to believe is not even possible.

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It turns out her story is not a new one. She was bullied in school, bullied to the breaking point. As a Syrian refugee, Amal, I suspect, already faced a lifetime of adversity just to be able to go to school. It should have gotten better coming to Canada, not worse. There are media reports that her bullying went unnoticed by teachers, not because it was done in dark corners but because it was done in her native language out in the open. This highlights just another complexity in dealing with such situations.

Amal's name translates into "hope". I know this motion has been brought forward to Parliament in that spirit of hope. I know the member for Timmins—James Bay is hoping to address the rampant rates of suicide among the indigenous communities in his riding and across Canada. Sadly, youth suicide is a large problem within these communities, within so many communities. I hope, we hope that we can make progress in addressing the root causes of suicide. Once identified, we need to address the problems to reduce our suicide rates in Canada.

As I read through the motion, I find, and I suspect most others would find, little to disagree with. Suicide is a big problem. We do not talk about it, so people do not realize how big the problem really is.

I recall talking to a police officer in Edmonton when I was at the Alberta legislature. He told me that there was an average of one jumper off the high-level bridge in Edmonton per week. He said that it was a place for people in Edmonton to go when they were finally ready to kill themselves. One per week, never reported, of course, in the media. The high numbers were a shock to me, and I am sure would be a shock to many of us here. The city has since built a suicide barrier on the bridge, but more needs to be done than building the infrastructure.

• (1640)

Every day in Canada, 10 people die by suicide and 200 others will attempt to take their lives. If that many people a day died in plane crashes, Canadians would be up in arms demanding government take more action. However, when 10 people die by suicide every day in Canada, when their cause of death is often unmentioned, when their cause of death is not up for discussion, then it is destined to continue.

Suicide is one of the top 10 causes of death in Canada, and much of it is preventable. Men are at a much higher risk, well, sort of. Men are three times more likely than women to die by suicide. However, women are three times more likely to attempt suicide.

No community is immune to suicide. From the most remote communities in Canada to the busiest downtown street, suicide knows no bounds. The causes are similar, as much as they are different. However, the resources to address mental health issues vary widely from our biggest cities to our smallest communities, from one province to another, from one city to another. Like much of our national health care system, outcomes will vary greatly depending on where one lives. That is just not right.

Throughout Canada, there are already calls for more mental health funding, and this motion repeats that call. Throughout Canada, there are already calls for better, more culturally appropriate education and prevention programs, and this motion repeats that call. I could go on,

but my point is that this motion does not call for anything we have not already heard before.

I do plan to support this motion, because I do not oppose any of its calls to action, calls often heard before. We certainly need to do something more than what we are doing now.

I am sure we all know of someone who committed suicide. Many just do not talk about it. We all know someone who tried to commit suicide. We just do not talk about it. We all know that more needs to be done to prevent and treat suicide. We just do not talk about it. This has to change, and that is why I am very happy that we are discussing this here today.

I want those who need help to reach out for it, to demand it. I especially want kids to get the help they need. The Kids Help Phone line is a fantastic resource for young people needing to talk to someone: 1-800-668-6868. All parents should post this number conveniently in their house and speak to their children about it. It could make a world of difference later.

Again, I will be supporting this motion. Any time we can discuss and support mental health issues and initiatives, any time there are efforts to raise awareness and remove the stigma surrounding mental health issues, I truly believe we are helping those in need. We just need to do more than talk. We need action.

I also want to express my sincere condolences to the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for his great loss.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise in this incredible chamber. For me, today is a day of great joy and hope as I see how we have come together. I see it as very telling. In the very first emergency debate this Parliament held, parliamentarians from every region of the country came together to discuss the horrific dark night of the Attawapiskat youth suicide crisis.

It was the first act of this Parliament, but we have unfinished business. It is so powerful that we are here today, to come full circle, to say that the rates of death of people in our country from hopelessness from mental illness is unacceptable.

What we have learned today is that suicide does not respect political boundaries. It does not respect the boundaries of faith. It does not live in urban or rural areas. It is not for rich or for poor. It affects every community. Every death is like a psychic emotional shockwave that tears families and communities apart. It leaves the bereaved wondering what they could have done.

