



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 034
Monday, November 23, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 23, 2020

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved that Bill C-206, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (qualifying farming fuel), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, our farmers are the backbone of our community and the engine of our economy. They are the hard-working men and women who take to the fields every day in the searing heat and, lately, the snow and freezing temperatures. They make sure we have food on our tables and, literally, the clothes on our backs. Our agriculture industry represents more than 7% of the GDP, and it still bears repeating how important, vital and essential our agriculture community is and its impact on our economy.

Farmers contribute over 2.3 million employment positions, including people who own farms and those who are involved in farming. That is one in eight jobs that is there because of farmers and the great work they do. We are an agriculture dynamo.

We are a leader in many categories. We are number one in the world in maple syrup. We produce 75% of the world's maple syrup, so let us hear it for maple syrup. We are in the top five in many agricultural productions, such as flax seed, canola, pulses, oats and durum wheat.

During the pandemic, and in fact, at any time in recent history, Canadians have not had to worry about food supply. Canadians have some of the least expensive, highest quality and safest food in the entire world, and that is because of our terrific farmers and agri-food workers.

During the pandemic, farmers kept going. As we all battled the pandemic, they kept making sure that their fields were planted and their animals were fed, so we could be fed.

As we start contemplating what a stronger Canada looks like going forward, one of the questions we will no doubt think about is

self-sufficiency. One thing I can tell the House about the future is that, as long as we take care of farmers, we will always be able to feed ourselves here in Canada.

Unfortunately, farmers have had difficult times in the recent years. Whether it was due to difficult weather conditions, global trade wars or pricing disputes, there have been numerous challenges. This includes, unfortunately, the latest free trade agreement with the United States of America, CUSMA, where there was a watering down or a reduction of the market share for many of our farmers, which is disappointing.

Different governments have responded to the pandemic differently in how they have supported the agriculture community. Our neighbours to the south have literally given billions of dollars to farmers to help them bridge to a better day and get the farms through this. Unfortunately, here in Canada, our farmers have not had the same benefit. Instead, our farmers are getting recycled funding announcements and endless platitudes. Farmers deserve better.

Even in our domestic marketplace, farmers are facing challenges. Multi-million dollar grocery stores are setting record profits. However, they are doing it, at least in part, on the backs of Canadian farmers. We need to give Canadian farmers a break.

Farmers are not asking for a handout. In fact, they are not even asking for a hand-up. They just want a level playing field because they know, as I know, that our farmers are the best in the world. Where they have an opportunity, they will be successful and they will win.

In 2008, before the government even contemplated a federal carbon tax, in British Columbia the government put in place a carbon tax. In fact, many commentators have highlighted the fact that our current carbon tax is built on the chassis of the British Columbia carbon tax. However, there are notable differences, one of which is that before that British Columbia carbon tax was ever put in place, its government contemplated deeply the effect it would have on agriculture.

Private Members' Business

The result was more fulsome exemptions for Canadian farmers and fairer treatment for B.C. farmers. They have a full exemption on all farm fuels, including natural gas and propane, which is exactly what my private member's bill calls for. As well, in British Columbia, most commentators have said this exemption actually strengthens the carbon tax and helps farmers. Why would we not do this federally?

In a world where much of our competition is not subject to pollution taxing, the carbon tax is an unfair barrier for our farmers. The government has hummed and hawed, saying, "Maybe it costs this much, or maybe it costs that much."

We do have numbers on the cost of the carbon tax, but they are not from the federal government, unfortunately. They come from producers, such as the Saskatchewan producers, who calculated that an unbelievable 8% of net income will go to the carbon tax for Saskatchewan producers.

In 2022, because of set escalators for everyone out there, there will be an automatic increase without parliamentary consent to the tax. It is a nefarious regime, no doubt. By 2022, because of those escalators, that tax will actually go to 12%. That means, to put it in the language of my neighbours, that one in ten cows that farmers raise would go to pay the carbon tax, one in ten pigs would go to pay the carbon tax and one in ten tonnes of grain would go to pay the carbon tax.

Many farmers have sent my office their bills. These are exorbitant bills, particularly during last year's harvest when the grain was wet and they had to spend extra time and money drying it. I have numerous invoices that show that the carbon tax was \$10,000 to \$20,000.

To add insult to injury, the government decided to charge HST on the carbon tax. Come on. What we are seeing is that this tax is not only making our producers less competitive, it is also reducing their margins.

Although the government will not admit it, the carbon tax is not neutral for farmers. The claim that the carbon tax is neutral is in dispute, but what is not in dispute is that, for farmers, as a particular sector, it is not revenue neutral. Farmers' prices are not set by themselves, but rather by governments and international markets. They cannot just push that cost along. It is coming directly out of the pockets of our farmers, and that is money they could be using to reinvest in their farms, invest in clean technologies and help support their families.

I come from a small town called Orono, Ontario. I think it is one of the prettiest towns in Canada. In this town, our economy is based on farming. Farmers go out and buy food at the local restaurants. They go to the feed store and buy feed for their stock. They go to the tractor dealership and buy tractors. There are countless jobs that are created by the farmers, and when we take this money out of rural Canada, we take this money out of Canadians' hands. Rural Canada does not need more taxes. What we need is more support.

The Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act currently includes a partial exemption on fossil fuels for farmers. It exempts diesel and gasoline. For whatever reason, and I still have not been given a good explanation of why this is, it does not exempt natural gas and

propane. However, natural gas and propane, by nearly every environmentalist's account, are actually cleaner fuels.

I do not understand why we would not exempt cleaner fuels but exempt dirtier fuels. It does not make sense. This impacts all of the agricultural sector, but it has specific impacts on grain farmers, who have to dry their crops with natural gas and propane. There is nothing that our farmers would rather than to not have to do that, or to find an alternative way of doing it using renewable energy, but the reality is that that does not exist right now.

Now, if we could pause, give the farmers a break from the carbon tax and let them reinvest that money into innovation and clean technology, maybe that would occur. Maybe the free market could come up with some great ideas that could clean our environment, but as of now, the carbon tax is a continuing burden on farmers. It is slowing innovation and making our environment dirtier.

As the member of Parliament for Northumberland—Peterborough South, I have the great pleasure of representing some of the best farmers of all of Canada. I have had numerous conversations with our farmers, and whether we are at the back of a tailgate, out in the fields or in the boardroom, they tell me over and over that they spend more time in the environment than anyone. They tell me that of course they want a clean environment, of course they recognize that climate change is real and they want to fight climate change, but they do not want to do it by being taxed.

• (1110)

What we want to do is to come up with innovation: clean tech to have us go forward. Examples of that are already happening. Farmers are among the leading environmentalists in Canada. They have advanced technologies such as no-till farming and precision farming.

One thing that I have gotten to know about from talking with some of our farmers is precision farming. It seems like it is out of the *Jetsons*, for people my age. It actually uses satellites. The satellites beam down GPS coordinates so that every inch of productive farm area is used and so that no extra drop of gasoline, diesel, natural gas or propane is used. This reduces emissions. The farmers are working hard to be environmental stewards for us.

The reality is that the grain growers have done analysis based on Statistics Canada's numbers. They emit about 66 megatonnes of carbon dioxide, which is not good. However, on the other side of equation are the crops they plant: their carbon sinks. These actually absorb over 100 megatonnes of carbon dioxide. Farmers are already carbon-neutral, 20 years ahead of the government's schedule. However, farmers, unlike nearly every other industry, are not given credit for this. They are not given an offset for the great work they do for the environment. We are just asking that we allow farmers the same playing field as other industries.

Why would we not get support for this private member's bill? In B.C. the NDP have done the same. The province strengthened its carbon tax. From an environmental perspective, I give it a check. It will help farmers be more competitive. There is a check. It will help our economy be stronger. There is a check. I do not see any xes.

I know that this cannot be true and I am hoping it is not true, but the only reason to oppose this bill would be pure politics. I know that the members on the other side want to support this. Whether they are from the Bloc Québécois, the NDP or the Liberal Party, members want to go back to farmers to tell them they are proud of having voted for a bill today that will make their lives a little bit easier and make things a little less difficult for them. We have to get beyond this.

I was in the House about two weeks ago, proudly speaking for small business owners and asking for a simple pause of audits during the pandemic. We were opposed. Only one party voted against us. I think we have had great amendments for a number of bills that were being legislated, but every time they are opposed, opposed, opposed.

I am calling upon my great friends across the aisle to do what is right for their constituents. Put down your sabres, extend your hands and work with our government-in-waiting to develop constructive solutions for Canadians. We want to work with our colleagues. We want to make life better for Canadians. Please join us.

• (1115)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I respect the member's remarks because I do not think there was very much exaggeration, except I might question where the best farmers come from. He might have been a little offside there.

The exemptions on diesel and gas are fairly easy to propose, because it is easy to mark the fuels with a dye. I have not checked into B.C. I am pleased to hear what he said about B.C. and will check into that.

How would the member feel about making this exemption in a way that it could not be abused? I think that is one of the key points. I agree with him 100% on the cost. I have spent a lot of time in western Canada, and I know some farmers have bills for drying grain that are over \$30,000 just for propane and natural gas. That is a cost burden that I recognize.

How could it be done in a way that the exemption would not be abused within the system?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I deeply respect the member across the way for his advocacy for farmers and for Prince

Private Members' Business

Edward Island. My wife's family is from down east, so I recognize and respect his claim that there are great farmers there as well.

British Columbia has already done this. We can use a receipt-based system otherwise. Anyone who has been in a farming community, which I am sure the member across the way would agree with, would know that farmers are among the most honest, hard-working people. I believe that we can come up with a system that farmers will abide by to make sure that we do not extend it to people who do not deserve it. I know farmers, and they will not abuse the system. That is a promise from me.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his speech and his comments.

I would like him to tell us what proportion of greenhouse gas emissions are actually produced by the fuel sector, such as propane and natural gas, in comparison with other sectors.

The Bloc Québécois thinks that we really need to focus our work on transforming western Canada's entire energy sector. What does he think about that and what measure would he suggest to help farmers become greener?

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I had the honour of being in the great province of Quebec to do my French training. I am still working on that, but maybe the next time I am up, I will be speaking in French.

I deeply believe in the free market and private enterprise. I believe that when we give farmers the opportunity, they will invest in green technology. I am sure members have had the same conversations in Quebec with farmers. They are passionate about the environment. They are passionate about climate change. They just want the opportunity to work privately and not have a heavy-handed government mandated on them.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South about a few of the other costs that farmers are dealing with. Farm debt, we have seen, has doubled since 2000. We have seen that the costs of fertilizer, chemicals, machinery, technology and services are taking increasing amounts of farmers' revenues so they are only left with a small portion of them.

Does the member have any thoughts on how we can help farmers with those other costs given how much they are now paying for the inputs?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I have deep respect for the member. I substituted on the agriculture committee and the member always has intelligent and extremely well-prepared remarks.

I would say much the same as I said earlier. Farmers are the most independent, hardest-working people. They are among the hardest working in Canada. All they need is for government to get out of the way: our farmers will make it happen if we reduce the burden on them. The beauty of the free enterprise system is that with freedom and liberty, millions and millions of farmers are making great decisions and producing great products. Quite frankly, they have an amazing track record of delivering on them.

[Translation]

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-206, an act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to extend the exemption for qualifying farming fuel to marketable natural gas and propane.

[English]

The bill before us attempts to alleviate potential costs borne by Canadian farmers. Let us take a closer look at the implications of the bill and what our government has already done to reduce the burden on Canadians as we safeguard the natural environment.

We continue to see the impacts of climate change through extreme weather events, from wildfires in western Canada to the increasingly powerful hurricanes, typhoons and storms that batter communities around the world. It is increasingly not a question of whether an extreme event will happen, but where it will happen.

[Translation]

Our government has made a serious commitment to address this major generational challenge. Canada must play a significant role in this global fight. We need to take immediate action in order to ensure that our children and grandchildren have clean air to breathe and a strong, healthy economy.

My constituents are very concerned about climate change, as am I. In recent months, I have received many emails from them asking me not to abandon the environment during this pandemic and telling me that we need to make the environment a priority. They are absolutely right.

• (1125)

[English]

This is why, in December 2016, Canada's first ministers adopted the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. The pan-Canadian framework is the country's plan to meet our emissions reduction target, grow the economy and build resilience to a changing climate.

[Translation]

The framework is built on the following four pillars: pricing carbon pollution; complementary actions to further reduce emissions across the economy; measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change and build resilience; and actions to accelerate innovation, support clean technology and create jobs.

[English]

Pricing pollution is essential to the framework. A price on pollution reduces pollution at the lowest overall cost to businesses and consumers. A well-designed price on pollution provides an incentive for climate action and clean innovation while protecting business competitiveness. It is efficient and cost-effective because it allows businesses and households to decide for themselves how best to reduce emissions.

We are making sure there is a price on pollution across the country, while also taking steps to maintain affordability of households and ensure Canadian companies can compete and succeed in a competitive global marketplace.

The federal pollution pricing system has two components: a regulatory charge on fossil fuels, and an output-based pricing system for large industrial facilities, which provides a price incentive to reduce emissions and spur innovation.

All direct proceeds from pricing pollution under the federal system are being returned to the jurisdiction in which they were collected. Returning proceeds from pollution pricing helps Canadians make more environmentally sustainable consumption choices, but does not change the incentive to pollute less. Every time a consumer or business makes a purchasing or investment decision, there is a financial incentive to choose greener options, regardless of how the proceeds are rebated or returned.

[Translation]

Our government has made it clear that nobody should be able to pollute for free in Canada. I also want to make it clear that federal pollution pricing is not meant to generate revenue. Its goal is to help everyone understand that polluting has a price and to support cleaner growth and a more sustainable future.

[English]

I repeat, the government is not keeping any direct proceeds from the federal pollution pricing system. In Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Alberta, the Government of Canada is returning the bulk of the proceeds from the federal fuel charge directly to households through climate action incentive payments. Most households have been getting more back in climate action incentive payments than they pay in increased costs due to pollution pricing.

The remaining proceeds from the federal fuel charge are used to provide support to key sectors in the federal backstop provinces including small and medium-sized businesses, municipalities, universities, schools, colleges, hospitals and not-for-profit organizations, as well as indigenous communities.

It is important to note the agriculture sector already receives significant relief under the federal pollution pricing system compared with other sectors of the economy. Most emissions from agriculture are from biological sources and are not covered under the federal pricing system.

The act as it stands provides significant upfront relief to farmers for gasoline and diesel, subject to certain conditions. In particular, all or substantially all of the fuel must be for use in eligible farming activities. Relief from the fuel charge generally applies to the operation of farming equipment and machinery, such as combine harvesters. Only limited emissions from the agriculture sector are covered under the federal pollution pricing system.

In short, this bill needs to be carefully considered to ensure it would not introduce complexity and unintended consequences. As it stands currently, the act's strength is that it is simple and straightforward in targeting a reduction in emissions.

[*Translation*]

Those are important considerations, and Canadians expect us to take them into account as we assess the potential benefits of Bill C-206.

[*English*]

The federal pollution pricing system is about recognizing that pollution has a cost, empowering Canadians and driving innovation. Putting a price on products that are more polluting and returning the bulk of direct proceeds to individuals and families in the jurisdiction of origin enables households to make cleaner and more environmentally sustainable choices.

I would be happy to support C-206 if it is sustainable and if there are no other ways to help the agricultural sector. However, I do believe that if we do make exceptions in certain industries, such as the agricultural industry, then we are really taking a step back and it would be open to other industries to also ask for exemptions.

I do understand that considering the pandemic, a lot of the burden has been on Canadian farmers. They have been affected a lot more than other sectors, not necessarily economically because they have been doing quite well, but a lot of the burden has been on them. Thanks to them, Canadians have been able to have food during this time. That said, I am still not 100% sold on Bill C-206 and I would need to see more. I would wait before I give an official position.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge farmers for their hard work and day in, day out dedication. Every day, from dawn to dusk, these people are out in nature working the fields. If anyone in Quebec and Canada cares about protecting the environment, it is farmers. I take my hat off to them.

My colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South said that we need to reduce the burden on farmers, and I have to say I agree with that in principle. We all want to reduce pollution, but we must always carefully consider the best approach to reducing

Private Members' Business

greenhouse gas emissions. We have two options: the carrot and the stick.

The carrot here is incentives to encourage people to change their behaviour. The stick is using punishment to achieve that goal. Every time we implement one of these measures, I think it is wise to ask ourselves whether it is effective and meaningful. That is not clear in this case.

This proposal would add propane and natural gas to the list of exemptions, since they are essential to drying grains. We all remember the CN strike last fall and the wave of panic that swept through our rural areas.

As this point in time, propane and natural gas are still the most efficient way to dry grain. When we talk about protecting the environment, we also have to think about minimizing the impact of changes on those who are hardest hit by the effects. Farmers are among the first to be affected by climate disruptions. If crops are extremely wet, more fuel is needed to dry the grains. This is not a personal choice that can be easily changed at this time.

Should we be looking for other heat sources that would be equally efficient and that could replace current fuels in the medium and long term? Yes, of course. Biomass is just one example that comes to mind. However, there are significant development and implementation costs to consider.

We have to think about providing support to the agricultural industry to make these changes as soon as possible instead of punishing our grassroots people. The problem is that Liberal polices often put the responsibility on the public and the grassroots. We see very few measures that target big business, the oil industry and the coal-fired electricity sector in western Canada. The Bloc Québécois knows that those are the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, because the numbers prove it.

Of course, that does not mean that we can ignore agricultural pollution, on the contrary. We have to recognize, however, that the use of fossil fuels is not the primary source of agricultural pollution. That would be livestock emissions, the use of fertilizers and a whole lot of other things we need to look at if we want to effectively reduce greenhouse gases.

If we want to meet the Paris Agreement targets, which were clearly endorsed by this government, then we have to tackle the big polluters. So far we have seen only mediocre programs that certainly will not allow us to meet these targets.

Private Members' Business

• (1135)

In Quebec, individual transportation is currently the main source of greenhouse gases. We are fortunate to have hydroelectricity. I cannot say the same for the west. This is not a rebuke. I would like westerners to understand my comments. If we look at Canada as a whole, since 1990 the west has been the primary source of all increases in greenhouse gas emissions, in particular from oil sands operations. Our view is that projects such as the Trans Mountain expansion should be abandoned. That is where we should be hitting harder.

I want to come back to agriculture. There is another reason for the Bloc's support of Bill C-206, and that is obviously the desire to help out the agricultural sector. In addition, Quebec is not affected by this bill because the carbon tax was created by the federal government to compensate for the fact that certain provinces and territories had not adopted any such program. Quebec has the carbon market and its system has been tied to that of California since 2013. It works well. This program exempts agriculture, which is not affected.

Still, when it comes to fuels, there is a part that cannot be measured, and this has an indirect impact on farmers in Quebec. Members of the Union des producteurs agricoles estimate that farmers have paid roughly \$40 million in indirect taxation through the carbon market. Talks are currently under way with Quebec about returning this money to that sector. I think that is the right thing to do, and in that spirit, it just makes sense that we recognize the contribution made by the farming community, as well as the difficulties it is experiencing. We therefore plan to support Bill C-206.

We have to keep one thing in mind. We think it would be unfair to demand immediate efforts and changes from those who are the primary victims of the crisis in the energy sector and the challenges posed by climate change, beginning with the farming community and their families. We therefore need to start with the most polluting industries.

The federal government has a responsibility here to stop subsidizing fossil fuels and to stop giving tax breaks that are much bigger compared to those given to other sectors. I could also mention Quebec's forestry industry, which has been woefully underfunded, even though this sector is an extremely sustainable source of materials if managed wisely. The key word here is "wisely". When a government imposes a tax like the carbon tax, it needs to consider whether this tax will work and whether it will change people's behaviour.

I think we need to do a lot of research and development to find alternatives to using oil and natural gas for drying grain. Farmers do not currently have other options, and this remains the most effective method.

What is the objective of the legislation? Section 3 of the act sets out the farming fuels that qualify for an exemption: gasoline, light fuel oil and fuels set out in a regulation. The bill introduced by our Conservative Party colleague simply wants to add marketable natural gas and propane to that list. I think that respects the spirit of the act, which was designed to put a price on pollution without penalizing the agricultural sector.

In conclusion, we are choosing to spare farmers from having to take on the environmental tax burden, which I think is a good thing. However, the western provinces must start working on an energy transition to diversify their economy. The Bloc Québécois will always support western Canadians. We stand with them and we support them. We do not want to shut down their industries and let them go hungry.

• (1140)

What we are saying is that they need to start transitioning. That is where they need to do some work. It is the way of the future. The burden should not be placed on the most vulnerable workers.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South for bringing the bill forward for debate. He has substituted on the agriculture committee a few times and I have sincerely enjoyed working with him. I look forward to having him join us again in the future, this time as a witness to defend his bill.

Before I go into the specifics of the bill, I want to say that the NDP believes there should be a price on pollution. The fact that human-caused climate change is occurring is no longer in dispute; it is a verifiable scientific fact. Canada is facing a climate emergency, one that will manifest itself in increasingly costly ways to our natural environment and economy.

A change in climate will bring more extreme weather events, and it is our farmers who will suffer. Changing precipitation patterns will bring increased frequency and longer durations of flooding and drought in different regions of the country. Fluctuating temperatures could have devastating impacts on livestock production. There will always be the increase of deadly forest fires. There will be real and catastrophic economic costs to this, both in adapting to the changes and in doing our best to mitigate them.

This will indeed be the fight of the 21st century. Unfortunately, the continuing political fight over the carbon tax ignores these realities and sidelines the leadership we as a country need to take against climate change.

I want to talk a bit about farmers and the important role they play in this conversation. This centres on carbon sequestration. The only way we are going to solve climate change is if we significantly reduce the amount of carbon we are putting into the atmosphere and find new and innovative ways to sequester the carbon that is already there.

One of these ways is through good agricultural practices and giving farmers recognition of agriculture's potential for carbon sequestration. It is estimated in scientific literature that agricultural soils have a storage capacity of 30 to 50 tonnes of carbon per hectare. Ecological, agricultural practices, which include low tillage, no-till and intercropping, already sequester more carbon in soil than farmers are currently given credit for.

Recently, I took a trip to the interior of British Columbia to talk with ranchers who had won sustainability awards. They were using proactive management of their grasslands with their cattle herds. This is the leadership we need to see, and farmers are indeed taking it. We can all use this as a good example of what Canada is doing right. Also, our farms in Canada have great renewable energy potential, both in harnessing the sun and wind, and of course in their production of biomass for biofuels.

Despite the advances we have made and the potential that good agricultural practices offer in the fight against climate change, it is still an inescapable fact that farmers today depend on fossil fuels. This is especially true when it comes to drying grain.

The unseasonably wet autumn of 2019 was called the “harvest from hell”. It saw extensive and prolonged rainfall right before and during harvest time in many parts of Canada. Early snowfalls and frost also ruined many crops. Farmers had to use propane and natural gas heaters to dry their grain. Without the use of these grain dryers, their cash crops would have become worthless, as rot would have set in. That would have been a huge economic hit. As it stands, there are currently no viable alternatives to the use of propane and natural gas for the operation of these dryers.

With a changing climate, the new reality is that there will be many future years during which significant amounts of grain drying will be necessary for farmers across Canada. As certain pockets of western Canada are losing workers at harvest year after year, grain drying is now moving from something nice to have to something they need to have.

Let me outline the value of this sector to the Canadian economy.

Canola alone is worth \$26.7 billion and pays out \$11.2 billion in wages, and 90% of it is exported. It is Canada's largest agricultural export.

• (1145)

Let us look at other grain sectors, wheat in particular. We exported 20.5 million tonnes of wheat in 2017, and that was worth \$21 billion in export sales.

This is a significant part of our economy. If farmers are suffering, as they have been with recent harvests, I believe, through the spirit of the bill, that they require some help.

Now let me turn to a more specific discussion on Bill C-206.

As the NDP agriculture and agri-food critic, I can say that the NDP will be supporting the bill at second reading. I believe the principle of the bill is sound and that it deserves to make it to committee for further examination. In fact, I wrote to the Minister of Agriculture in February to bring this particular issue to her attention.

Private Members' Business

Let us look at what the bill does. The bill makes amendments to the interpretation section of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to broaden the definition of what a qualifying farm fuel is. The Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act was brought about through the enactment of an omnibus budget bill, Bill C-74, in the previous Parliament. Bill C-206 would add natural gas and propane to the definition, which is currently limited to gasoline, light fuel oil or a prescribed type of fuel.

This is important because the term “qualifying farm fuel” is used in several important sections of that federal statute. It is referred to in section 17 and again in section 38, as two examples. This is important because those sections specify that a charge for the carbon tax is not payable. If we list these two additional fuels, natural gas and propane, as qualifying farm fuels so they are understood to be used only on the farm for farming purposes, the charge for the carbon tax would not be payable.

As my colleague, the sponsor of the bill, correctly noted, there are provincial precedents. In my home province of British Columbia, coloured fuel purchases can be made, such as coloured gasoline and coloured diesel. These are exempt from both the motor fuel tax and the carbon tax in British Columbia. British Columbia also lists propane as having an exemption from the motor fuel tax. It is understood that propane is going to be used by a qualifying farm for a farm purpose if certain conditions are met.

I believe there is strong provincial precedent, and that is why the bill deserves to go to committee for further examination. Hopefully we can hear from some qualified witnesses there.

Seeing that my time on the bill is wrapping up, I believe that Bill C-206, at this second reading stage, does deserve to go to committee. I am happy to be supporting it for that discussion.

As part of the broader discussion on the bill and the costs that farmers are bearing, we need to recognize, as has been detailed by the National Farmers Union, that Canadian farm debt is now listed at over \$100 billion and has nearly doubled since 2000. Since 1990, the corporations that supply fertilizers, chemicals, machinery, fuels, technology services and credit have captured nearly all farm revenues, leaving farmers with just 5% of the total revenue.

Private Members' Business

While the measures provided in Bill C-206 would have a measurable impact and benefit, especially when farmers are having to dry their grain, I hope we can use the bill to broaden the discussion on the other costs that farmers are having to bear. As a country, we all need to come together to tackle the farm crisis. It is going to require a sustained effort to actually put our support in the farmers' corner.

I will conclude there. I would like to again thank the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South for bringing the bill forward. I hope the House sees fit to vote in favour of it at second reading so we can have a more specific discussion at committee.

● (1150)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-206. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, for bringing it forward and addressing what is a very serious concern within our agricultural sector.

Our farmers across the country understand that certain things are outside their control: weather, droughts, floods and commodity prices. However, they continue to work extremely hard for Canadians' health in making sure we have food on our tables, and there is anxiety and mental health stress that go along with that. Farmers do that because they are passionate and love what they do.

However, there are some things they rely on the government to provide. They want to ensure they have the infrastructure to move their commodities to market. They want to ensure they have a competitive tax and regulatory regime. They want to ensure they have trade markets around the world in which to sell their commodities. One area where the current Liberal government is failing Canadian agriculture is the tax and regulatory regime, and Bill C-206 tries to remedy that situation.

In my opinion, the COVID pandemic has had a devastating impact on our economy. As parliamentarians and as Canadians, we are going to be looking to sectors of our industry and relying on them to help us pull ourselves out of this very deep financial hole. I would argue that agriculture will be one of the key sectors that can help us do that.

There are going to be food shortages around the world, and food security in our own country is going to be an issue. Canadian farmers, ranchers and processors are willing and able to take on that burden, but for them to do that we have to ensure they have the resources not only to survive this pandemic but to thrive afterwards. Asking them to pay the burdensome cost of a carbon tax, which other industries do not have to pay or have exemptions for, does not make sense. The bill would address that.

What is frustrating for our farmers and ranchers is they are not getting the credit they deserve for what they have already done. They are not getting the credit they deserve for the carbon sequestration and carbon sink that agriculture is. Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba has done a study showing that Canadian agriculture is a 30-megatonne sink on the positive, yet we continue to attack agriculture with the misinformation and misperception that is out there.

Canadian agriculture is not part of the problem when it comes to climate change. In fact, it is part of the solution. It is decades ahead of every other industry in Canada, and no one has made people in the agriculture sector do this. There has been no carbon tax there forcing them to do this. They have done it because they know it is the right thing to do. Very few Canadians are as passionate about their soil, their water, their livestock and their grain. It is their livelihood, so of course they are going to do everything they possibly can to take care of things.

I found it interesting that my Liberal colleague, who was speaking on behalf of the Liberal Party, was saying that farmers need to find a more equitable solution to this problem. If there were a cheaper and more efficient way to do it, farmers would have found it.

I want to ensure that my colleagues across the way understand what we are talking about and the impact this is having on agriculture. It is unfortunate that my Liberal colleague was blaming farmers for climate change. Again, as I said, farmers have done everything possible to ensure they have done their part in the fight against climate change and in protecting our environment.

I am not going to name the person, but a Liberal colleague said, last year, "Why do farmers not put solar panels on their combines?" This speaks to what we are up against here in the misunderstanding around agriculture. They harvest 24 hours a day, seven days a week when harvest time comes, from sun up to sun down. When people say farmers should be looking for alternatives, we really have some work to do in understanding what farmers are doing and what limitations they already have.

● (1155)

The Kielstra family has a poultry farm in my riding and I toured their poultry operation earlier this summer. Mr. Kielstra was very upset about this carbon tax. He showed me his bills and gave me his Excel spreadsheet. He paid \$51,526 in carbon tax last year, just to heat his barns. He has no other choice. It is winter.

He has to heat those barns to protect the health and safety of his birds. If not, he is going to be charged with animal cruelty. There is no other alternative. He cannot build a fire in the barn to protect his birds. He is using natural gas and propane to do that because they are clean fuels, they are inexpensive and they work.

When the carbon tax in 2022 goes to \$50 a tonne, that \$50,000 he is spending now will be close to \$100,000 a year. We are not talking nickels and dimes here. We are talking about the difference between ensuring this operation is viable or going bankrupt. What makes it different for this sector is that farmers cannot pass on those costs to their customers. Agriculture is a price-taker. It is not that he can just increase the price of his birds by \$50 a pound or kilogram.

Private Members' Business

The same goes for grain farmers. A grain farmer in northern Saskatchewan sent me his carbon tax bill for one delivery of propane to dry his grain. For one delivery of propane, his carbon tax bill was \$800. That lasts him one week, not a month or a year. That is \$3,200 a month he is paying to dry his grain and, once again, he has no other choice.

There was the harvest from hell last year, which we spoke a great deal about in the House, and northern Saskatchewan had a huge snowfall again this fall. Again he is going to have to dry his grain, and farmers from Saskatchewan to Ontario all had to do that last year. They had to take on costs they never expected. Again, as a grain farmer, he cannot pass those costs on anywhere else. He is absorbing those costs himself. The agriculture minister said last week that she understands that farmers work on very tight margins. Yes, that is right. Therefore, when the government has an opportunity to do something about it, why would it not please step up and do that?

Farmers are those who kind of keep their heads down, work hard and do everything they possibly can, but over the last year, year and a half, they have become very outspoken about the impact this carbon tax has had on them. I am very concerned about the position the Liberal government is taking on this. The previous agriculture minister said that all of the Canadian farmers he talked to were very supportive of the carbon tax. I can say exactly how many farmers I have spoken to who are supportive of the carbon tax. It is very close to zero.

When I asked the current agriculture minister, in an Order Paper question, what the cost of the carbon tax was to Canadian farmers, her answer was that the information was secret. Champions of agriculture, as Liberals profess themselves to be, should not be hiding the truth. We know what the cost of the carbon tax is to Canadian agriculture. It is crippling. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said the carbon tax is costing Canadian farmers about \$14 million a year.

Conservatives are offering a very easy solution. There are already exemptions for purple gas and diesel. There are exemptions for the greenhouse industry. Why not expand that definition to include propane and natural gas, which are the cleanest fuels, the least expensive fuels and would offer Canadian farmers an opportunity to keep their heads above water through this very difficult time?

As I said at the beginning, Canadian agriculture has a unique opportunity to carry the burden, to help Canada dig itself out of a very deep financial hole, not only here in Canada but around the world. However, it is also important that we protect the security of our food supply and our supply chain. If our farmers cannot survive this, we do not have food on grocery store shelves.

With no farms, there is no food. That is imperative. Bill C-206 would help to alleviate the burden, the mental health stress and the financial crunch that Canadian farmers are feeling right now. I would urge my colleagues across the floor and throughout the House to support this bill.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Lead-

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear in terms of the Government of Canada's ongoing support of our farming community. We have actually had very strong advocates within the Department of Agriculture, including a minister who is very sensitive to all the different regions and the needs of the farming community.

I wanted to speak to this bill because I am someone who was born and grew up in the Prairies, around Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I can recall being on the John Deere tractor when I was 12 or 13 years old in the province of Saskatchewan, or driving down Highway 2 in the province of Manitoba, where we would see a line of farmers cultivating and harvesting wheat. It is a very impressive sight at 11 p.m. or midnight, when the lights are beaming and we can see the reaping of the fields to feed the world. It gives a whole new meaning and I understand this. I do not believe I am alone.

Within the Liberal caucus, where we even have a rural component, members are very much aware of the issues that farmers have to face in every region of our country. When we talk about a price on pollution, it is one of the reasons why, through a budgetary motion, we looked at some of the costs farmers have, particularly with gas and diesel, and then came up with the exemption. It was something that is fairly easily tagged and marked. Therefore, we could ensure that farmers are being given a break on the price on pollution.

I would question the member when he said that 98% of farmers are opposed to a price on pollution. At the end of the day, whether one is a rural or an urban member, we recognize the impact the population has on our environment. All of us want to play a role.

What is important is that the government recognized that we needed to level the field and make sure everyone is contributing a fair share. That is something the government has done and we will continue to look at ways in which we can improve the system. At times, the Conservatives try to give a false impression that the government, the Liberal caucus, does not understand the farming community. That is just not true.

I have had many opportunities to have discussions and visit farms with many different commodities, whether poultry, the pig industry in the province of Manitoba or the many grains that are grown. I am not unique within the caucus. We understand the difficulties when farmers have a wet crop and need to dry that crop out to get it to market.

I want to remind my friends that, when Harper was the prime minister, we had heaps of wheat being piled outside of storage bins while we had ships that were empty miles away from the Vancouver port.

Government Orders

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to speak today on Bill C-8 from the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw people. I want to acknowledge that the riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith lies within the territories of the Snuneymuxw, the Snaw-naw-as, the Stz'uminus and the Lyackson first nations.

Huy'chka siem.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria for sharing this time with me today so that I could speak to this important bill.

Bill C-8 is an act to amend the Citizenship Act. The bill would change the oath of citizenship so that newcomers to Canada, in addition to pledging allegiance to the Queen, will also faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the aboriginal treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

The Snuneymuxw people, whose territory I am from speaking today, signed a treaty in 1854. This was the 14th and the last of the so-called Douglas treaties, and it was ignored for over 100 years. It was not until the landmark White and Bob Supreme Court case in 1965 that this treaty was finally recognized by the Government of Canada. This historic case marked the beginning of the modern era of treaty and aboriginal rights and title, advocacy and activism across Canada.

I learned about this treaty while working on a film about the Nanaimo River, entitled *Voices of the River*. In my interviews with Snuneymuxw elder Ellen White and with her grandson Doug White, who was the chief of Snuneymuxw First Nation at the time, they both emphasized the importance of this treaty and the rights and title that it enshrines. Most residents of Nanaimo would have no knowledge of this treaty and what it means. It is a constant struggle for the Snuneymuxw people to have their treaty rights recognized.

This is true for first nations across Canada, as we have seen with the Mi'kmaq fishery in Nova Scotia and the Haudenosaunee dispute in Caledonia, Ontario. We are all treaty people in Canada. We have historical treaties that need to be respected, and for those first nations that have never signed treaties, it is incumbent upon the gov-

ernment to go through the modern-day treaty process in a respectful way.

It is important for newcomers to Canada to understand the indigenous and first nations rights enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All Canadians, including new Canadians, need to understand these legal documents. They should understand that if they are not in a region that is covered by a treaty, then they are in a region that has never surrendered and is still legally indigenous territory.

The bill would complete number 94 of the 94 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That does not mean that the current Parliament has finally gotten to the end of the list and has implemented the previous 93 calls to action, far from it. We have a very poor record of implementing these calls to action. Earlier this year my colleague, the hon. member for Fredericton, presented a scorecard in her speech on this issue. Out of the 52 broader reconciliation recommendations, seven have been completed. Under justice, it is one out of 18; language and culture, one out of five; health, zero; education, zero; and child welfare, zero.

In the first year, five recommendations were completed, and just four since 2016. At the current rate, it will take approximately 38 more years before all of the calls to action are implemented. This is not reconciliation in action.

Call to action number 94 is important, but there are far more urgent calls to action that we need to turn our attention to. Call to action number one calls upon federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of aboriginal children in care. Right now there are more indigenous children in the child welfare system in this country than there were children in the residential schools at the height of the residential school system. This is an ongoing abuse of human rights and a violation of fundamental social justice.

When I talk to local leaders from first nations and urban indigenous communities in my riding, they tell me the same thing: Children are being apprehended by provincial child welfare agencies, and it is not because the parents have neglected to provide their children with love, care or attention. The majority of child welfare apprehensions are a direct result of poverty and inadequate housing. The Government of Canada could deal with this immediately with a poverty reduction strategy and rapid housing program for first nations and urban indigenous populations.

Government Orders

• (1210)

The missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry recommendations called for a guaranteed livable income to ensure no Canadian needs to live in poverty. A guaranteed livable income would remove the bias inherent in our social welfare programs and would be a step toward ending systemic racism in this country. Indigenous people are overrepresented in our prison system and in our homeless population. This is also a direct result of poverty and the disproportionate number of children pulled from their families and communities by the child welfare system.

We have a long way to go toward true reconciliation with indigenous people in Canada. Under the reconciliation section of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, the first call to action, number 43, calls upon federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation. This is important and we need to get this done right away. Why are we not debating this right now?

It is a national shame indigenous communities have boil water advisories that go on for years and even decades, that indigenous communities deal with serious and persistent poverty, that indigenous people are overrepresented in our criminal justice system and in our homeless population, that we have such high levels of suicide among indigenous youth and that health outcomes for indigenous people are comparable to those of residents of low-income countries.

It is an international black eye for Canadians that we have encroaching developments and industrial projects forced upon indigenous communities after sham consultations and then have those developments and projects rammed through with enforcement actions by highly armed militarized police forces.

We need economic reconciliation to improve the conditions for economic development and economic sovereignty for first nations. The connection to land is key to the culture of indigenous people in Canada, but as colonizers we have broken that link. The reserve system forced indigenous people off the land and took away those key connections to their culture. Industrialization has destroyed many traditional territories with resource extraction, including excessive logging, mining and oil and gas production, destroying biodiversity and leaving behind toxic messes.

In my riding of Nanaimo Ladysmith, the traditional lands of the Hul'qumi'num-speaking people were stolen out from under them with the E&N land grant 150 years ago. Coal baron and B.C. cabinet minister Robert Dunsmuir was given 8,000 square kilometres of land, or 20% of Vancouver Island, to build the E&N railway from Esquimalt to Nanaimo as part of the deal for B.C. to join Confederation. This corrupt deal and historic wrong need to be corrected. We cannot celebrate 150 years of B.C. joining Confederation next year without reparation for this theft. Reconciliation must be more than words, it must include reparation for historic wrongs.

There is a long list of things we need to do to make things right in our relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis people in this country. If this is indeed our most important relationship, as the Prime Minister has often repeated, then let us get on with it.

I have had the honour and privilege of working with many newcomers to Canada and I know they are keen to be good citizens and become part of our communities. Many of the newcomers arrive from difficult situations and have faced war, poverty, environmental degradation and human rights abuses. Once they learn about our history and fully understand the circumstances many indigenous people live with in Canada, these newcomers are shocked.

Bill C-8 is an acknowledgement of the responsibilities of all Canadians, including new Canadians. It is an important piece of legislation. The Green Party supports this legislation. We support all the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we support the recommendations of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry and we support the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I hope to debate much more legislation implementing urgent calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation report soon. I hope this happens in the very near future.

• (1215)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the biggest challenges we face when we look at this piece of legislation is we are still not seeing a government taking an active role and actually implementing the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Here we are again with another small step, but we still do not see substantive support to move forward in a way that is really about reconciliation.