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Outside this building, activists, mental health workers and people are standing and saying that there is reason for hope. It is our obligation, as legislators, to join them in ensuring we have a framework. We know frameworks and action plans work. We can look to Quebec for this. Quebec is a world model. Its youth suicide rate has dropped by 50%. Imagine what that would mean in the rest of the country. ITK now has a suicide plan? We should have a national suicide plan. We are bringing in a suicide plan to respond to the military, which is we need, but we need one for everyone.

Earlier this winter, when I was in Thunder Bay, I received a call at 11 o'clock at night to go to a hotel. Sol Mamakwa, the provincial member, asked if I would go with him. There had been a death of a 14-year-old girl. I did not know the community, but he asked if I could go and pay my respects. We went to the third floor of the hotel. We gave our condolences, starting with the classmates, then the neighbours, the third cousins, the second cousins and down to family members. We then walked into that room at the moment people were talking about taking that little girl's body home from the hospital. When we tried to give our condolences, the only thing they could say was they had lost so many.

How is it possible that a country with as many resources, hope and skill as Canada can leave its young to die? As parliamentarians, we need to respond to that question. We are not just there to say sorry for people's losses. We are there to say that their child, or husband or cousin was loved, but just were not sure he or she was loved. We can love people as a society and individuals, but as a nation, we have the obligation to put in place the tools to ensure that when people are hopeless and in their darkest hour that there will be support for them if they make that call. If they are looking for those resources, they will be there. As well, as parliamentarians, we need to ensure we are tracking the hot spots and danger points so we can start to move in and put the resources on the ground.

We learned in Attawapiskat, Neskantaga and in so many other communities that it is not good enough to wait until the crisis hits. Proactive engagement and working with communities across the country gives people a sense that their lives have meaning and dignity and that they will not take that dark path. This is the opportunity before Parliament.

For all the smut and corruption we debate on a daily basis, to have begun this Parliament talking about this issue and ended it trying to make a change, we can go home and say that for all the other things we have failed on, we all came together on this one. It is going to make a difference.

•(1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 8, 2019, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

•(1650)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here to speak to my deep distress over the plight of wild salmon on the coast of British Columbia. I hope everyone has had the chance to experience the amazing journey salmon make when returning to their home habitats. It is awe inspiring to see their dedication and strength as they return to spawn.

On the coast I live on, the wild salmon are the backbone of our region. They are what we eat, the mainstay of our economy and what we live to protect. Sadly, for many years, the salmon have been ignored. The much-needed restoration of streams and rivers has been completely ignored. The harm done to wild salmon by the lack of an active strategy to restore and monitor was in the hands of both Conservative and Liberal governments, and look where we are today.

Often I have seen that rural and remote communities, like the ones I have the honour of representing, are ignored. How long have indigenous communities, public and sports fisheries, commercial fisheries and environmental groups come to the door of successive governments warning them that the wild salmon are at risk? The restoration needs to happen now, not later, and it is later now. It should have happened many years ago.

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I can tell this House that in my riding of North Island—Powell River, the desire to protect wild salmon is high. I hear from all sectors, and their concerns are very similar. In my riding, there is simply not enough staff working on the ground from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The ones who are there are working hard, but with such a large and diverse region, with so many communities, we simply need more staff in the area. We need more to participate in what is happening in our region and in our communities. We need them to bring that information back to Ottawa so that they know here what is happening in our communities so that local knowledge is part of the decision-making process.

Several weeks ago, I had the honour of doing a tour at a local hatchery, one of several in my riding, with the Powell River Salmon Society. This amazing group has worked hard with its small staff, dedicated board of directors and numerous volunteers to do what it can to support the salmon. With no increase in funding in over 35 years, it is amazing what the group has been able to do.

My communities are ready to do all they can to support wild salmon. What we need is a bold plan, one that focuses on creating a safe place for wild salmon to thrive, and it must be a community-based coastal plan, not one from Ottawa.