I am wondering if the member could talk about why indigenous communities are being asked to wait, government after government, and when we are going to actually see action, and what would that action look like?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, it is a very good question. I would like to know myself when the government is going to take the appropriate action. When are we going to move on the rest of these calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? When are we going to deal with the recommendations from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, including a guaranteed livable income? When are we going to move indigenous people out of poverty and deal with our child welfare system?

I think that we need to do these things as soon as possible, and I would invite the hon. member to stand with me when I talk about reparation for the E&N land grant. I know that part of her riding is in that E&N land grant, and that is a historic wrong. It was one of the most corrupt deals in this country, which allowed the coal baron, Robert Dunsmuir, to build castles in Victoria based on the wealth he extracted from first nations territories.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech.

For a number of years now, we have been seeing the Liberal government's inaction with respect to the cause of indigenous peoples across Canada and particularly in Quebec. We hear horror stories about reserves that do not even have clean drinking water for children. That is outrageous, and real action needs to be taken.

This bill takes real action and does something worthwhile. I think it is important to amend the oath of citizenship as proposed by adding the words "including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples".

While we are doing something useful and cleaning up the oath of citizenship to add important elements, we could also remove the unnecessary elements. The first part of the oath states, "I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada". Does anyone still think that is important? I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about that.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his statement. I am sure that if members of the Bloc Québécois have other ideas that they would like to bring forward on changing the oath of citizenship, they can do that in one of their opposition days.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, of the 94 resolutions, many do not actually require federal jurisdictional changes. I believe there are about 75 that do. However, not all of the recommendations require legislation in order to deal with the resolution.

Let us take a look at the first resolution that deals with child welfare. Would the member not agree that many of these resolutions and recommendations are, in fact, being acted on, at least in part? We have to work with other stakeholders. The federal government cannot just sweep in and say that it is done. There is an obligation to work with stakeholders. Would the member not at least acknowledge that is, in fact, the case for many of the resolutions?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I do agree that we need to work as a country with different levels of government to deal with all of these calls to action. However, there are things that the federal government can do right away. One of those things is to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That is something that I would like to see this government push forward right away. Let us get that legislation dropped ASAP. I have heard it—

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Lead-

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to pick up on that, when we talk about how important that United Nations resolution is, we recognize that it was actually brought to the floor of the House a number of years ago from a member of the New Democratic Party. The Government of Canada did in fact support that piece of legislation and it passed through the House of Commons. It would have become law and received royal assent had it gone through the Senate, but it did not get through the Senate.

Since the last federal election a number of things have occurred, including, stating the most obvious, the coronavirus. The government's first priority was to deal with the negative impacts of the coronavirus. That does not mean that the government was not acting on all of the different fronts it needed to act on while it focused its attention on the coronavirus. When we hit that reset, we have often been criticized by the Conservatives about the throne speech. Why did we have to bring in another throne speech? In previous speeches that I have delivered on the floor here, I have addressed that issue.

Within the throne speech we find another commitment to bring forward the same legislation that the member from the Green Party just referenced. What I have found is that time passes pretty quickly here in Ottawa. The years go by pretty quickly. Here, once again, we are having to deal with legislation because of things that, in good part, were beyond our control. There was a commitment in the throne speech to deal with that particular call for action regarding the United Nations resolution. I am very confident that it is coming. Hopefully, we will be able to pass it through, just like we had government legislation that was brought in for the education of judges, with respect to sexual assaults. There was other legislation that passed in the previous Parliament, but because it did not pass the Senate, it was never given royal assent.

It is the same thing now where we have brought forward a piece of legislation as a part of the government agenda. We are going to have to deal once again with that other piece of legislation and are very hopeful.

When we take a look there are 94 calls for action. This particular piece of legislation we are dealing with today, Bill C-8 is making change to the oath. I will get to the actual oath and ceremonies at some point, but this is dealing with the last call for action. I have a handy booklet here with all 94 calls for action, something that I always keep at my desk, which highlights the importance of it to me personally. Just as it is so important to me, I know how important it is to our Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, virtually from day one, has talked about the relationship between government and indigenous people and how we need to change that relationship and work hard on that relationship.

What does bill C-8 do? It responds to the 94th call for action and states that we call upon the Government of Canada to replace the oath of citizenship with the following:

• (1225)

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

While it might not be word for word, a great deal of effort was put into that. That call to action and what the department has done to come up with today's wording has included a great deal of consultation with indigenous communities and others.

I constantly hear from members on all sides of the House about the importance of supporting the calls to action in general, maybe not 100% of them. However, we have made that commitment to work toward 100% of those or at least encouraging support for them. This is one of those calls. It is a very positive and fairly straightforward call. It would be nice to see it passed by the House of Commons, sooner as opposed to later. In good part now, it will be in the opposition court. It will determine how long it will be before it gets out of the House of Commons.

As I pointed out, there are 94 calls to action, 76 of which are linked to the federal government responsibilities. Many of those calls incorporate Ottawa working with others to fulfill the commitment. An example of that is the first. Today we are talking about call to action 94. Let us look at the first call to action. I referred to that call to action in my question to the member of the Green Party. It is a fairly length call to action, but it is a very important one. It deals with child welfare.

The significance to the debate on that is to recognize there are different types of calls to action. Today, we are really talking about Ottawa and our responsibility to change the oath. That needs to be done through legislation. This is why the bill is before us. However, not all calls to action are like that.

The first call states:

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by.

Then it states a number of things we could do.

The significance of this is that unlike this bill, it is not like the federal government could bring in legislation to say that call one is done. It does not work that way for all of the calls to action.

This one is going to require input from indigenous leaders, provincial governments and agencies and even beyond that. When we talk about the child welfare system, as cited in the debate today, I am very much aware of the situation. All one needs to do is look at my riding when we talk about children. If we look at the number of apprehended children, or children who are in the care foster parents, on a per capita basis, I would be surprised if Winnipeg North was not one of the highest, if not the very highest, in our country.

For many years, whether a parliamentarian in Ottawa or a member in the Manitoba legislature, we have had to deal with that. For my New Democratic friends, I would like to let them know that the worst provincial entity I can think of is the 15 years of governance by the provincial NDP in the Province of Manitoba. The problem actually peaked during that time.

● (1230)

As much as the NDP would like to blame the Liberals for not doing enough, there is a great deal of room for improvement within the New Democratic Party in Manitoba. It was one of the last issues I dealt with prior to leaving the Manitoba legislature. I talked about the child advocate, saying that Manitoba was in crisis because of

Government Orders

the children in care. The NDP premier was more concerned with where the information came from and that it had been released rather than the facts.

When we talk about these calls for action, we need to get the support and consultations in place and work together with the different stakeholders. When my colleagues and friends from the Green Party or the New Democratic Party in particular say that there are 94 calls and only eight or nine have been dealt with, I do not believe that is the case.

For many of the different calls to action, certain actions have taken more time than others. However, we can be encouraged by the fact that unlike some of the previous reports that came forward, these recommendations are not sitting on a shelf collecting dust. Ministers and members of Parliament from our caucus consistently raise the importance of reconciliation in the calls for action on the floor of the House, or in our caucus or in our communities.

Earlier I cited the little booklet given to me by one of my former colleagues, Robert-Falcon Ouellette, the previous member for Winnipeg Centre. We all remember Robert's personality and miss him dearly. Hopefully, he will return. However, when we look at the 94 calls for action, some of them we can deal with in a timely fashion, where Ottawa gets to play the lead. This is one of them.

When I think about citizenship, one experiences many different feelings. I suspect virtually all members of Parliament have participated in citizenship court ceremonies. What a wonderful opportunity it is to do so. I have been doing it for many years, both as a member of Parliament and as a member of the Manitoba legislative assembly. I have wonderful memories of what I witnessed. They would be held inside the Manitoba legislature in the so-called Manitoba Room, which faces Broadway, with its huge beautiful chandeliers. It was such a wonderful feeling to walk into that room, see the chairs lined up, with a judge standing at the front, and individuals, who were receiving their citizenship, smiling from ear to ear. Seeing them in that beautiful room, in that democratic institution speaks volumes about freedom and democracy.

● (1235)

I remember going to what was the NorWest health centre in the community of Winnipeg North. A room had been set up with many chairs and a judge was present. People were receiving their citizenship. One of the most touching parts of that ceremony was a young woman of Filipino heritage who had taken her oath. When it came time to sing the national anthem, she pulled out a big Canadian flag and wrapped it around herself. We could see tears as we started singing the national anthem. It is a very special moment in time when people receive their citizenship. I have attended many different swearing-in ceremonies to reaffirm my citizenship, because we do live in a great nation, the best country in the world from my perspective.

Government Orders

To recognize the importance of indigenous people is of the utmost importance. For the life of me, I cannot remember his last name, but Winston is a resident of Winnipeg North. I believe he lives on Arrow Street, to be more specific. He is of indigenous background. I attended a special citizenship event in an armoury in Winnipeg. What was nice is that he brought forward a greeting and a blessing. New citizens heard first-hand the words he spoke. It was a rather strong and powerful message on how Canada is open for all.

At these citizenship courts, there has to be a judge, but we will also see an RCMP officer. In recent years, we have also seen someone representing the Canadian Forces. I have been to a couple where an indigenous elder attended. I would encourage indigenous elders to continue to attend to tell the story of Canada. It is an important aspect.

In every citizenship ceremony I have had the privilege to attend, I have always walked away feeling very proud to be a Canadian, because people from around the world have chosen Canada to call home. Indigenous people are not getting the recognition they deserve for being there, opening doors and opportunities. A willingness to share is so important, to understand treaties and their relationship. That is why reconciliation is so important. That is why the Prime Minister consistently talks about the relationship between indigenous people and the government and why it is so important for all of us.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission came up with excellent calls to action. Today is all about call to action 94 and I encourage all members to support it.

• (1240)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is timely that we are talking today about the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the Alberni Valley where I live, there is a housing crisis. Over two-thirds of the people living on the street are indigenous. We know the government has promised 3,000 beds next year to address homelessness, which is just not enough.

Last night, I received a call from Martha Martin, the mother of Chantel Moore. Her daughter was shot at the hands of police in New Brunswick. She told me her son, Mike, who had been living in care and aged out of care, took his own life two nights ago by suicide. I believe Mike could be alive today if all the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action were implemented. Numbers 18, 19 and 3 all relate to health. Numbers 30, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 43 relate to justice.

Our system has taken two of her children's lives. It is killing her family. I know the member wanted to talk a lot about partisan politics but right now, we need to work together. We need to fast-track this bill so we can deal with call to action number 94 and move it forward. We need to get to these items and stop the endless deaths happening on the streets of our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the consequences to our society are significant the more we delay taking the actions necessary to improve living conditions in general. They are horrendous. The member made reference to a couple of examples.

Equally, it is irresponsible for us to try to build an expectation that is very difficult to achieve. We cannot resolve all the problems overnight. The member knows this is the case. It takes time, resources and a great deal of effort from not only the government in Ottawa but all governments, indigenous leaders, community leaders and many others.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to see my friend across the way in person. When it comes to debates about indigenous issues, I am always struck by the way members of the government speak as if they have not been in government for the past five years. They talk about all these outstanding problems, which are true, but they are in a position to do things about them. When it comes to the government's legislative agenda with respect to issues impacting indigenous peoples, it focuses on important, but relatively symbolic issues such as this, as opposed to the more concrete issues.

Will the member bluntly tell us why the government has not acted more effectively in the last five years to address and confront some of the problems we have been talking about in the House over that period?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, imagine the effort involved when a member of the New Democratic Party brought forward Bill C-262 and then, with the support of members, we were able to get it passed out of the House of Commons to the Senate. There was much frustration that followed when Conservative senators prevented it from passing.

An hon. member: It was a bad bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: The member says it was because it was a bad bill. I believe a majority of the House today would probably say the member is wrong and those Conservative senators were wrong in terms of what they did. I suspect we will find that out in time.

We have seen legislation, financial resources and co-operation we have not witnessed in the last many years come from this government, working with the many stakeholders, to make a real impact on the day in and day out of our communities and the people living in them, particularly those of indigenous heritage.

• (1245)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to let the hon. member know that it took two and a half years to get his government to go along with Bill C-262. I was a person who was part of those lobbying efforts, walking and writing because of pressure from Canadians who really cornered his government.

The member talked a lot about recognizing the importance of indigenous people. I want to let him know that the way to recognize indigenous people is by honouring human rights. His government currently is in its ninth non-compliance order to immediately stop racially discriminating against first nations kids. It has spent over \$3 million fighting survivors of St. Anne's residential school.

He has used COVID as an excuse for stalling, but I want to speak specifically about one example: clean drinking water. Neskantaga currently has been evacuated because of not having clean drinking water. We know that one of the greatest disease deterrents and safety measures that can be taken during the time of the pandemic is frequent handwashing, so I would think that this should be a top priority, yet he consistently talks about incremental justice when it comes to indigenous people.

I wonder if the member would have the same sort of patience if his riding of Winnipeg North had to evacuate because it did not have clean drinking water, and whether he would be so patient for his own constituents to receive that basic human right. I highly doubt it. Just to let him know, as the representative for Winnipeg North, he actually has the highest child-apprehension rate in the country. That is something that is important for him to be aware of as their political representative.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not need a lesson from the member for Winnipeg Centre with regard to apprehensions in Winnipeg North. I have been there for 30 years, both as an MLA and as a member of Parliament. I can assure the member that not only do I hold this government to account in terms of its involvement in dealing with child apprehension, I did it for many years when the NDP at the provincial level failed the children of Winnipeg North in a very real and tangible way and where that member was absolutely silent, I suspect, during those years.

The member made reference to Bill C-262, and why it took so long. After the calls to action were announced, the current Prime Minister committed to all of them. Supporting Bill C-262 and UN-DRIP was within those calls to action. The Liberal members of the caucus supported it. When Bill C-262 was brought in, there was no requirement for the government to bring it in. It was a private member's bill and the Liberal caucus supported it. We assisted in ensuring, along with New Democrats, that it passed through the House of Commons. The member would have to speak to the Conservative senators who were determined to hold it up, in terms of why it ultimately did not receive royal assent.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that in September 2019, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found the government wilfully and recklessly discriminated against first nations children by underfunding child and family services. The government has fought the decisions of that tribunal for years, spending time and money in the courts.

Does the hon. member support the call from the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry for a guaranteed livable income to ensure that people are not left in poverty? I would like to know whether he would support a rapid housing initiative to deal with the housing crisis on first nations reserves, including in my communities here, in Snuneymuxw and Stz'uminus, and whether he would approve of a rapid housing program for urban indigenous people. There is a disproportionate number of urban indigenous people who are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, not that long ago I stood in the chamber speaking to the second and maybe even third

Government Orders

reading of Bill C-92 in the previous Parliament. Within that legislation, we allowed for and encouraged the further devolution of child care to indigenous agencies so that they would be more engaged with respect to children of indigenous backgrounds. I saw that as a positive step. Call to action No. 1 talks about children. Yes, there is still more for us to do and we are committed to doing just that.

● (1250)

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Markham—Unionville.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill, and I would also like to thank my colleague, the shadow minister on this file, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, for her hard work in the chamber and in committee on this issue. She has a very important job to do in holding the government to account when we begin to reopen the country and welcome immigrants back who will eventually become part of our Canadian family.

I rise today to speak on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94.

I want to start by saying that I will be voting for the bill. Most of the public know what it is designed to do, which is to change the oath of citizenship. I believe that this is a very important piece of legislation that would put us one step closer to reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people.

Just to be clear, the current oath of citizenship is:

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

The version proposed in the bill would change the ending to:

...and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

It is worth acknowledging that Canada is a nation of immigrants who have come, and continue to come, for better lives. We are also a nation that stands on the traditional territories of, and shoulder to shoulder with, first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

I think we should be proud that Canada is one of only a few countries in the world where indigenous and treaty rights are entrenched in our Constitution. By recognizing and affirming the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis in the oath of citizenship, we are also educating Canadians, especially new Canadians, about these rights.

Our Constitution is one of our most important documents, if not the most important document, and being aware and understanding some of the resolved and unresolved treaty rights in different parts of the country is something we should share with new Canadians. Educating new Canadians on the relationship with indigenous peoples is a key part of the path to reconciliation that is critical to our nation's future.

Government Orders

I am confident my colleagues would agree that a top priority for all of us in this chamber should be to work towards reconciliation with our indigenous peoples. For those at home watching, I was in the House of Commons in Centre Block at the time when Prime Minister Harper offered a full apology on behalf of Canadians for the residential school system. It was a historical moment, and one I will never forget. The treatment of children in Indian residential schools was a sad chapter in our history, and it had to be acknowledged. The government had to apologize for it, and rightfully did so. It was also the previous Conservative government, under Prime Minister Harper, that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or the TRC, to facilitate reconciliation among former residential school students, their families, communities and all Canadians.

Between 2007 and 2015, the government provided about \$72 million to support the commission's work. The TRC spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada and heard more than 6,500 witnesses. It also hosted seven national events across Canada to engage the Canadian public, educate people about the history and legacy of the residential school system and share and honour the experiences of former students and their families.

The TRC created a critical historical record of the residential school system and, as part of the process, the Government of Canada provided over five million records to the TRC. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba houses all the documents collected by the TRC.

Given the incredible work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many of us in the House are concerned that the government has been slow to respond to the report's calls to action. In fact, a new analysis reveals that "dreadful progress" with disappointing results has been made on the TRC's 94 calls to action. The Prime Minister embraced the calls to action at the 2015 unveiling, describing them all as a blueprint to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. However, it is clear that things are not what they need to be, and the sole reaction to the TRC's calls to action is not the only broken promise from this government.

We also have the promise on boil-water advisories. The Prime Minister recently appeared to walk back his government's promise to end all boil-water advisories in first nation communities by March 2021. He would not commit to meeting the 2021 deadline, and said that the federal government was working to lift the remaining drinking water advisory "as soon as possible".

When is "as soon as possible"? Is it months from now, years from now or perhaps longer?

• (1255)

Let us take the Neskantaga First Nation as an example, which has been under a boil water advisory for more than 25 years. Officials shut off its water after an oily sheen was found in the water reserve. Tests later showed the water was contaminated with hydrocarbon. Over 200 residents have now been evacuated to Thunder Bay, where they are being housed in hotels.

The Neskantaga chief said that elders, children, infants and people with chronic health conditions were flown out of the community after the water shutdown, which closed the schools and nursing

station. With no running water, the remaining residents have had to use buckets to collect water from the lake in freezing temperatures.

The chief said, "I've never had access to clean drinking water and I'm 50 years old. You hate to see your relatives, your children, your future, living in this condition." The chief goes on to say, "Right now we are being offered band-aid solutions."

The government originally stated in December 2015 that the community would get a new treatment plant up and running by the spring of 2018. It is November 2020 and it seems like the government has broken its promise.

Also, let us not forget winter is coming. The Prime Minister said his government has lifted many drinking water advisories since 2015, but the Indigenous Services Canada website shows that 61 first nation reserves are still living under long-term drinking water advisories.

Let us also not forget first nations people are going through a housing crisis that the government has not handled very well. Last year, the Cat Lake first nation declared a state of emergency over excessive mould, leaky roofs and other poor housing conditions. Things became worse when a Cat Lake resident died from respiratory issues. Her family was clear the death was caused by extensive mould problems in her home. There is evidence that almost half of the homes on Canadian reserves have enough mould to cause serious respiratory problems and other illnesses.

With respect to Cat Lake, I do have to say the government did provide portable homes and construction material to build new ones. However, everything it does on this file seems to be reactionary. It has to see a major crisis first, and then it acts.

The government should not be complacent. This housing crisis in first nations communities should not be costing people their lives. Indigenous leaders say that an epidemic of mould, undrinkable water and overcrowding in first nations homes remains a nationwide problem that has been largely ignored.

We have another issue in Nova Scotia, where tensions are very high over a long-standing fishery dispute. There has been violence and a lot of heated rhetoric. There have been years of concern about the issue. It is not like the government found out about it when it recently flared up. Once again, the government is being reactionary. There have been years of talks but there has been no solution.

Government Orders

The government has now been in place for five years and little has been done. It needs to do better, and Conservatives are more than willing to help. All this to say that indigenous people deserve government attention and reconciliation should be a top priority for all of us in this place. Although more can and should be done, this bill is a step in the right direction for indigenous people, and therefore, I will be supporting it.

It is not often I agree with my colleague the parliamentary secretary, but I cannot have a conversation about an oath of citizenship without talking about the extreme honour of being involved. He was bang on when he talked about what an honour it is, as members of Parliament, to be involved.

In my 16 years, certainly one of the highlights of my job is having the opportunity to attend the citizenship ceremonies. They come in all different shapes and sizes, and I have attended them on July 1, which is absolutely a particularly important and special day. I have also done them in schools, legion halls and all across Niagara.

It is quite an honour to do that, so I want to recognize what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the government in the House of Commons said. As members of Parliament, we have a pretty unique role. Just having the opportunity to hear people's stories of getting to our great country, as well as some of the hardships they have had to endure is completely inspiring.

It has been an honour to talk on this particular bill, Bill C-8. As I mentioned before, one of the amazing privileges we have as members of Parliament is having an opportunity on a fairly regular basis to attend citizenship swearing-in ceremonies, where we have the opportunity to hear great stories from people coming from all around this great world to become citizens of this great country.

• (1300)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I take issue with a couple of things my friend opposite said.

He said the government should be accelerating the calls to action, and I completely agree we need to do more and need to do it faster, but can he explain why in the previous Parliament his party, Conservative members in the Senate, blocked the passage of Bill C-262, even though it was passed in the House of Commons and it passed a resolution asking for the Senate to expedite its passage?

Why did his party block it in the Senate? How does that go with what he is saying about the implementation of these calls to action and the things we need to do in order to attain true reconciliation?

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, when legislation is bad, there is always an opportunity not to support it to make it better. One of the things I hear over and over from the government is, "It's not our fault. We didn't do it".

The government has been in power for six years. I think that most of us are getting a little tired of hearing that it was the previous government's fault. Once again, there is no reason to support bad legislation. We need to improve it, and we need to do a better job when it comes to that in the House.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate working with my friend and colleague on many dif-

ferent things, but I thank him for supporting this bill. We are happy to see that because we had heard from the previous leader of the Conservative Party that they would not be supporting this bill.

He talked about the sense of urgency around issues for indigenous people. I talked earlier about the high number of indigenous people who are homeless right now. I also spoke of my friend Martha Martin sharing with me that her son, Mike Martin, had taken his own life. It was a death by suicide. Mike had been living on the streets and gave up hope.

The current plan of the government is to build 3,000 units next year to deal with the homeless issue. Clearly that is just not adequate. Does the member support New Democrats, and will he work with members in this House and at all levels of government, including indigenous leadership and indigenous communities, to put pressure on the Liberal government to do more to save lives, so that people like Mike do not resort to taking their own life because they have lost hope?

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, I share the pain of my colleague for Courtenay—Alberni in terms of the person he knew, Mike, who lost life to suicide. That is never a good thing, so my thoughts are with them now at this time. Also, it has been a pleasure to work with my colleague on a number of initiatives over the last years.

I think it is important that we always engage, certainly, first nations when there are issues that pertain to them. There should never be a top-down approach from the government, which says we know best and we can figure all of this out. I think if we do not have collaboration with all levels of government and if we do not have collaboration with first nations, then whatever we do as governments, whatever we do as the federal government, is doomed to fail.

It is important and incumbent upon us as legislators to work with all levels of government and first nations when we are looking to implement solutions that we hope will have a long-term effect. We also hope they will be implemented in a way that will make sure things get done the way they should be done the first time around.

• (1305)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would appreciate my colleague's reflection on this point. We often see from the government on these issues, that when it is looking at the TRC recommendations, it seems like it is trying to pick the low-hanging fruit, the recommendations that are maybe the easier ones to implement.

There are a lot of harder ones to implement, which are actually going to have the most critical impact on the quality of life of indigenous people. We see precious little action over there, while we see a picking the low-hanging fruit over here. I would be curious for his take on that.

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, unfortunately this always seems to be the case. It is either a talking point or an announcement of low-hanging fruit. Very rarely do we get the sustained and necessary action, which sometimes involves a lot more heavy lifting.

Government Orders

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94).

The bill will change the oath of citizenship. The new oath will now read:

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

As someone who emigrated to Canada, I know first-hand just how valuable and memorable the experience of taking the oath of Canadian citizenship is. That is why this bill is very close to my heart. When I came to Canada back in 1974, the wait for my citizenship felt like a long time.

The day I went to my ceremony was one of the happiest days of my life. I can still remember the building, the people who were sitting beside me and the colour of the carpet in the room. However, what I remember the most was the moment when I put my hand to the chest and swore the oath. I still think about that to this day, and what it meant to me.

When I speak to other new Canadians, I hear the same thing. The oath is the legal requirement to become a Canadian citizen, but it is much more than that for every newcomer.

To become a Canadian, I had to pass the citizenship test. That test would show I understood the history of Canada and what this country stands for. This was before Canada became one of only a few countries in the world where indigenous and treaty rights were entrenched in our Constitution.

Some of the questions on the citizenship test were things I had picked up over the years, and others were things I needed to study. Canada's relationship with its first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples was not something I was required to know. It was not something that came up often. Back then when people said "Indian", it was unclear if they were talking about me or Canada's first people.

Let me tell the House about what I did know even back then. I knew about reserves, and I knew about poverty. Many of the homeless I would see in Toronto were, sadly, first nations people. I have learned a lot about Canada's indigenous people since that time, and about the struggles they still face.

For example, reserves to this day have boil water advisories that are decades old. Indigenous people represent only about 5% of the adult population in Canada, but make up 30% of the people behind bars. The lasting impact of residential schools and the mental health crisis has led many indigenous people to take their own lives. The housing crisis on reserves has forced people to live in rundown homes filled with black mould, threatening the lives of those inside.

I have learned much more since being elected. I wish I had known more. I am glad that schools in Ontario are now making sure that students are familiar with these topics. That was not the case when my children were in school.

There is a lot of ignorance about these issues, even though none of these issues are new. They span generations. Where progress has been made, it has come too slowly. Our new leader has said, "...all governments in our history have not lived up to what we owe our Constitution and indigenous Canadians."

• (1310)

I want to be clear about this. Canada is the best country in the world and I am proud to be a Canadian. One of the things that makes Canada so great is that we consistently acknowledge our mistakes and fix them.

I was not a member of Parliament when it happened, but I remember when Prime Minister Harper offered a full apology on behalf of Canadians for the horrendous residential school system. The Conservative government also created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which recognized that the Indian residential school system had a profoundly lasting and damaging impact on indigenous culture, heritage and language.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action were first released, the member for Papineau, now the Prime Minister, committed to action immediately. He was later given a four-year majority government. When giving some of his first speeches, he talked about how important Canada's relationship with its indigenous people was.

There are 94 calls to action in the TRC report. Although we are implementing call to action 94 today, it is important that Canadians know that the progress the Prime Minister promised has been far from realized.

Four years of a majority government has yielded little progress. A 2019 report by the Yellowhead Institute says that by 2018, only eight calls to action had been implemented. That number increased to nine by the end of 2019.

One of the reasons the progress for Canada's indigenous people has been so slow is they are often treated as an afterthought by the government. It was only at the very end of the majority government that it even put the first version of this bill forward, Bill C-99. After the election, which saw the Prime Minister re-elected, the government put forward a new version of Bill C-6, only to start again. Then the Liberal government chose to prorogue Parliament, killing the bill on the floor of the House before it could come up for a vote.

I recognize that the bill would bring a lot of changes. After four years of the same old, I was pleased to see the bill reintroduced in the current session. However, I cannot stress enough that indigenous people need to see real action on mental health, incarceration rates, housing and much more. That is why it is important that we pass Bill C-8 quickly, as it would affect the lives of those struggling right now.

Government Orders

Some might say this move is only symbolic. I would say that symbols are incredibly important. There is only a problem if the government continues to deliver lip service to indigenous Canadians and not results.

If there are any concerns about the wording of the bill, I am sure we can come to a consensus at committee. It is very important that indigenous groups from across the country have their say. I recognize the committee has many restraints regarding witnesses, so I hope the Liberal government is engaging in consultations as we speak.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, within the Truth and Reconciliation report, there are 94 calls to action. Many of those calls to action do not require legislation. Call to action 94 does, because it would change citizenship. I am glad to hear that the Conservative Party appears to be supporting the legislation.

Would the member not agree that many calls to action do not require legislation, but simply require the Government of Canada to work with other jurisdictions to implement them? In doing this, we could take into consideration a good number of the calls to action.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech by the member for Winnipeg North a couple of minutes ago when he mentioned that what happened was out of his control, that time passes fast in Ottawa and that the Liberals are trying their very best. What nonsense that is.

What is the bottom line? When can indigenous people see real action from the government? Those are my questions for the Liberal government. There are many issues, but we have to do our best to make sure the needs of indigenous people are taken care of regarding housing, suicide issues and their many other issues.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking so much about indigenous homelessness and housing, and the high number of indigenous people who are homeless and the lack of action.

The truth and reconciliation recommendations are calls to action. In this debate, the member for Winnipeg North has continued to say that it is not just legislation but action that is required, but we are not seeing that action. We are seeing a commitment by the government to build 3,000 units for all of Canada, for the 235,000 people who are homeless right now. This is completely inadequate.

Does my colleague believe this is inadequate and that the government needs to accelerate it significantly in the immediate future to save lives, especially given COVID, during which even more people have been marginalized? There is an overrepresentation of indigenous people on the streets dealing with this crisis.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the hon. member regarding the issues facing indigenous people, such as housing, poverty, suicide, fresh drinking water, mould in housing and the lack of jobs. The list goes on and on. The Liberal government, which has been in power coming up to six years now, keeps on talking but has nothing to show for it.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville came to Canada in 1974. I came here in 1984. I went through the same process as he did and was proud to take the citizenship oath. I still remember that particular day.

The hon. member mentioned that former prime minister Stephen Harper made an apology, but I remind him this was the same Prime Minister who ditched the Kelowna accord, which was going to improve life.

Coming back to the bill, does the hon. member agree the bill is very important for allowing new immigrants to become familiar with the heritage and history of indigenous people in Canada?

• (1320)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, yes, absolutely. However, we need to do more for indigenous people. We are not doing enough. We can talk about Stephen Harper or anybody else—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here in the House with so many friends to address this important debate, and to follow my friend, the member for Markham—Unionville, who gave an excellent speech. He said he came to Canada in 1974. I came to Canada in 1987, actually, so he has been here longer than I have.

I want to first set off my debate by talking a bit about the content of the bill. I also want to talk a bit about some of the context around the government's agenda and proposals with respect to indigenous issues.

The bill would amend the citizenship oath to read as follows:

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

The reference to first nations, Inuit and Métis people, and the references to aboriginal and treaty rights, would be new references the bill proposes to add to the legislation.

The genesis for this discussion of amending the citizenship oath is a recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, specifically call to action number 94. As members have observed, the bill seems to have support from all parties and will pass second reading and go to committee. However, there is an issue we will need to hear about more at committee, which is important to note. We will need to hear from witnesses about the difference between the formulation of the oath in the legislation and the proposal that was in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation 94.

Government Orders

The proposed oath, which I looked up before speaking, from the commission report was as follows:

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

The formula is slightly different between the proposal in recommendation number 94 and the proposal in the bill. The bill references first nations, Inuit and Métis, and is a bit longer. Regardless, it is important to ensure that as we proceed down this road in the spirit of reconciliation, we hear from indigenous leaders along the way. Again, it will be important to elucidate at committee whether the relevant stakeholders and communities that are particularly invested in this have been consulted with respect to the difference in wording between the TRC recommendation and the bill. That will be an important point for us to follow up on.

Before I reflect on some of the specifics regarding changing the oath, I want to say that the Conservatives support the bill moving forward. We think the aspirations behind it and the substance of it are reasonable and valuable, and we look forward to further discussion and debate.

Right now we have before Parliament, at various stages, three pieces of legislation that in some sense deal with or touch directly on the relationship between the government and indigenous peoples in Canada. We have Bill C-5, Bill C-8 and Bill C-10. We are discussing Bill C-8, which amends the citizenship oath. We have Bill C-10, which is a larger, broader bill with many issues in it that would make changes to the Broadcasting Act, some of which put into the Broadcasting Act the expectation that broadcasters have diverse content reflecting different communities, including indigenous communities. Then we have Bill C-5, which deals with a statutory holiday for recognizing and remembering what happened in the context of indigenous residential schools.

All three of these bills contain important elements. The Conservatives have supported Bill C-5 and Bill C-8. We have some concerns about Bill C-10, although they are not related to the objectives, but are related to other aspects of the bill, as it is a broader bill. Regardless, in the context of the legislative agenda of the government right now, we have these three different bills.

● (1325)

If the Liberals are deciding what kinds of bills they are going to put forward with respect to indigenous issues, members might say they have a few different options in front of them. In considering those options, we can divide the bills they are putting forward into two broad categories. There would be bills that represent acts of recognition and then there would be bills that represent actions that target quality of life improvements.

This is an important distinction to make. Acts of recognition are things like putting in place a statutory holiday, changing wording, changing language, the legislature making statements, expressing its acknowledgement of certain facts and its will for reconciliation. These kinds of acts of recognition are things we do often as a legislature. They are important and have a place, which is why we are supporting this bill.

Other examples of acts of recognition this legislature has taken include motions where we express our appreciation for a certain community or the work done. In the last Parliament, we passed many bills that create heritage months, for example. Heritage months are a way of collectively commemorating and recognizing the contribution of certain communities. These acts of recognition and pieces of legislation that call for wider community recognition are important.

Why are they important? They create opportunities for us to call to mind, recognize and appreciate the valuable contributions made by certain communities. We are shaped by our history. As a legislature, we have a role in encouraging a recognition and awareness of that history. That is important and valuable. We can do those things and there is a legitimate place for us to do those things.

Another category of legislation we have are actions that specifically target quality of life improvements, which seek to make changes to practical circumstances in order to make peoples' lives concretely better.

These actions of recognition, whether changing an oath, commemorative day, representation in broadcasting or heritage month, are important. However, legislation that touches peoples' direct quality of life and deals with their ability to access justice with the recognition of their rights, the delivery of concrete services, whether it is health care or other supports, that deals with economic development, I would think are on balance more important.

To me, it is striking when I look at all the recommendations that have been made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I look at all of the options in front of the government in terms of prioritizing its response. We see more or less exclusively acts of recognition, as opposed to actions that are aimed at concrete quality of life improvements.

If we saw a mix of both, that would be fine. However, we need to start to be critical and ask that question when we are seeing a focus exclusively on the acts of recognition, as opposed to on those kinds of quality of life improvements I talked about earlier.

What are the areas we are missing? Where has the government failed when it comes to making quality of life improvements? There are many areas we need to look at in terms of concrete quality of life improvements. We can talk about justice and health, and many other things.

I want to start by talking about economic development. Talking to indigenous Canadians in my area and across the country, I know there is a real desire for economic development and for people to have jobs and opportunities in their own communities.

• (1330)

There is also a recognition that when there is economic development in different communities, it gives those communities control and ability to invest in programs that reflect the priorities of those communities. We hear calls from communities for funding from the government for programs around health, around language, around infrastructure and these sorts of things, but to the extent that communities are able to have economic development themselves, they are also able to prioritize, and invest in those priority areas without needing to come and ask the government for funding in that specific area. It is not an either-or. It is not as if communities have to choose between accessing government funding and economic development, but when communities are developing economically it gives them a greater degree of autonomy and control and it gives them the opportunity to invest in those priorities right away.

Many indigenous communities have been benefiting from being part of the energy economy, developing natural resources and pursuing other opportunities. In the course of this debate, the parliamentary secretary responded to my question about concrete actions by talking about Bill C-262 from the last Parliament. It is important to address this directly. If we want to give indigenous communities the opportunity to develop economically, they have to be able to do so in a framework that involves reasonable consultation, but ultimately gives them the opportunity to move forward. If they have, for example, an energy development project where the indigenous communities in an area are actually the proponents of that project and there is a minority that is opposing those projects, in a case where there is overwhelming support within local indigenous communities, there has to be a consultation framework that allows that project to move forward.

This is where Conservatives have parted company with other parties, especially around issues like Bill C-262, because if they put in place a framework that effectively means that one community could have a veto over the desire for the economic development of all surrounding communities, that is a problem. There needs to be a meaningful consultation process in which communities are listened to, but there also has to be an opportunity for communities to develop their own resources and the standard for consultation has to stop somewhere short of unanimity. One cannot expect that every person has to agree before we see any kind of economic development.

It has been something that maybe we have discussed less since, because COVID-19 took up all the attention in terms of discussion, but early in the year we were dealing with a situation where all of the elected community leaders wanted a particular project, the Coastal GasLink project, and a minority of hereditary chiefs were against that project going forward. That was the context, and it was debated extensively. Some members of this House behaved as if a case in which a minority within a community objected, that, in and of itself, was sufficient basis for stopping economic development from going forward. We took the view that when there is strong support within indigenous communities for a project to go forward, then that project has to be able to go forward. The consultation has to happen and if people say yes, they have to be able to develop those resources and benefit from them.

We see cases across this country where indigenous people are seeking the opportunity to pursue economic development, to devel-

Government Orders

op resources. There can be debate, there can be tensions, and those debates happen within communities as well as between different communities, but the opportunity for people to pursue economic development is important.

The government members talk about the discussion we are hearing today, separate from the debate on Bill C-8 but about Bill C-262 from the last Parliament. That is concerning for a lot of indigenous Canadians who want to have this opportunity to develop their own resources, to benefit from the opportunities that flow from them, and to use those resources to invest in things like language preservation, health improvement, infrastructure improvements and so forth. They want to be able to use the benefits that flow from economic development for those things.

• (1335)

I want to also just add, in terms of economic development, one of the exciting and interesting opportunities when it comes to the development of things like pipeline infrastructure is that the expansion of infrastructure could also bring in things like better Internet connectivity into some of these communities.

It is not just about opportunities directly in the natural resource sector, it is about the fact that, when we have benefit agreements, we have the building of infrastructure into and around different communities, which gives people the opportunity to have better connectivity, to access different resources and education, or to work in online businesses. There is so much more opportunity that flows from these kinds of developments, which we are just on the cusp of.

This country has so much potential, and a lot of that potential is around resource development. Those who are most likely to benefit to the greatest extent from that development are those who are more likely to be living proximate to those resources.

We could talk about some of the significant issues around justice, around working to ensure our justice system is fair to all people. We are identifying the reasons there may be disproportionate impacts on certain communities and working seriously to counter those impacts. That is the kind of thing that takes hard work.

The government has made statements to recognize the problems that have existed in the way indigenous people have been treated by our justice system. It is one thing to affirm there is an issue here, again, an act of recognition, and is another thing to say we are going to take concrete action and go from that active recognition and really target those quality of life improvements.

As I said earlier during questions and comments, so often when I hear from government members when we are having debates about indigenous issues, there is a tone in their speeches as if they are still in opposition. They will say that there have been all these problems and that we need to do better and do more.

Government Orders

I look across the way and think that the government has been here for five years, and it is still constantly blaming Stephen Harper and constantly talking about the failures of history that have held it back. Do I think it is possible to change everything and make everything perfect within five years? No, I do not. Do I think it could be focusing on real concrete progress as part of its agenda? Yes, I do.

I hope we do not have the current government for another five years or another 10 years, but I suspect if we did, we would still hear the same speeches. We would still hear the same members saying that we have failed for too long and we need to do better. At what point does this recognition that we need to do better come back on them and lead them to say maybe not just “we” in the abstract, somebody else needs to do better sense, but “we” as in “we as a government” need to do better?

The government here does need to do much better. The Conservative caucus is supportive of Bill C-8. We are going to be supporting it through to committee. We look forward to the committee's study on it, especially delving into some of these questions I mentioned about the distinction between the version in the legislation and the TRC recommendation. However, we want to see the government take seriously the need to advance legislation and policy that concretely improves the quality of life for indigenous Canadians.

Yes, recognition is important, but if we see bill after bill on the issue of recognition but not targeting concrete quality of life improvements, it looks increasingly like the government is trying to avoid delving into these complex policy areas that would really make a difference. If it recognizes there is a need for more resources and need for economic development, when are we going to see the legislation that is going to really support economic development within indigenous communities and make it easier to grab those opportunities? When are we going to see the legislation that seeks to address those long-standing justice issues?