For too long, successive governments have forgotten the realities of small, rural and remote communities. A bold plan is what I am here to look for and what should have been done over 10 years ago. It was not, and now my communities are having to pay the price of successive governments' inaction.

I am hoping to hear today what the plan is for the region I represent, what effort will be put into protecting the habitat for salmon and what will be done to support the many communities and businesses that rely on salmon. It is so important to my riding, and I hope that we get a good answer for those folks today.

• (1655)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I suspect that the member of the New Democratic Party has not really gone through the many different initiatives the government has undertaken with respect to our salmon. Also, a person does not have to be from British Columbia to be passionate about this particular issue.

The member made reference to the idea of taking a local approach. The Government of Canada agrees with that approach of looking toward our communities and working with other stakeholders.

Let me give a sense of some of the things that are happening.

In partnership with the provincial government, we created the British Columbia salmon restoration and innovation fund, to which the government will contribute \$100 million over five years. This goes along with provincial funding of over \$42 million. We are also proposing \$5 million in funding to the Pacific salmon endowment fund.

We have also hired 29 new scientists in the Pacific region. Moreover, in 2019-20, we will be investing \$107.4 million over five years, as well as \$17.6 million per year ongoing to support the stock

assessment and rebuilding provisions in the new Fisheries Act, which will cover priority Pacific salmon stocks.

We have also taken steps to support conservation and promote rebuilding through the salmonid enhancement program and the coastal restoration fund, with investments totalling \$18 million. This will support 13 habitat restoration projects in B.C. alone.

We are investing \$1.3 million toward implementing the Pacific salmon treaty. This funding will be used for completing existing stock assessments and catch monitoring. We have also made key investments to mark the international year of the salmon and have introduced our new wild salmon policy implementation plan, lasting from 2018 to 2022, which will ensure the recovery of the species.

To give the false impression that this government is comparable in any way to the Conservative Party does a disservice to our constituents and to Canadians. The government has been very proactive in recognizing how important our salmon industry is to our country.

We also recognize the things that take place during the salmon run. I have never witnessed it first-hand, but I have had the opportunity to see it through documentaries and I have heard individuals talk about it. Recognizing the importance of the salmon run goes beyond the member opposite and the New Democratic Party.

I believe the vast majority of Canadians want the government to take action on this, as it is an important file to all Canadians. That is exactly what the government has been doing. Our ministers and the parliamentary secretary have been working hand in hand with the civil service, the province and other stakeholders to address this very serious issue.

It is more than just talk as well. It is about tens of millions of dollars. It is about engaging various stakeholders in order to resolve this issue.

The government of Canada is listening and is working with community leaders and other stakeholders to ensure the protection of our salmon run, and I think that is a good thing.

• (1700)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am sad to hear that the member has never seen the salmon run in person. However, I will remind him that the people in my riding see the salmon run every year, and when it does not happen, it is absolutely devastating. I also want to remind the member that the issue is one of successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

As for what we are doing today, I am happy to see the resources coming, but they are too late. The communities in my riding are paying the price for the lack of action from the current government, the previous government and the one before that.

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When people in my riding are hurting, it is my job to stand here to ensure that everyone hears about it. These are local, small, rural communities that will be punished severely by the lack of government action.

I want to see a bold new plan. This is a first step and I am proud and happy that it is happening, but it needs to be done well. The consultations never happened in my riding. The government never talked to the people in my area. We would love to see more staff there to do that work.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is simply wrong. She does have a responsibility to communicate the reality of what is actually taking place. Now she is saying that the issue arose previously, or in other words with the Conservatives and what has taken place in the last 20 years, less the most recent three years.

I am talking about what this government, the Prime Minister, the minister and his parliamentary secretary have been doing in the last three years, in the time since the Prime Minister has been responsible for governing the nation and dealing with important issues, and the

salmon run is important to this government. That is the reason we have invested tens of millions of dollars and that is why we are working co-operatively with the various stakeholders and others: to ensure that we are doing whatever we can.

This means investing time, energy and money in working with the community. I believe this will pay off, and that is what the member should be conveying to her constituents.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saskatoon West is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:03 p.m.)

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