The government talks about doing better. It is time for it to do better so we can see some of these concrete improvements.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member asks when we are going to see the legislation for this and when we are going to see legislation for that. I know the member is very much aware that there are 94 calls to action. Not all of those calls are under federal responsibility, and many that are under federal responsibility do not necessarily require legislative action. Along with legislative action, this government, over the years, has taken tangible monetary actions that have made a huge difference in the daily lives of people.

I wonder if the member's speech is missing very important content in terms of how it is that the government's responsibility goes beyond just providing legislation. Would he provide his thoughts in terms of why it is he believes that the Conservative Harper regime starved indigenous communities from being able to deal with issues like the boil-water effects and so many other indigenous issues?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that question was true to form from that member. It was another “blame Stephen Harper” question.

Look at where we have been in 2020 with respect to indigenous issues. We started the year off with a conflict that emanated from one coast and now we are dealing with a conflict on the other coast. We have these cases where indigenous communities want to be involved in the economy, they want to pursue economic opportunity and there are challenges in the process of doing that. The government has been asleep at the switch on all of these fronts.

Yes, of course, not all of the recommendations of the TRC require legislative action, but if we look at the areas the government has picked and the areas the government has ignored, we see that it recognizes the big problems but does not act on them. It is focused on recognition. Acts of recognition are important but they are not the whole picture.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's remarks on this bill.

I agree with what he said about it being easy to summarize the Liberal government's stance on indigenous issues in this country. My colleague recently made an effort to speak French during a debate on another motion, so I too will make an effort by saying that, in English, the Liberal Party's stance on this issue boils down to “words, words, words”.

On the subject of housing, which has gotten a lot of attention lately, the government launched a cross-Canada rapid housing initiative. Unfortunately, Montreal and Quebec City are the only two cities in Quebec that have had the opportunity to get money under that initiative. Mayor Valérie Plante pointed out that the number of homeless people in Montreal has doubled from 3,000 to 6,000 during the pandemic, which is a big problem.

I would like to draw my colleague's attention to the following. The new citizenship oath reads as follows: “I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second”. Obviously that is a problem for us, but all of a sudden it is about the Constitution. I know my colleague is a history buff. As he knows, Quebec did not sign. Is it not a little—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a solution to offer. If Quebec would sign the Constitution, there would be no problem.

That was a joke.

I thank my colleague for his question. It is true that this government is all talk and no action.

My colleague presented us with this example. I serve on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and I can say that the government talks a lot, but does not walk the talk.

• (1345)

[English]

The member spoke about a number of issues with the oath. He is not necessarily enthusiastic about the reference to the Queen or the Constitution.

The general spirit of this is the application of recommendation 94, and it is noteworthy that the reference to the Constitution does not appear in call to action 94. That said, this is an issue that I am sure members will raise in committee. The question for us at second reading is the spirit of the legislation at this stage.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to correct some facts in my hon. colleague's speech. I want to let him know that Bill C-262 was studied in committee. There were 71 witnesses and only one mentioned veto. When he talks about the hysteria of ensuring that indigenous peoples' basic human rights are recognized in this country by adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, I am wondering why the Conservatives continue to base their opinion on evidence that is not factual, which has been affirmed by the legal community, and why he feels that providing indigenous peoples with the respect of minimum human rights, something that is afforded to other Canadians, is going to result in the sky falling?

There is this whole bogeyman coming out of the closet when it comes to ensuring that indigenous people have the same rights as all other Canadians. I am wondering why he and his party violently fight against that and if they plan, once again, to vote en bloc against the human rights of indigenous peoples in this country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I am not sure if her characterization of Conservatives being hysterical about this or violently opposed to the legislation is quite on point. I would simply say that I disagree with former Bill C-262 insofar as I do not think it is an effective mechanism. Yes, it upholds the aspirations that we all have, but the question is not just one of recognition. It is also a question of what the practical implications of the bill will be.

We need to have legislation that recognizes rights and is clear about giving indigenous communities the opportunity to develop their own resources, because we do not want a situation where indigenous communities are prevented from developing their own resources and prospering by the sentiments of minorities within the larger community. There has to be a process of meaningful consultation, a result and an opportunity to develop in cases where it has the support of the majority.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I hope my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan will forgive me for picking up on one aspect of this notion that the Liberals will forever blame Stephen Harper for everything. I certainly share a lot of sympathies with his point of view, but we did debate in this place, which I know is close to the heart of my friend, the egregious conduct of the People's Republic

Government Orders

of China in relation to human rights and their corporations acting here in Canada. I want to point out an aspect of his comments.

The Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement was not only negotiated by Stephen Harper and brought into being and ratified through cabinet, through order in council, but it binds this country legally for 31 years. It is rather hard to get out of it or treat it as something in the past, when it bound us for such a very long time. I wonder if the member would agree with me that it is past time to have a full review of what we are obligated to and how our hands are tied as a result of this Canada-China FIPA.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the relationship between Canada and the PRC is the subject of great interest. I will be forgiven for perhaps not having my notes on that specific topic in front of me as we are debating Bill C-8, dealing with the citizenship oath and indigenous peoples.

I understand the intention that framed the agreement. It was designed to try to provide more protection for Canadian investors that were operating in China. Obviously, it is a very difficult environment for Canadian investors, and it is also fair to acknowledge how even circumstances have changed around that relationship over the last five or six years. Maybe there were expectations of the trajectory of that relationship that existed 10 or 15 years ago that have just not come to fruition.

Maybe at some point, on a Green Party opposition day, we will have an opportunity to debate this in greater depth and I will be fully prepared to give a more detailed response at that time.

• (1350)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege to share my time today with my colleague from Oakville North—Burlington.

I cannot begin this speech without first acknowledging that the House of Commons is situated on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

The oath of citizenship is very important to me as an immigrant to this country. The day that I was able to recite it in front of the citizenship judge was the day that I truly arrived in this country. It is a moment in time I will never forget. It was 1987, and I was an engineering student at the University of Calgary. For many years, both before and after I arrived here from India, Canada represented two things for me and the dreams that I had for my future: equality for all and opportunity for all.

Even without a firm grasp of English and with very little financial resources, I knew that if I worked hard and embraced everything my new country had to offer me, I would succeed. Therefore, in the weeks leading up to my citizenship ceremony, I recited the oath tirelessly. I worked on absorbing every word to memory. I practised my pronunciation with diligence, so that I could show the respect I held for such a monumental point in my life. Most importantly, I took the time to put into context what it meant to commit to fulfilling my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Statements by Members

I read as much as I could to educate myself about the history of Canada. I also read the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, so that I could fully appreciate the values that united citizens of all backgrounds together. Most importantly, I spoke to people. I found out what it meant to be Canadian through the voices of friends and colleagues that I had met over the years.

I am sharing my own personal experience, because, ultimately, the entire process behind our oath of citizenship boils down to values. These are the tenets that we, as Canadians, want to share with those seeking citizenship. They are also fundamental pillars helping new Canadians embark on their new lives here in Canada. This is why Bill C-8 is so critically important. It is about reaffirming a reconciliation framework that shows respect and deference to the aboriginal and treaty rights of the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

The Canadian story begins with indigenous peoples' heritage in Canada. As part of the Government of Canada's ongoing and ever-evolving commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples, we must enact recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership in action. It is a process that is multi-faceted. This why our Prime Minister committed to national indigenous organizations that he will meet with them annually in order to sustain and advance initiatives that continue to grow shared priorities and progress. It is why every piece of legislation that this government advances is crafted with a lens of reconciliation and respect, and it is why, at the moment of being granted citizenship, we are proposing a revised text of the oath to contain wording that reflects the broad range of rights held by diverse indigenous peoples.

These are difficult times for Canadians and for the entire world. Throughout the global pandemic, the government has focused on supporting indigenous communities, working to control the spread of COVID-19 and keeping everybody safe.

• (1355)

The government will continue to do that as we walk the shared path of reconciliation with indigenous people and remain focused on implementing the commitments made in 2019.

This has not stopped during this pandemic. If anything, it has gotten worse. The government is committed to addressing racism in a way that is informed by experience of racialized communities and the indigenous people. This is hard work, not just for Parliament but for all Canadians. Renewing the relationship with indigenous peoples must be based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. Our laws and policies must foster co-operation with indigenous peoples and reflect on how we can work to protect indigenous languages, traditions and institutions.

This government continues to advance the belief that Canada's diversity is among its greatest strengths. We are a united country because of, not in spite of, our differences. At the same time, we remain focused on an inclusive society that is bound by a set of shared values. The citizenship oath is much more than a passage of words, it represents a deep appreciation for our open, free, democratic and diverse Canada. We as a government believe strongly that is at the heart of that appreciation and understanding of indigenous peoples, their history and their rights.

The Bill C-8 amendment is intended to contribute to reconciliation with indigenous people.

I want to once again convey the importance that my citizenship ceremony and the oath I recited have had in my life. I was given an answer for my dreams and the way in which I could fully embody becoming Canadian. Today's proposed change in language continues that process for every new Canadian going forward.

Indigenous peoples are at the heart of Canada's history, its identity and, indeed, its future. The legislation would help to continue building trust through stronger, more collaborative and respectful relationships with indigenous peoples across Canada.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's speech in support of Bill C-8 was moving and beautiful.

I have a very simple question for him. He spoke passionately about the importance of including the aboriginal peoples of Canada treaty rights in our oath, but I wonder whether he feels it is just one step in many steps in recognizing aboriginal treaty rights in our nation.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, it is totally true that this is just one step moving forward. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report has many different aspects.

I know the ministers are working very closely with indigenous leaders across the country to ensure access to clean water and good health and ensure other issues faced by indigenous communities are taken care of as well.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have four minutes for questions and comments after the time allocated for Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, in recognizing the stark and unusual period we have been facing since March of this year, I would like to pay tribute to the incredible efforts of the people in my riding who have stepped up to help our community in remarkable ways, supporting local charities, shopping local, adapting their small businesses literally on a dime to help deliver much-needed services and products safely.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

I salute the eight municipal governments, the two first nations councils, the Georgian Bay Métis Council, the four chambers of commerce and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit for their leadership and great work on keeping the people of my riding informed and supporting them during this pandemic.

[English]

Finally, I salute the front-line health care workers of Simcoe North, whose care for their patients in the face of crushing demands and great personal risk has been steadfast and unrelenting. They deserve our deepest gratitude each and every day.

* * *

INDIGENOUS DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is indigenous disability awareness month. First proclaimed in British Columbia in 2015, it is one of the first and only observations specific to indigenous peoples living with disabilities anywhere in the world.

This month we raised awareness of the often unique issues faced by indigenous peoples living with disabilities, the necessity of ensuring that their disability and health-rated needs are addressed, while recognizing the valuable contribution they bring to our communities on a daily basis.

Recently, I spoke to Neil Belanger from the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, who shared with me that indigenous peoples in Canada experienced a rate of disability twice that of the non-indigenous population. The prevalence of disability among indigenous peoples combined with the challenges faced by indigenous communities further compound the challenges they face.

Let us ensure that their voices are included as a government if we want to be a truly inclusive society.

* * *

*[Translation]***POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many different topics were discussed this weekend at the G20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, one of the most important topics was overlooked: the release of political prisoners like Raif Badawi.

The Bloc Québécois twice urged the government to take advantage of this opportune moment. It is customary for Saudi Arabia to pardon prisoners at major international events. Clearly the government fell down on the job and did not do everything possible to get Raif Badawi released.

Today, at the conclusion of the G20, the joint statement made no mention of human rights, and Mr. Badawi continues to serve his sentence as he has been for eight years now. Canada acted as though the G20 had been organized by a state like any other. Ottawa missed a golden opportunity to help Mr. Badawi, his wife Ensaf and their children. Ottawa will be held to account.

*[English]***SEAMUS O'REGAN SR.**

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to send my deepest condolences to our colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, on the loss of his father, Seamus O'Regan Sr., last week. I am sure our province and our entire parliamentary family join me in sending our thoughts and prayers to the minister and his family at this most difficult time.

Seamus O'Regan Sr. was a proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian, a dedicated public servant and, most important, a devoted husband, father and grandfather. Having been called to the bar in 1968, he spent many years on the bench in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, before being appointed to the provincial supreme court where he served 34 years as a justice and retired in 2017.

Mr. O'Regan will be fondly remembered for his quick wit, practicality and utmost kindness to all. I hope everyone takes a moment to remember Seamus O'Regan Sr. and the profound impact he had on his family and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

* * *

● (1405)

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, until recently, most Canadians had never heard of Chase Claypool, but eight months ago Chase was drafted into the National Football League by the Pittsburgh Steelers. In his second game as a professional, the rookie wide receiver had three catches, including an 84-yard passing touchdown. That is the longest TD from scrimmage in league history by a Canadian player. Two weeks later, Chase scored four more touchdowns against the Philadelphia Eagles, another record. Since then, he has continued to tear up the league, including 10 touchdowns in his first 10 games. Could a Super Bowl be far behind?

Chase played high school football for the Abbotsford Panthers before playing college ball at Notre Dame. He joins golf champions Nick Taylor and Adam Hadwin, World Cup soccer player Sophie Schmidt, Vancouver Canucks Jake Virtanen and many others in cementing Abbotsford's reputation as a hotbed of talent.

I congratulate all of them. They have made us proud.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

LONGUEUIL TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS MARKET AND FAIR

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday I will have the pleasure of taking part in the official opening of Longueuil's 14th annual traditional Christmas market and fair.

This year, because of the pandemic, this event is moving with the times and becoming a virtual market. Thanks to the organizers' creativity, everyone will have the opportunity to discover our talented local artisans' products and shop online. Virtual market visitors will also be treated to all sorts of seasonal activities such as singing, secret recipes and more.

I want to thank the team from *Métiers et traditions* and the City of Longueuil for enabling the people of my riding and elsewhere to fully and safely enjoy the magic of the holidays while supporting local businesses. I invite you all to discover Longueuil's traditional Christmas market and fair.

* * *

[English]

KITCHENER-WATERLOO SYMPHONY

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House and recognize one of Waterloo region's largest arts and cultural organizations. The Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Since 1945, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony has grown from a community orchestra into the third largest in Ontario. It has toured the world and its recordings have received Juno Award nominations. Throughout the pandemic, the symphony has transitioned to virtual concerts, comprising of a physically distanced orchestra on stage at its home venue, Centre in the Square, delivered via video streaming.

On a personal note, one of the greatest experiences I have had is the privilege of sharing the stage with our symphony, performing with and hearing my own compositions played by these world-class musicians. My daughter and many other young artists, as part of our region's youth pop choir, KW Glee, have also performed numerous times with the symphony.

On behalf of all hon. members in Waterloo region, from Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and our townships, we wish to congratulate the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for its milestone anniversary, resilience and success.

* * *

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer I was honoured to meet a fascinating person in Edmonton with an amazing story.

Leo Korownyk told me about what it was like to live through the Holodomor. That was the forced starvation of millions of people in Ukraine in the 1930s. Joseph Stalin was the communist leader re-

sponsible for it. Even though crops in Ukraine were plentiful, people starved to death.

This is the time of year we commemorate that horrible famine. I want to thank Leo for telling me his first-person story. I am glad to spread the word about this atrocity. We must continue to guard against hard-core socialism and communism. It was communism that enslaved Ukraine and caused the genocide. Let us remember the words of Winston Churchill, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it."

* * *

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 87th anniversary of the famine-genocide in Ukraine known as the Holodomor, when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated all food to destroy a Ukrainian population opposed to his rule. Nineteen people per minute, 1,200 per hour and 28,000 per day were dying of famine at the height of the Holodomor. The world was silent and millions died as a result.

My grandmother, Olena, was a survivor of the Holodomor and she often told me that she hoped the victims of the Holodomor would not only be remembered, but they would be honoured. Honouring them, she said, meant not just remembering them or commemorating them, but taking the steps to ensure that a crime like this would never happen again.

This week I hope all of us remember and commemorate the victims, but I also hope we recommit ourselves to ensuring that crimes like this, even today, stop and never happen again. Let us do as my grandmother would have asked if she were here today. Let us remember the victims. Let us commemorate the victims. Let us honour them.

* * *

● (1410)

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to call on leaders from across Canada to renew our commitment to eliminating non-tariff barriers to internal trade.

Canada's economy is in desperate need of solid leadership and certainty if we are going to build back stronger. Experts from across economic sectors agree that by eliminating trade barriers between provinces, Canada could add \$50 billion to \$130 billion every year to our GDP, thus saving Canadian families \$5,700 to \$7,500 a year.

In a world of increased uncertainty and economic volatility, now is the time for us to turn to our fellow Canadians as our most trusted and reliable trade partners. Breaking down trade barriers will help strengthen national unity, protect essential industries and get our economy back on track.

In the House, I do my best to speak on behalf of the constituents of Regina—Lewvan who love the term, “The world needs more Canada.” Now is the time for all of us to take the view that Canada needs more Canada, and champion internal trade as a critical tool in our economic recovery tool belt.

* * *

VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CRIME WEEK

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, we are commemorating Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. Today, I want to remember a few victims and their families from my region.

Lyle and Marie McCann from St. Albert disappeared and were killed. Their killer has been convicted but has yet to reveal the location of their remains. We must do more to ensure killers are held accountable when they refuse to provide information to families. McCann's law, which I introduced in the last Parliament, would do just that.

I also think of Shelly MacInnis-Wynn who lost her husband, Constable David Wynn, at the Apex Casino in St. Albert. Her husband's killer was let out on bail with incomplete information, illustrating why we need Wynn's law to ensure criminal history is always shared at bail hearings.

I think of the murdered and missing indigenous women and the citizens of rural Canada who have been victimized and denied the supports they need to ensure their security from criminals.

Conservatives will not stop fighting until all victims and their families get the justice they deserve.

* * *

[Translation]

OKILL STUART

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the end of November, which for me is the month of remembrance.

I meet regularly with veterans living in Brossard—Saint-Lambert, and these meetings are often filled with strong emotions as well as a great deal of humour.

[English]

Today, I would like to remember and honour Okill Stuart.

Mr. Stuart died last year at the grand old age of 98. He was our constituency's last surviving World War II veteran. He was also a person of many accomplishments as a businessman, family man and incredibly involved member of the Saint-Lambert community.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

Okill Stuart never hesitated to share his war experiences with members of the new generation in Saint-Lambert who were fortunate enough to hear his stories.

[English]

I was very fortunate to have known and befriended this most admirable human being. He received many honours throughout his life, but I think the ones he most treasured were the ones he received for his service: the France-Germany Star, the Defence Medal and the War Medal.

[Translation]

He also received the Legion of Honour medal.

Let us honour his memory.

* * *

[English]

COQUITLAM SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, I was pleased to join Coquitlam small business owners Zabrina, Justin and Phil on a special video call with our Prime Minister. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many challenges for small businesses, and Zabrina, Justin and Phil's Ninja Bubble Tea is no exception.

When the pandemic first hit, Ninja Bubble Tea had to shut down operations from March to May. Since reopening, it has shifted its operations to meet the evolving challenges of COVID-19. I was happy to see Ninja Bubble Tea taking full advantage of our government's COVID-19 support programs, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy, Canada emergency commercial rent assistance and the Canada emergency business account.

Ninja Bubble Tea's story is one of hometown success. There are countless stories like this behind every small business: stories of entrepreneurship, perseverance and everyday Canadian resilience. I am proud to highlight yet another Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam story in the House.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

JEAN BEAUCHESNE

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to Jean Beauchesne, a colleague from my riding office in Trois-Rivières. Last June, he received not one but two cancer diagnoses. We were all shocked when we heard the terrible news.

Oral Questions

Despite this, Jean has kept up his resilience and extraordinary composure while undergoing chemotherapy. Jean worked in the Mauricie media for almost 30 years and was our communications officer. His perseverance and resilience are such that a close friend called him the Terry Fox of 2020.

On behalf of the people of Trois-Rivières, I wish Jean a good recovery. I hope that our positive energy will sustain you, Jean.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are standing up for Canadian values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law threatened by the Chinese communist regime. Conservatives strongly support pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong who are being arrested and risking their lives in the name of freedom from China.

Canadians are alarmed by revelations that the Chinese communist party is forcing the Uighur Muslim minority into brutal re-education camps. China's widespread human rights abuses are well known to Canadians. Why then are the NDP member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski and the Green Party member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith scheduled to speak at an event that amplifies Chinese communist propaganda and interferes with Canada's independent judiciary?

The event calls for the release of Meng Wanzhou, who is currently under house arrest in her \$13-million Vancouver mansion. Green and NDP members' time would be better spent calling for the release of Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, who have been held in appalling conditions in Chinese prisons for over 700 days.

Shame on the NDP and Green Party for supporting Chinese communist propaganda over Canadian values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

* * *

MARC HOVINGH

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like so many others, I was deeply shocked and saddened when Constable Marc Hovingh was killed in the line of duty on Manitoulin Island last Thursday.

A 28-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police who was described as a gentle giant by his friends, Constable Hovingh, with his wife Lianne, was active in his community, especially within the Mindemoya Missionary Church.

As we strive to better recognize the contribution of essential and front-line workers, this event reminds us of the legacy of sacrifice by those who stand to serve and protect.

On behalf of the people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, who are filled with grief at this tragic loss and grateful to all who put their lives on the line for us every day, I wish his wife Lianne and his children Nathan, Elena, Laura and Sarah continued strength through these difficult times.

As I extend sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family, I do as well to his colleagues in the Ontario Provincial Police, to his friends and to the residents of Manitoulin Island.

I ask all members to join me in a moment of silence for Constable Marc Hovingh.

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of Ontario Provincial Police Constable Marc Hovingh, killed in the line of duty on November 19, 2020.

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not hesitate to involve himself in areas of provincial jurisdiction when it suits his political purposes, but on issues regarding the health of Canadians and the response to COVID he is in hiding. The Prime Minister alone is responsible for the border. He failed. The Prime Minister alone is responsible for vaccines and rapid testing. He is failing. It is easier for the Prime Minister to blame the provinces for the shutdowns and increased cases than to do something. That is cowardly.

Why has the Prime Minister's big talk never been matched by real solutions?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me speak for a moment about vaccines. Let me start by thanking the outstanding public servants at Procurement Canada. Thanks to them, Canada has one of the very best portfolios of vaccines in the world. We have purchase agreements with all of the leading vaccine candidates: Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline, Medicago, Novavax and Oxford-AstraZeneca. We are well positioned to vaccinate Canadians and that is what we are going to do.

Oral Questions

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister alone is responsible for our border and what happens there. Today, we learned that over five million people have come into Canada and not isolated. If we had rapid testing these people, many of whom are essential workers, could have been tested and cleared or tested, isolated and treated. We are 11 months in and rapid testing is uncommon in Canada and at-home testing is non-existent.

When will the Prime Minister step up, do his job and ensure that rapid and at-home testing are available to Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me inform Canadians and members of the House that six rapid tests have been authorized: bKIT Virus Finder from Hyris; BD Veritor system from Becton, Dickinson and Company; Abbott ID Now; Abbott Panbio; Xpert Xpress; and Sofia 2 SARS Antigen FIA from Diagnostic Hybrids. By the end of the year we expect delivery of 20.5 million Abbott Panbio antigen tests.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk, but no results.

Eleven months after COVID hit, thousands of lives and millions of jobs and freedoms of Canadians have been lost. We are on the verge of a mental health crisis, and lockdowns that were meant to be a last resort to buy some time have become the Prime Minister's only answer. Smart border action, rapid testing and good data are all part of the solution and a federal responsibility, but the Prime Minister is sitting on his hands and doing none of the heavy lifting.

When will he step up, do his job and present a smart strategy to deal with COVID?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about vaccines and rapid tests so let me talk for a moment about the border. Let me start by reminding all Canadians and visitors to Canada that a 14-day quarantine is mandatory and we expect and require people to abide by that.

When it comes to the Canada-U.S. border, let me also say this. We have imposed unprecedented restrictions on travel across that essential border and have done it while maintaining the essential lifeline of trade between Canada and the U.S. That is a great accomplishment and a testament to the friendship between Canada and the United States.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that we just get bits of information at a time.

On top of that, the provinces are the ones telling us about the plan to distribute vaccines when that information should be coming directly from Ottawa. Three provinces have announced how many vaccines they will receive.

Sure, the plan is easy to see: The vaccines will be distributed to the provinces on a per capita basis. However, we should not be getting bits of information from the provinces about the federal government's game plan. Why will the Government of Canada not

share its distribution plan with the public? It should not be complicated.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that the vaccine distribution plan is absolutely essential.

That is why I am so proud of the public servants at Public Services and Procurement Canada. Thanks to them, Canada has the very best portfolio of vaccines in the world. We have contracts with Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi-GlaxoSmithKline, Medicago, Novavax and AstraZeneca-Oxford.

• (1425)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Deputy Prime Minister, that is not the problem.

The problem is that the Prime Minister, who is back at Rideau Cottage, comes out every day to put on a little show for Canadians, but he has nothing to say. He gives press conferences with no new information.

Meanwhile, the American government has proven that it has an action plan. Procurement is already done. The distribution plan has been set in motion. Everyone knows where the government is headed. Let's look at a smaller country, the Netherlands. Officials there have announced that the vaccine will be given to people aged 60 and over, people with health problems and front-line health care workers.

Why does our government not come up with a comprehensive plan and announce it to Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to distribute the vaccine, the most important thing is to procure the vaccine.

That is why I want to emphasize that Canada has done this. It is important to reassure Canadians and to explain that we really do have the best portfolio of vaccines in the world.

As for distribution, we are currently working with the provinces and territories, experts, and the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that we have an excellent distribution plan.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Thérien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, the Minister of Official Languages declared that we are on the verge of a linguistic crisis.

I have news for her. French has been in decline in Quebec for a long time, and much of the blame for that lies with the federal government, whether Liberal or Conservative. She is like a pyromaniac who yells "fire!". Ottawa has been gutting Bill 101 since 1977. Ottawa funds organizations that challenge Quebec laws. Ottawa opposes the application of Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses.

Oral Questions

Will the government admit that the linguistic crisis is largely Ottawa's doing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Today, members talked about the Holodomor, a deliberate effort to kill a language and a culture. That is why I want to assure the member that French in Quebec is very important to me personally. I am well aware of the fragility of the French language.

I want to assure all members that we will work to protect French in Quebec.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is an exception in the Liberal Party.

The Liberals' culture has long been hostile toward the French language. One half hour after apologizing for underestimating the decline of French, the member for Saint-Laurent liked a tweet stating that this decline is greatly exaggerated. That is just unbelievable.

When the Bloc wanted to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses, the member for Mount Royal rose in the House and stated that it was shameful. Today, the Bloc has returned with an actual bill to protect the French language.

Which Liberal camp will win: the one that says it wants to take action or, as usual, the one that shows contempt for the French language?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to again point out that I understand what a challenge it is for Quebec and Quebecers to remain francophone in North America when they are surrounded by anglophones.

I also understand that there are new challenges in the digital age. That is why I truly want to work with all of our colleagues to protect the French language in Quebec and Montreal.

* * *

● (1430)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, small businesses had to close and that was tough. The Liberals proposed a plan, but that plan did not work because it was designed for landlords, not tenants.

Today, the plan still does not work for small businesses. The NDP has a simple solution. Will the Prime Minister provide help to small businesses that is retroactive to the spring or not?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I am very pleased to inform the House that, starting today, small and medium-sized businesses can apply for the Canada emergency rent subsidy through the Canada Revenue Agency. Payments will begin on December 4.

I also want to note that the assistance will be retroactive to September 27. The government will cover up to 65% of rent. If businesses are subject to lockdown restrictions they will receive 90% of the cost of their rent.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me try this again in English.

The plan proposed by the Liberals when small businesses were forced to shut down was a complete and abject failure because it was designed for landlords, not tenants, so that, as a tenant, a small business could not apply for it. Now their plan still does not help the businesses that had to shut down in the spring.

Our solution is simple. We are asking the government to make that help retroactive to April. It is what small businesses are asking for. Will the Prime Minister help out small businesses by making the help retroactive to the spring?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have today is not only a plan for commercial rent. We have a law, and I would like to thank all members of this House and of the Senate for supporting it.

I would like to take this opportunity to let all small businesses across our country know that they can apply today to Revenue Canada to get that rent support. Payments will begin on December 4. This is retroactive to September 27. This is the support our businesses need, and they will get it.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Canada's chief medical officer released an update on COVID-19 modelling in Canada. While the numbers were sobering and a stark reminder of the serious situation we are in, one thing really stuck out to me. There was no real mention of indigenous people or their communities in this report.

How can the government properly support indigenous people at this time when they are not even included in these significant reports?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the last week for indigenous peoples has seen multiple rises in cases affecting indigenous communities. It is, indeed, alarming. What the member has also seen are targeted responses in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Government of Canada stands with those peoples as they deploy exceptional measures to defend their people and to prevent their communities from contracting COVID, and we will always be there with them.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question was about data. With the alarming rise of cases in indigenous communities, the Minister of Indigenous Services this weekend spoke about the lack of accurate data.

On April 28 at the INAN committee, I asked the minister directly what actions his department was taking to ensure informed decisions. Seven months later, a second wave is overwhelming indigenous people and their communities, yet we have more news stories about how a lack of data is still a problem.

Does the minister have a solution, or is it simply too late?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the collection of data is an ongoing process. What we do know is what we are able, as a matter of effective jurisdiction, to control, which is the situation on reserve. We know that the data has so far been positive. The alarming rate of increase over the last few weeks is, indeed, alarming. That is why we are deploying tailored resources because on the feedback we have received from communities.

Where we see that vulnerability is in urban settings, and that requires partnership with indigenous communities on the ground, as well as with the provinces. That is what we will constantly be striving for, that continued work so we can have a tailored healthy response to a world pandemic.

• (1435)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pointing a finger at the provinces is not going to solve the problem. Let us try something different.

On December 20 of last year, Maxwell Johnson and his granddaughter were handcuffed and put in the back of a police cruiser simply for attempting to open a bank account using a status card as identification. Today we learned that it was ISC, the minister's own department, that encouraged the bank to call 911.

Does the minister actually think this was an appropriate response by his department?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the incidents in question are exceedingly alarming. Indeed, they did occur a year ago, and what we saw was the process of systemic racism showing its head on the ground, and the results that it had with the police intervening.

Clearly all members of society need to know and respect the validity of a status card. I only recently got the transcript of the 911 call. In the process of reviewing it, it is slightly unclear, but if there is an issue with Indigenous Services Canada and its involvement, we will act swiftly.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rapid testing helps save lives and keep the economy rolling.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government dragged its feet when it came to rapid testing. For instance, the Abbott ID NOW test was approved by the Canadian government on September 30, but it was

approved by the United States way back on March 27. March, April, May, June, July, August and September makes six months of waiting.

Why did the government drag its feet for six months on this very important rapid test?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 4.6 million rapid tests have been delivered since October to provinces and territories. Indeed, over two million have gone to Ontario and 1.2 million to Quebec.

All across the country, we have delivered the resources that provinces and territories need to protect the health of their citizens. We are going to continue to be there for provinces and territories as they work to deploy these rapid tests in ways that help them combat COVID-19.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned a lot of numbers, but she forgot one, the number six. The Liberals waited six months to approve a rapid test that had been approved by the U.S.

Let us now talk about at-home testing. On Tuesday, November 17, the United States government proudly announced that it had approved Lucira Health's at-home test, which is designed for home use and gives results in just 30 minutes.

It took the Canadian government six months to recognize rapid tests. Will we have to wait another six months for at-home testing?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have leaned in to work with companies and manufacturers that are developing new tools to fight COVID-19, including testing solutions. The world is eagerly awaiting rapid tests, saliva tests and new technology that will help us diagnose quickly people who have COVID-19.

On our end, our job is to ensure that provinces and territories have what they need to deliver on health care in their jurisdictions, and that is exactly what we have been doing all along. Whether it is the \$19 billion in safe restart money, or the procurement and deployment of rapid tests, we will be there for provinces and territories.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the same old story, the same old broken record.

That is exactly what the minister told us about rapid testing six months ago. She told us that we need to look at this on a case-by-case basis. However, the U.S. approved these tests six months ago.

Right now, at-home tests are available. They can save lives and give results in 30 minutes. The U.S. government approved one of those tests a week ago. Today, the Canadian government is unable to approve it.

Are the Liberals going to wait six months? The longer it waits, the more COVID-19 will spread.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost 10.9 million Canadians have been tested for COVID-19 here in Canada. This is in large part because of the expenditures of the Canadian government in supporting provinces and territories to deliver on their health care responsibilities.

Whether we are talking about \$19 billion in transfers, or about approval and deployment of rapid testing, all of the supports we provide to the provinces and territories are with one goal in mind, and that is to protect Canadians from COVID-19. We are going to continue to be there for provinces and territories every step of the way.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister was right to declare this weekend that we are on the verge of a language crisis.

She acknowledged that we need to do whatever we can to protect the French language and that this is how we will move forward as a society. That is why the Bloc Québécois will be introducing a bill that will make federally regulated companies subject to Bill 101.

The Prime Minister has said that he supports Bill 101. Will his government and his party act accordingly and support our bill?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many parliamentarians have walked these hallowed halls.

In the history of the 42 previous parliaments, French has never been recognized as a minority language in this country. This government is the first government in history to recognize the importance of the eight million francophones who fight every day to speak their language, and we will fight alongside them.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want to see action. It is one thing to recognize that we are on the verge of a language crisis, as the minister has done, but it is another to do something about it, which means recognizing that the Liberals themselves contributed to the crisis and then implementing concrete solutions.

The Bloc Québécois wants to make knowledge of French a requirement for obtaining citizenship in Quebec, but the Liberals want to vote against that. The Bloc wants Bill 101 to apply to federally regulated companies, but the Liberals are unable to say whether they will vote for or against that.

We are coming up with concrete solutions, so why are they unable to take action?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we agree with the Bloc Québécois members and all colleagues who are francophiles and official languages allies.

Protecting our language in Quebec and across the country is important. At the same time, protecting the French fact means protecting it both in Quebec and across the country. That means supporting it not just for Quebec, but for all francophones. We have one million francophones in minority communities who fight for their right to speak French every day.

That is why the modernized Official Languages Act that we will be introducing takes those aspects into account.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the government extended the Canada emergency wage subsidy until next summer, the Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment to cut off access for political parties. The government voted against that, supposedly because it did not like how we worded the amendment. I gave the Liberals two weeks to get back to me with wording that would suit them, but I have had no response.

Was it really the wording they did not like, or was it actually the idea that they would have to pay back the \$800,000 they have taken out of the money intended for charities and SMEs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It gives me an opportunity to point out to Canadians that, together, we have created a rent subsidy program and that Canadians can apply today.

With regard to the emergency wage subsidy, we also decided together to extend this program until the summer. This is also very important to all businesses across the country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to access the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, people must have earned \$5,000 the previous year. However, according to information obtained last week, the government let 800,000 people receive the CERB without even having filed their income tax return. There was therefore no confirmation that they were eligible for this money. Those benefits were paid for by hard-working taxpayers.

How did the government confirm the eligibility of people who had not filed a tax return?

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very clear from the beginning of the pandemic: We will always be there for Canadians in need.

The eligibility criteria for the Canada emergency response benefit clearly state that an individual must have earned at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the preceding 12 months. This could be employment income, self-employment income or provincial benefits for maternity or paternity leave.

It is ridiculous that we have to tell the member opposite to do some research before believing everything he reads on the Internet.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess she is saying we should not believe the documents that are produced by her own department. That is where we got the information.

She thinks there is a conspiracy going on in her department, which said that 800,000 people got access to the CERB benefit without filing taxes to prove they had earned the necessary \$5,000 in order to receive the money. I think of the minimum wage workers who went out and bagged groceries and worked hard during the pandemic. They had to pay the tax for that money to go out.

What did the government do to ensure that the people who received the cheques were actually eligible?

• (1445)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little baffled, to tell members the truth. I can tell members that filing one's taxes is not an eligibility criteria for CERB. Someone has to have earned \$5,000 in the last 12 months or last year. It very much could have happened that people earned it over two tax years. It is illustrative of having met the eligibility criteria, but it is not one of the eligibility criteria.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course it is not one of the eligibility criteria that one files taxes, but it is one of the only ways someone can prove they have actually earned the \$5,000 necessary to qualify. In this case, 800,000 people did not file their taxes. The government should indicate if it had some other way of demonstrating they earned the necessary money. This is a government that gave cheques to prisoners and told public servants to send out money even when they suspected fraud.

If they were not using income tax filing as proof of eligibility, what exact evidence were they using to prove people were eligible?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we can look at people's tax filings, but if they have not filed taxes, we will follow up with them. They may have earned that \$5,000 in this tax year. They could have earned it in January or February of this year. Of course it would not be shown on last year's tax filings. It is one way the CRA can determine eligibility, but as the member himself said, it is not the only way.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Alberta is now reporting the most COVID-19 cases in the country, more than Ontario and Quebec. We have massive outbreaks in long-term care homes. Our major hospitals have reached their ICU capacity and there is no place for patients to go.

In Alberta, we have no mask mandate, the fewest COVID-19 restrictions in the country, and Jason Kenney is refusing to allow the federal contact tracing app, even though the Alberta app is an abysmal failure.

Albertans are dying. Will the government show some leadership to protect Albertans from this disaster?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every province and territory has the responsibility to protect the health of their citizens. We have assisted the provinces and territories every step of the way in their efforts to do so, with \$19 billion in safe restart money for contact tracing, testing and data, \$740 million of that money going to long-term care homes to support and protect people who live in long-term care homes from infection. For schools, there is \$2 billion to protect students, teachers and staff who work in those schools from infection, and there are rapid tests for the provinces and territories.

We will continue to be there, including with the Canadian Red Cross, additional contact tracers and more.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, IRCC's ability to receive applications from the mailroom has slowed to a crawl. For spousal sponsorship, IRCC went from receiving over 6,000 applications per month to just 30. The government is also unable to meet the minister's 14-day processing standard for extended family reunification. In fact, the minister's office said there is no way to know if those applications even exist and "not to bother" inquiring because the unit is overwhelmed.

Will the minister just automatically renew documents that have expired since the shutdown, without further requirements from the applicants, to free up scarce resources?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no government has done more than ours to reunite families, and that includes in the midst of this pandemic.

Oral Questions

We are going to accelerate and prioritize the processing of family sponsorship applications, including for spouses, with 49,000 by the end of this year. We will allocate 40,000 spaces under the parent and grandparent program, and we are indeed meeting our service standards when it comes to reuniting families in the midst of this pandemic. That is a reflection of our government's commitment to reuniting families.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister told Canadians that the number of COVID-19 cases in the second wave is surging and that now is the time to redouble our efforts to fight the virus. He also promised that the federal government would always be there to support Canadians and their livelihoods.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance please give us a brief update on the Canadian economy and tell us what the government plans to do next?

• (1450)

[Translation]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has prioritized the health response to COVID-19 and has supported businesses and our economy.

[English]

We entered this crisis with a strong fiscal position, which has allowed us to provide unprecedented support to Canadians during this pandemic.

I am pleased to announce today that on November 30 we will be presenting the 2020 fall economic statement. Our plan will continue to support Canadians through the pandemic and ensure that the post-COVID economy is robust, inclusive and sustainable.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, B'nai Brith, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, led by former Liberal MP Michael Levitt, have all expressed deep disappointment in the government's terrible decision to vote for an anti-Israel resolution at the UN last week.

Will the government restore Canada's long-standing policy of opposition to these anti-Israel resolutions?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear to all parliamentarians, to Jewish communities across Canada and our friends in Israel: Canada has been, is, and will always be a steadfast ally of Israel.

We are strengthening our bilateral relationship and are standing side by side with Israel at every opportunity internationally. The Israeli and Jewish community know they can always count on Canada, and we will continue to be by their side.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, friends are supposed to have each other's backs. The Deputy Prime Minister likes to say her government stands with Israel, but it is hard to believe given some of her comments last week.

When asked about this vote, she tried linking Canada's decision to support this anti-Israel resolution to what she called "a worrying rise of authoritarian regimes...[and] anti-democratic populism".

Was the Deputy Prime Minister seriously trying to compare Israel to authoritarian regimes?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should let the Deputy Prime Minister speak for herself.

When it comes to the Government of Canada, all Canadians and all members of the House, we have been, we are, and we will always be standing with our friends of Israel. The Jewish community across Canada knows that. I spoke to my counterpart in Israel, and they know Canada is a steadfast ally.

We will continue to support Israel at the United Nations every step of the way.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past year, the Legault government has been calling on the federal government to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses in Quebec.

We have seen the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Official Languages, and even the Prime Minister wax lyrical about French in Quebec.

When will they match rhetoric with action?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that French is losing ground in Quebec. We recognize that, and we want to take action.

I have had good conversations with my counterpart in Quebec, Simon Jolin-Barrette, who is working on a reform of his own.

For our part, we are also working in collaboration with various stakeholders across the country, including several in Quebec, in order to modernize the Official Languages Act. It is a priority, and we are devoting a great deal of effort to it every day. I am sure that the modernized act will help protect and promote French in Canada.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is just more rhetoric that means nothing. What we want is real action. I will try to ask another question.

This morning, my colleagues and I again called on the Liberal government to pause the harmful audits of small businesses that have been hit hard by COVID-19.

Will the Minister of National Revenue respect the will of Parliament, which voted in favour of a motion to that effect on November 4?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, our government respects the fact that the Canada Revenue Agency is independent. The Minister of National Revenue will not instruct the CRA to conduct audits, nor will it intervene in audits that are under way.

* * *

• (1455)

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is telling us he sets all partisanship aside when appointing judges.

However, we know that the Prime Minister's Office intervened at least four times to talk about candidates. We also know that Liberal members give their opinions on the political affiliations of candidates when asked to do so by the Prime Minister or his staff. If I understand the minister correctly, everyone talks to him about the candidates, but he does not listen to anyone.

Why does everyone keep approaching him about this if it does not work? Is it because his colleagues are slow learners, or is it because the minister is leading us down the garden path?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Our government put in place a process based on transparency, merit and diversity for identifying highly qualified jurists and appointing them to the bench.

We are proud to have appointed over 400 legal experts to the bench based on their merit. These men and women meet the needs of the courts and reflect Canada's diversity.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues across the way are quick on the uptake, and they have realized that pressuring the minister works.

For example, last year, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs managed to get four of his top donors, the wife of his brother-in-law, and his neighbour appointed to the bench. The minister would have us believe that it was a coincidence, that no one spoke to him about those candidates and that even if anyone had, he would not have listened.

Can we all agree that this looks bad? Will the minister finally realize that he is the only one who believes that these appointments are not partisan?

Oral Questions

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have pointed out several times, each candidate is assessed by a judicial advisory committee, which does not have access to partisan information. It bases its decisions on merit. After that, the judiciary and the legal community are consulted to ensure that the candidates will meet the needs of the courts and promote Canada's diversity. I am very proud of the process we have put in place.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Manmeet Bhullar, a former Alberta MLA, was a selfless man of integrity and kindness who was dedicated to bringing persecuted Afghans, Sikhs and Hindi refugees to Canada. He tragically died five years ago today, but his legacy lives on and the need for his work continues.

Earlier this year, ISIS terrorists murdered 25 Sikhs while they attended prayer service in Afghanistan and then bombed the funeral service honouring those victims. The Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation is calling on the Liberal government to create a special refugee program to bring this threatened community to Canada.

Will the Minister of Immigration support this call, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to share my hon. colleague's comments with regard to the Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation, which has been a very important partner in allowing us to resettle some of the Afghan Sikhs who have been targeted by these heinous acts. We will continue to work with the Manmeet Bhullar foundation as well as other organizations across Canada to uphold human rights around the world and to resettle the world's most vulnerable.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, suicide is the second-highest cause of death for youth aged 10 to 24, with an average of 294 young Canadians committing suicide every year. For every youth suicide completion, there are nearly 400 attempted suicides. That is over 110,000 attempts by young Canadians, and many more suffer in silence. Communication is the first essential step in assisting youth at risk of suicide.

When will the government implement a 988 number for those seeking help?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, I am deeply concerned as well about the mental health of Canadians and, in fact, Canadians who use substances. We have seen increases in mental distress as a result of COVID-19 making things even harder for Canadians from coast to coast. That is why we launched “Wellness Together” early on in the pandemic. I want to point out that more than 530,000 Canadians across the country have accessed the portal, with over 1.5 million distinct web sessions. This is an opportunity to tell all Canadians that it is not just self-help resources that are available on the web. People can connect to trained professionals. They can attend virtual sessions and telephone sessions.

I will work with the member opposite's colleague on the idea of a one-stop number.

* * *

• (1500)

JUSTICE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice says he is proud of appointing his political donor to the Quebec Superior Court. Frankly, he should not be. Even the appearance of impropriety in judicial appointments erodes public trust in the justice system. As a lawyer and past bar association executive, I know the system only works if Canadians have faith in its fairness and independence.

Does the minister not realize the Liberals' partisan judicial appointments are eroding public confidence in its independence?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has put into place an open, transparent and accountable process to identify and appoint highly meritorious jurists to the bench.

With respect to the individual in question that the hon. member has cited, I point out that I proactively sought an opinion from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who reviewed the situation and determined that there was no conflict of interest and that a recusal was not required.

We are proud to have appointed more than 400 jurists to the bench, women and men. These jurists are of the highest quality. They represent the diverse face of Canada and they are reflective of the needs of the courts.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is top of mind for my constituents and for all Canadians. Canadians want to know how we will balance addressing the very real challenge of climate change with building the economy of the future.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain to the House how the net-zero emissions accountability act, which was introduced last week, will make that possible?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vimy for her work on climate action. Last week, our government presented a major component of our plan to grow a prosperous economy for Canada while tackling the challenges of climate change. Unions, industry, environmentalists and large companies in the energy sector have made it clear that this is an important step towards a low-carbon future.

* * *

[English]

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Blue Sky Hemp Ventures in my riding of Saskatoon West develops innovative products such as hemp biomass, which can be used to reduce greenhouse emissions. A funding application for Blue Sky to deliver up to 10 jobs was approved by the Saskatoon office of Western Economic Diversification back in June. It sat on the minister's desk for over five months as COVID ravaged our economy. She only approved it 72 hours ago when she started seeing my name on emails to her.

Why is the minister playing politics with prairie jobs while our economy suffers?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the allegations of my colleague. Obviously, I would like to talk to him about this specific case.

We have always been there for many businesses across the west. Not only have we been there, but we included much more funding recently to Western Economic Diversification by doubling its budget. Clearly there have been a lot of asks because many businesses were affected by the double whammy that we have been seeing in the western economy, but we have been there and we will continue to be there for them.

* * *

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last few weeks, several big-name, former CBC journalists, like Peter Mansbridge and Adrienne Clarkson, have publicly expressed grave concern over the CBC's new Tandem project, which seeks to sell the credibility of the CBC to the highest bidder and pass it off as news.

Why was a program from our public broadcaster to sell branded content as news ever allowed to get off the ground?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that the CBC is an autonomous Crown corporation responsible for managing its own operation while offering Canadians accurate and quality information without political interference.

The Conservatives would like to tell the CBC and journalists what to cover and how, but that is not how democracy works. Some might say that the Conservatives are delusional because they seem to find conspiracy theories wherever they look.

We need to respect journalists' independence, and we will always do so.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this pandemic, the Liberal government should be supporting Canadian industries, not punishing them.

However, that is exactly what it is doing. Every year the government is automatically jacking up taxes on Canadian wine, beer and spirits. This escalator tax on alcohol is killing jobs, reducing our competitive trade and punishing consumers. It is drastically impacting the livelihoods of farmers, producers, and restaurant and bar owners right across this great country.

When will the Liberals get rid of their ever-increasing excise tax on Canadian alcohol?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian wine industry is, of course, something that we are all very proud of, and we are proud of the remarkable advances that that industry has made.

The Government of Canada works very hard to support that industry in regions across the country, including working very hard on some of the trade issues that the member has been asking questions about.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians commemorate the loss of Manmeet Singh Bhullar, who gave so much to his community here in Canada and particularly vulnerable Sikh and Hindu communities abroad.

As Mr. Bhullar once said:

The greatness of humanity, the greatness instilled in every human being, the greatness of serving is to be realized and developed. That is my hope, that is my dream.

As we reflect on his contributions and his memory, could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell us what the government is doing to carry on his important work?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation is a fitting tribute to a leader who gave so much to Canada and the world. His legacy continues through the foundation's advocacy, which is an irreplaceable conduit of Canadian compassion in support of vulnerable Sikh and Hindu populations abroad.

I look forward to further strengthening our partnership, and building on our efforts to provide refuge for those fleeing conflict and persecution.

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the Alberni Valley, over two-thirds of the people living on the street are indigenous. The Liberals' promise of additional beds is not nearly enough. Last night, Martha Martin, the mother of Chantel Moore, who was shot by police in New Brunswick, told me her son Mike had become homeless, and a few days ago died by suicide. I believe Mike could be alive today if all the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action were implemented and the Liberals had an indigenous-led housing strategy.

Will the minister explain to Martha, who has now lost two children, why they have delayed on acting on the truth and reconciliation calls to action and continue to fail indigenous families?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no relationship is more important to our government than the nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples. We have committed significant new funds to support indigenous housing across Canada. This includes \$1.5 billion for a distinctions-based approach for housing for first nations and for Inuit-led and Métis nation housing strategies. Also, under our \$13.2-billion national housing co-investment fund we have prioritized projects to serve indigenous peoples.

There is more work to be done, but we have also made a lot of progress.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, why is Bill C-7, medical assistance in dying, abolishing the safeguard of a 10-day reflection period and reconfirmation of consent, thereby introducing advance requests for MAID?

Nothing in the Truchon decision of the Quebec Court of Appeal, which the government chose not to appeal, requires this, and the Supreme Court of Canada, in Carter, insisted on the requirement of clear consent. Palliative care physicians, disability advocates and other experts insist that this is an important safeguard, and, like other legislated MAID reports on mature minors and mental disorder, advance requests also raise significant challenges.

There is no clear—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Government Orders

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we heard going coast to coast, when we consulted with Canadians intensively, people who worked in the field as well as families and others, was that the 10-day waiting period only increased suffering. People who have made the decision, who have gone through with their doctors and with the families to decide to access MAID in an end-of-life scenario, have made up their mind. The 10-day waiting period only added suffering. We heard stories of people not taking their pain medication for the last 10 days in order to be in a position to make that final decision.

We heard again and again that it only added to the suffering that people had, and we have, therefore, eliminated it in only the end-of-life scenarios.

* * *

• (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a courtesy in this place that when someone is speaking, especially about a mother who has lost a second child in the last six months, that members in the House would show respect and let them have their question so that the government can answer, and so that the family can get answers and the respect they deserve.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to call on all members to show respect and decorum in this place so that those families who have had such a serious injustice happen in their lives get the respect that they deserve.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that point of order.

I want to remind all members in the House that while someone is speaking, they are likely telling a story that is very close to their heart and something that means a lot to them. I have noticed that there are people talking among themselves, not listening and not being aware of what is being said. Sometimes, it is nice to see members have a good time and a chuckle, but when there is something serious going on, please, I ask all members to pay attention to what is being said in the chamber when they are talking among themselves. I am sure it is inadvertent and not done on purpose, but it can be seen as being insensitive, and I would ask hon. members to just pay attention to what is being said.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith has a point of order.

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I am actually rising on a question of personal privilege.

The member for Kildonan—St. Paul used her S.O. 31 to misrepresent and malign me and the Green Party of Canada. Her facts are wrong, and I would like to correct the record.

I am taking part in an event to discuss and debate whether Meng Wanzhou should be free—

Some hon. members: Debate.

The Speaker: I believe we are getting into debate. I understand that sometimes things are said in the House. I am not sure if the

hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul wants to reply. No, the member does not.

Again, I want to remind hon. members that when they do say something and refer to someone else in the chamber to be very mindful of what is being said and what the repercussions may be.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS[*Translation*]**JUDGES ACT**

The House resumed from November 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-3.

• (1545)

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

(Division No. 24)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bessette
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Champagne
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chen	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cormier	Cumming
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal

Routine Proceedings

Dhillon	Dong	Pauzé	Perron
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Drouin	Dubourg	Poilievre	Powlowski
Duclos	Duguid	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Rayes	Redekopp
Duvall	Dzerowicz	Regan	Reid
Easter	Ehsassi	Richards	Robillard
El-Khoury	Ellis	Rodriguez	Rogers
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Romanado	Rood
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Fergus	Fillmore	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Sajjan	Samson
Finnigan	Fisher	Sangha	Sarai
Fonseca	Fortier	Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Fraser	Freeland	Schiefke	Schmale
Fry	Gallant	Schulte	Seeback
Garneau	Gaudreau	Serré	Sgro
Gazan	Généreux	Shanahan	Sheehan
Genuis	Gerretsen	Shields	Shin
Gill	Gladu	Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Gould	Gourde	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gray	Green	Simms	Singh
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Sorbara	Soroka
Hallan	Harder	Spengemann	Stanton
Hardie	Harris	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hoback	Holland	Strahl	Stubbs
Housefather	Hughes	Sweet	Tabbara
Hussen	Hutchings	Tassi	Thériault
Iacono	Jaczek	Therrien	Tochor
Jansen	Jeneroux	Trudeau	Trudel
Johns	Joly	Turnbull	Uppal
Jones	Jordan	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Jowhari	Julian	Van Popta	Vandal
Kelloway	Kelly	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Kent	Khalid	Vecchio	Vidal
Khera	Kitchen	Viersen	Vignola
Kniec	Koutrakis	Virani	Vis
Kram	Kurek	Wagantall	Warkentin
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Waugh	Webber
Kwan	Lake	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Lametti	Lamoureux	Yip	Young
Larouche	Lattanzio	Yurdiga	Zahid
Lauzon	Lawrence	Zann	Zimmer
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Zuberi — 315	
Lefebvre	Lehoux		
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)		
Liepert	Lightbound		
Lloyd	Lobb	Nil	
Long	Longfield		
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor		
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Manly	Martinez Ferrada		
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)		
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier		
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman		
McCrimmon	McDonald		
McGuinty	McKay		
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)		
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson		
Mendès	Mendicino		
Michaud	Miller		
Monsef	Moore		
Morantz	Morrison		
Morrissey	Murray		
Nater	Ng		
Normandin	O'Connell		
Oliphant	O'Toole		
Patzer	Paul-Hus		

NAYS

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 25 petitions. These returns will be tabled in electronic format.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, in accordance with the orders of reference of Monday, April 20, 2020, and Wednesday, September 30, 2020, concerning the main estimates 2020-21.

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Health, in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year 2020-21.

The committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same.

* * *

● (1550)

[Translation]

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans and group insurance plans).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and proud to introduce today in the House, seconded by the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville, a private member's bill that seeks to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

This bill reaffirms my unwavering commitment to workers and retirees, a commitment that is shared by my colleague and the Bloc Québécois. It is a commitment that I made in the House on October 17, 2017, by introducing Bill C-372 to defend the rights of workers, which I feel should be inalienable.

Under the existing legislation, when a company is restructured or goes bankrupt, the workers' pension funds and insurance are not properly protected, even though they belong to the workers. It is part of their salary that they negotiated and agreed to defer. My bill seeks to correct that injustice.

When we think about former workers at Cliffs Natural Resources, Mabe, La Pointe-de-l'Île or even Sears stores all across Quebec, my bill is there to protect what belongs to workers. I urge all my colleagues to support my bill.

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

[English]

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions to present today.

First, this is a petition on the Uighur situation. I do not know if members of the House have seen the pictures of the people lined up on the train station platforms being taken off to concentration camps. We have said "never again", and it appears this is happening again. The people who have signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to recognize the genocide of the Uighur people in China and to use the Magnitsky act to bring sanctions against the Chinese officials who are participating in this genocide.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I have is presented from Canadians across Canada. They are calling on the House of Commons to protect the conscience rights of physicians, health care workers and health care institutions. They recognize that the Canadian Medical Association also confirms that conscience rights do not interfere with access to health care.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition that I have to present today is from hundreds of Canadians from across Canada. These petitioners are concerned about the accessibility of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and its impacts on public health, especially on the well-being of women and girls. They recognize that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop a means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being. As such, the petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt meaningful age verification on all adult websites.

● (1555)

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present is from hundreds of Canadians across this country who are concerned about the state of palliative care in this country. They have signed this petition to ask the government to establish a national strategy on palliative care.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present today seeks to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms and are concerned about the impact of hearing loss caused by the noise levels from firearms and the need for noise reduction.

These petitioners acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device that is criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound moderators and allow them for hunting, sport shooting and noise pollution reduction. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to allow these firearms owners to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting events.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I have to present today is from Canadians across the country. In this petition, they are writing to condemn sex-selective abortion and they are calling for the rapid passing of the bill presented by the member for Yorkton—Melville.

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present to the House petition e-2943, which has over 30,200 signatures.

The petitioners are asking the Canada Revenue Agency to immediately suspend the imposition of the federal sales tax on osteopathic care provided in Quebec.

People in my riding have talked to me about taking this issue very seriously because Quebec is currently holding consultations about creating a professional association for osteopaths. That is going to happen in the next 12 months. The petitioners are asking the government to suspend the tax because it was done very suddenly and this group of professionals got no warning.

[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given that the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of this very chamber, after comprehensive study, concluded from all the witness evidence that was presented that the threshold was met to call what is going on with Uighur Muslims in East Turkestan by the Communist Party of China a genocide, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to take the following actions to address the situation. They ask the government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide, and to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, more commonly known as the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against Uighur Muslims in East Turkestan.

SEX SELECTION

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition supported by thousands of Canadians. It notes that sex-selective abortion is presently legal in Canada and the practice is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women. The petition also notes that a recent poll conducted by the National Post shows that 84% of Canadians believe it should be illegal to have an abortion if the family does not want the child to be a certain sex.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners also note that international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, UN Women and the United Nations Children's Fund, have identified unequal sex ratios at birth as a growing problem internationally.

Finally, they note that Canada's health care profession recognizes sex-selective abortion as a problem. Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to pass a Criminal Code prohibition on sex-selective abortion.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition. I am speaking today from the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ Nation. *Hych'ka Siem*.

The petitioners are calling for the House assembled to follow through on commitments to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to follow through on commitments to meet the calls for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The petitioners specifically note the ongoing situation on Wet'suwet'en territory and the Coastal GasLink. They also note the pervasive ways in which implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be incorporated into Canadian law.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a mere three petitions in the House today. I will try to do better next time.

The first petition is on Bill S-204, which is currently before the Senate. It has been put forward by Senator Salma Ataullahjan, who is doing so much great work on human rights. This bill would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad and receive an organ where there had not been consent. It would also make a provision for a person to be inadmissible to Canada if they have been involved in organ harvesting and trafficking.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the human rights situation of Uighurs, and it is similar text to what my colleagues have put forward. It calls for the recognition that Uighurs in China have been and are being subjected to genocide, as well as for the use of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, to sanction those responsible for this heinous crime being committed against the Uighur people.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The third and final petition I am presenting today, Mr. Speaker, deals with sex-selective abortion. The petition is in support of the private member's bill put forward by the member for Yorkton—Melville. Petitioners note wide public support for legislative measures aimed at ending this practice and affirming the dignity of all people, regardless of gender.

Routine Proceedings

• (1600)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and pleased to present a petition as well in support of Bill S-204, which seeks to combat forced organ harvesting as well as trafficking.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of one of my Davenport residents. It is e-petition 2699, initiated by Alex Quaresma, who I want to thank for her passionate advocacy in this petition.

E-petition 2699 acknowledges some of the historical injustices behind the founding of the RCMP, as well as the anti-indigenous racism that still exists within many of Canada's institutions, including the RCMP. This petition urges an increased focus on reallocating some of the RCMP's funding and resources toward community-based resources and trauma-informed care, among many other things.

The petition also urges the elimination of mandatory minimum sentencing measures, which disproportionately impact indigenous people, Black Canadians and people living in poverty, and it asks for the implementation of the action items outlined by the Parliamentary Black Caucus. Finally, it urgently asks for the implementation of the recommendations put forward by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

I would like to thank Alex for her wonderful advocacy, and I hereby present this petition in the chamber on her behalf.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions today.

The first petition regards the situation of the Uighurs in China and calls on the House to recognize this as a genocide, something I note the Subcommittee on International Human Rights did recently.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of sex-selective abortion. The one thing that has not been mentioned by the previous speakers on this topic is the fact that sex-selective abortions are inevitably of female unborn babies or fetuses.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too am presenting a petition on the suppression of the Uighurs by the Chinese Communist Party, which includes methods such as forced sterilization and abortion.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too, like my colleagues today, am honoured to present this petition on the Uighurs in China. It has been well explained by a number of my colleagues already.

I present petition no. 10874647 on behalf of the Uighur people, formally recognizing that they have been subject to genocide in China and that we promote the use of the Magnitsky act to sanction

those responsible for these heinous crimes being committed against these people in China.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 124, 125, 128, 131, 133 and 134.

[Text]

Question No. 124—**Mr. Damien C. Kurek:**

With regard to the Optional Survivor Benefit (OSB) for common-law partners and the statement on the government's website that "The Canadian Forces Superannuation Act (CFSA) was amended so that a member living in a common-law relationship can provide a survivor pension if the relationship begins after age 60. However, the regulations must be amended to specify the details. Consequently, the OSB is not yet available for common-law relationships.": (a) when will the regulations be amended to make the OSB available to those in common-law relationships that begin after age 60; (b) why have the regulations not yet been amended; (c) what are the government's projections regarding how many such individuals will be eligible for the OSB; and (d) of the individuals in (c), what percentage does the government project will opt in to the OSB?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces offer competitive salaries and world-class benefit packages that start on the first day of a member's service, up until after they retire. To ensure members are fairly compensated for their service to Canada, National Defence continues to work on issues, such as the optional survivor benefit for common-law relationships, to better reflect the reality of today's veterans.

With regard to part (a) of the question, optional survivor benefit regulations are currently in the process of being amended. The amendments are complex and require coordination among multiple departments to ensure they are done properly. This process is being done collaboratively with Treasury Board and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

With regard to part (b), National Defence is currently working collaboratively with Treasury Board and the RCMP to determine a common policy approach for amending regulations. This will ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces, public service and RCMP pension plans are cohesive and contain similar optional survivor benefit provisions.

With regard to parts (c) and (d), National Defence does not maintain this information and it is not available to provide a projection at this time.

Question No. 125—**Ms. Nelly Shin:**

With regard to expenditures related to legal proceedings involving veterans and veterans' groups, since January 1, 2018: (a) what is the total amount of expenditures incurred to date, broken down by case; and (b) what are the expenditures in (a), broken down by type and line item?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to expenditures incurred in relation to legal proceedings involving veterans and veterans' groups, since January 1, 2018, to the extent that the information requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege or settlement privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege to the extent of revealing the total legal costs, as defined below.

The total legal costs, including actual and notional costs, associated with legal proceedings involving veterans and veterans' groups since January 1, 2018, amount to approximately \$5,475,000. These costs cover all types of legal proceedings, including individual and class actions brought by veterans, judicial review applications of decisions of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and appeals. The Crown is usually not initiating these proceedings but rather acts as a defendant or respondent. The total legal costs are with respect to litigation and litigation support services, which were provided in these cases by the Department of Justice. Department of Justice lawyers, notaries and paralegals are salaried public servants and, therefore, no legal fees are incurred for their services. A "notional amount" can, however, be provided to account for the legal services they provide. The notional amount is calculated by multiplying the total hours recorded in the responsive files for the relevant period by the applicable approved internal legal services hourly rates. Actual costs are composed of file-related legal disbursements paid by the department and then cost-recovered from the client departments or agencies, as well as the costs of legal agents who may be retained by the Minister of Justice to provide litigation services in certain cases. The amount mentioned in this response is based on information currently contained in the Department of Justice systems, as of October 6, 2020.

Question No. 128—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the government's reaction to the genocide and human rights abuses of Uighurs in Xinjiang Province, China, and the decision as to whether to place Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible: (a) will the government be placing sanctions under the Magnitsky Act on the Chinese government officials responsible for the genocide; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, which Chinese government officials will be subject to the sanctions, and what criteria will the government use to determine which officials will be subject to the sanctions; and (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, then what is the rationale for not placing sanctions on those responsible for this genocide?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers. The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canadian foreign policy and is a priority in the Government of Canada's engagement with China. The nature and scale of the abuses by Chinese authorities of Uighurs and other ethnic and religious minorities, under the pretext of countering extremism, are deeply disturbing. The Government of Canada is alarmed by the mass arbitrary detentions, repressive surveillance, allegations of torture, mistreatment, forced labour, forced sterilization of women and mass arbitrary separation of children from their parents. These actions by the Chinese government are contrary to its own constitution, in violation of international human rights obligations and inconsistent with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Canada takes allegations of genocide very seriously. We will continue to work in close collaboration with our allies to push for these to be investigated through an international independent body and for impartial experts to access the region so that they can see the situation first-hand and report back.

Canada has continuously relayed its concerns about China's actions directly to Chinese officials. Canada has also taken action to speak out at the United Nations in co-operation with partners. For example, in June 2020, during the 44th session of the HRC, Canada and 27 other countries signed a joint statement voicing concerns on the human rights situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Recently, at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, on October 6, 2020, Canada co-signed, along with 38 other countries, a joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. As part of joint communications, Canada and other countries have repeatedly called on China to allow unfettered access to Xinjiang to UN human rights experts and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Canada is judicious in its approach regarding when to deploy sanctions and/or draw on other courses of action in our diplomatic tool kit based on foreign policy priorities. The regulations enacted under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act allow the Government of Canada to target individuals who are, in the opinion of the government, responsible for, or complicit in, gross violations of internationally recognized human rights or acts of significant corruption. Canada takes the matter of listing individuals under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act very seriously. A rigorous due diligence process has been established to consider and evaluate possible cases of human rights violations or corruption anywhere in the world against the criteria set out in the act, within the context of other ongoing efforts to promote human rights and combat corruption. Our government believes that sanctions have the maximum impact when they are being imposed in collaboration with other countries.

Routine Proceedings

Please also note that the trade commissioner service has updated its guidance for businesses on the risks of doing business in China, including risks related to human rights abuses. Ensuring companies adhere to responsible business practices is essential to manage social, reputational, legal and economic risks. The Government of Canada expects Canadian companies active abroad, in any market or country, to respect human rights, operate lawfully and conduct their activities in a responsible manner consistent with international standards such as the UN “Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights” and the OECD “Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises”. Among other things, the Government of Canada expects Canadian companies to adopt global best practices with respect to supply chain due diligence in order to eliminate the direct or indirect risk of involvement in any forced labour or other human rights abuses.

Please be assured that the promotion and protection of human rights are core priorities of Canada’s foreign policy. The Government of Canada will continue to raise its concerns regarding the human rights situation in Xinjiang and all of China, and will continue to call on China to live up to its international obligations.

Question No. 131—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to isolation housing or quarantine facilities provided to foreign visitors to Canada during the pandemic: (a) how many foreign visitors have required the government to provide isolation housing or quarantine facilities upon arrival to Canada since March 2020; (b) what is the monthly breakdown of the amount spent on housing or quarantine facilities to foreign visitors; and (c) are foreign visitors required to reimburse Canadian taxpayers for the costs related to isolation housing or quarantine facilities, and, if so, (i) how many visitors have paid reimbursements, (ii) what is the total dollar amount collected by the government for such reimbursements?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), federal quarantine facilities are for any travellers arriving in Canada who do not have suitable options to self-isolate or quarantine through their own means. To date, the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, has housed approximately 32 foreign nationals in federally designated quarantine sites. This excludes repatriation of cruise ship passengers in March 2020. This accounts for less than 3% of travellers who have used these facilities.

With regard to (b), due to current contracting activities, including potential competitive processes, the exact breakdown of costs cannot be publicly disclosed at this time.

With regard to (c), no, foreign visitors are not required to reimburse the Government of Canada for their stay in federally designated sites. With regard to c)(i), PHAC has received quarantine cost reimbursements, approximately \$40,000, from a small number of foreign national crew members of four foreign vessels, because there was a failure by shipping agents to abide by public health measures upon entering Canada. With regard to c)(ii), to date, PHAC has invoiced approximately \$40,000 to shipping agents for the quarantine of their crew members in federally designated sites.

Question No. 133—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to the Veterans Affairs Canada area offices, which have all been closed to veterans since March 2020: (a) which offices have reopened to clients and what was the reopening date of each office; and (b) of the offices that are still closed, what is the projected reopening date when they will be open to clients, broken down by location?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Veterans Affairs Canada continues to serve veterans and their families by phone and online. In addition to regular services, Veterans Affairs Canada has reached out to 18,000 vulnerable clients since the beginning of the pandemic.

With regard to (b), the health, safety and well-being of veterans and their families, as well as Veterans Affairs Canada employees, is the priority of Veterans Affairs Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Essentially, all Veterans Affairs Canada employees are equipped to work remotely, enabling Veterans Affairs Canada to continue to provide services to veterans and their families in the midst of this global pandemic.

Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to take guidance from public health officials and work with its partners across government to support easing restrictions in a gradual, phased and controlled manner that prioritizes the health and safety of employees and those accessing services at departmental buildings. While access to Veterans Affairs Canada offices is suspended, veterans and their families are still accessing Veterans Affairs Canada programs and services. Veterans Affairs Canada staff are available, working remotely and prioritizing getting benefits to veterans in greatest need.

Question No. 134—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to sanitizer product purchases since March 13, 2020: (a) how many litres in total have been purchased; (b) of the amount in (a), (i) how many litres have been distributed through the government distribution system, (ii) how many litres of sanitizer have been purchased from off-shore suppliers, (iii) how many litres of sanitizer have been purchased from domestic suppliers; (c) of the amount in (a), how many litres have been purchased from suppliers that have been recalled by Health Canada; (d) have any sanitizers on the recall lists been distributed to Canadian health care providers; and (e) how is the government tracking sanitizer products and other personal protective equipment that has been distributed but later recalled?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), 20,649,819 litres have been purchased.

With regard to (b)(i), 20,649,819 litres have been distributed through the government distribution system.

With regard to (b)(ii), 10,243,813 litres of sanitizer have been purchased from offshore suppliers.

With regard to (b)(iii), 10,406,006 litres of sanitizer have been purchased from domestic suppliers.

With regard to (c) of the amount in (a), none of the sanitizer purchased by PSPC has been recalled.

With regard to (d), none of the sanitizer purchased by PSPC has been recalled.

With regard to (e), none of the sanitizer or personal protective equipment purchased by PSPC has been recalled.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 126, 127, 129, 130, 132 and 135 to 137 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 126—**Ms. Nelly Shin:**

With regard to spending on stock photographs or images by the government since December 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, and other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each contract or expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) details and duration of the contract, (iv) date, (v) number of photographs or images purchased, (vi) where were the photographs or images used (Internet, billboards, etc.), (vii) description of advertising campaign, (viii) file number of the contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 127—**Ms. Rachael Harder:**

With regard to government expenditures on membership fees, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since December 1, 2019: (a) how much money has been spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) name of the organization or vendor, (ii) date of purchase, (iii) amount, (iv) number of memberships purchased?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 129—**Mr. Kenny Chiu:**

With regard to federal funding in the constituency of Steveston—Richmond East, between January 2019 and October 2020: (a) what applications for funding have been received, including for each the (i) name of the applicant, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they applied for funding, (iv) date of the application, (v) amount applied for, (vi) whether the funding has been approved or not, (vii) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved, (viii) project description or purpose of funding; (b) what funds, grants, loans, and loan guarantees has the government issued through its various departments and agencies in the constituency of Steveston—Richmond East that did not require a direct application from the applicant, including for each the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they received funding, (iv) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved, (v) project description or purpose of funding; and (c) what projects have been funded in the constituency of Steveston—Richmond East by recipients tasked with subgranting government funds (e.g. Community Foundations of Canada), including for each the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they received funding, (iv) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved, (v) project description or purpose of funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 130—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the electronic format of documents provided through the Access to Information and Privacy Act and the government's digital government strategy: (a) which institutions still provide large files, such as those too large for transmis-

Routine Proceedings

sion via email, to the individual making the request using CDs or DVDs; (b) for those institutions that use a different format, such as e-post or USB sticks, for providing large files to the individual making the request, which format is used; (c) does each institution in (a) plan on transitioning to a format that does not require an optical disc drive, and, if so, what are the details, including the timeline; and (d) of the computers and laptops purchased by the government in the past two years, approximately what percentage of the (i) computers, (ii) laptops, contained an optical disc drive required to read CDs or DVDs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 132—**Mr. Dean Allison:**

With regard to Service Canada Centres: (a) which centres have reopened to the public since the shutdown in March 2020, and what was the reopening date for each location; and (b) what is the projected reopening date for each of the locations still closed to the public, broken down by location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 135—**Mr. Michael D. Chong:**

With regard to Canadian drone technology being used by the Azerbaijani military after being exported through Turkey: (a) why did the government reinstate export permits of military equipment to Turkey in the spring of 2020; (b) were there any assurances provided to the government that the exported military equipment would not be used against Armenia and, if so, what are the details of any such assurances; (c) what are the details of all military equipment exported to Turkey to January 1, 2019, including (i) supplier, (ii) description of equipment, including volume, (iii) value, (iv) intended purpose of equipment, as written on the application; and (d) what are all details of any documents, including correspondence, sent or received by the Minister of International Development or her office relating to military exports, including (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipients, (iv) title, (v) format (memorandum, email), (vi) file number, (vii) summary of content?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 136—**Mr. Marc Dalton:**

With regard to the Canadian government's reaction to the report from the United Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre and Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre, which indicated that Huawei 5G technology could put national security at risk: (a) has the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security conducted its own Huawei risk assessment, and, if so, what were the results; and (b) has any other government department or agency conducted a risk assessment in relation to Huawei, and, if so, what are the details, including the scope of the assessment and the results?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 137—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the government's Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles program and the purchase and lease incentives which came into effect on May 1, 2019: (a) how many vehicle purchases have qualified for the incentive; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by make and model; (c) what is the total amount paid out to date under the program; and (d) what is the breakdown of how much has been paid out by (i) manufacturer, (ii) dealership, including the location and name of each dealership?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

• (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***CITIZENSHIP ACT**

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

The Deputy Speaker: Before we get into debate, I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 34 minutes.

Resuming debate. When this motion was last before the House, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton had four minutes remaining for questions and comments.

We will therefore begin with questions and comments.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member give a very passionate explanation of his situation and how important it was that we have this legislation before us today. I wanted to thank him for sharing his story with the House and provide him the opportunity to reinforce why this legislation is so important, possibly providing a comment regarding the importance of that swearing-in ceremony.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his question and his inspiration. He asked why this bill is important. I came to Canada as an immigrant and became a Canadian citizen in 1987. At that time, we had very little knowledge of our indigenous people, their culture, their history and their heritage.

This bill moving forward is a very positive step in recognizing the heritage of indigenous people, as well as in reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation have many aspects, and one on them is making sure new Canadian citizens recognize the importance and heritage of our indigenous nations.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am joining the debate today from my home and would like to acknowledge I am on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act to change Canada's oath of citizenship. The bill proposes to insert text into the oath that refers to the rights of indigenous peoples. The new oath would include the following words, "which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples." This change continues to fulfill our government's commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, specifically call to action 94.

Recognizing treaty rights is important not just for new Canadians but for all Canadians.

In March, I attended a wampum belt exchange in Oakville on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the signing of Treaty No. 22. The mayor of Oakville, Rob Burton, and Mississaugas of the Credit chief, Stacey Laforme, led the exchange, with community leaders witnessing the event, one that traditionally marks events, alliances and kinship between different peoples.

At this event, Wendy Rinella, the CEO of the Oakville Community Foundation, commented that most Canadians had the mistaken notion treaties signified surrender by indigenous peoples. In fact, the Two Row Wampum signified a treaty to live in harmony with the people of Canada and their government.

Recognizing the significance of indigenous and treaty rights is an important step as we walk the road to reconciliation. In a letter I send to new Canadians in my riding, I speak about how our nation is a nation of immigrants who have worked hard and sacrificed much to be part of shaping the equitable, diverse and thriving democratic nation we call Canada.

Like many of us in the House, I have attended citizenship ceremonies and have seen the unbridled joy and pride new Canadians show for their chosen country, much like the member for Surrey—Newton described earlier in his speech. I recall in particular my friend Hisham receiving his citizenship and how the citizenship judge had the new citizens wave a Canadian flag at the end. It brought tears to my eyes.

As we welcome those who chose Canada as their country, it is important they learn about the toll colonization has taken on indigenous peoples in Canada.

As we make this change to the oath of citizenship, it is also important to respond to Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 93 to update the information kit for newcomers to reflect a more accurate history of Canada and of the diverse indigenous peoples whose lands on which Canada is now built.

This includes information about treaties and the obligations Canadians have to uphold the agreements that were made to live in harmony. Treaty education needs to include more than just a list of rights and responsibilities. It must also provide potential new Canadians with information about how Canada has failed to live up to its treaty promises, how generations of Canadians have acted in bad faith and legislated harmful and racist policies that have led to great harm, specifically highlighting the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and how it is the responsibility of every Canadian to work toward reconciliation and healing our shared country.

In 2016, I held a screening of the documentary *We Were Children* about two first nations children's experience at a residential school. During the panel discussion afterward, two new Canadians asked why they never learned about residential schools and the history of indigenous peoples when they became Canadian citizens.

In 2017, I was pleased to support Burlington resident Mariam Manaa, who worked with local indigenous knowledge keeper Steve Paquette on e-petition 1228. I had the privilege to table the petition in the House of Commons on February 13, 2018, which was signed by over 600 Canadians.

The petition called on the government to continue to work in consultation and partnership with indigenous nations located across Canada as well as the Minister of Indigenous Services to redevelop the Discover Canada study guide curriculum and citizenship exam so it would acknowledge indigenous treaty rights, require applicants to answer a question regarding the traditional territories they were currently inhabiting, if applicable, and uphold the spirit of the commitment to educate new Canadians on residential schools and the legacy of colonialism.

• (1610)

It is imperative when crafting policy with regard to indigenous peoples that the government do so in consultation and partnership with indigenous peoples. An updated guide needs to educate new Canadians about residential schools and be transparent with regard to the ongoing legacy of colonialism and racism by the Canadian government. The guide could also address the sixties scoop and shed light on the current crisis in the foster care system today.

It is my belief that new immigrants who make the choice to become citizens deserve to know about the history of this land. That includes the good as well as the bad. People who immigrate to Canada are emigrating from countries that may have thousands of years of recorded history. We do a disservice to those new immigrants when we pretend that the land we inhabit has only been around for 150 years.

We can share stories about Vimy Ridge and the 1972 Summit Series, but if those stories are not accompanied by the lived experience of survivors of residential schools, we are impairing their ability to fully enter the public discourse on what it means to be Canadian. I am of the opinion that once people take their oath of citizenship, they are equally entitled to all the benefits and the baggage that Canadian citizenship entails.

In addition to educating new Canadians on the legacy of residential schools and colonialism, we need to do a better job of educating new Canadians about the traditional territories they currently inhabit when they are studying for their citizenship exam. I understand this recommendation would require curriculum to be different, depending on where the new immigrants were studying for their exam, but if we properly inform newcomers as to the history of the land they occupy, we will better be able to understand the ongoing process of reconciliation and the issues facing indigenous nations today.

Government Orders

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Lastly, I feel it is essential that we teach all Canadians, including those who are about to become new citizens, about the history of the influential indigenous peoples who shaped Canada's identity. Too many of us learn only about the pre-Confederation history of indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

While Tecumseh and Joseph Brant were undoubtedly historical figures who shaped the history of Upper Canada, we need to highlight the work of contemporary indigenous leaders, intellectuals, artists and activists of which there are many notable examples.

When this bill was introduced, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said:

The Oath is a solemn declaration that all newcomers recite during the citizenship ceremony. With this amendment, we are changing the Oath of Citizenship to be more inclusive, and taking steps to fundamentally transform the nature of our relationship with Indigenous Peoples by encouraging new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect the significant role of Indigenous Peoples in forming Canada's fabric and identity.

The change to the citizenship oath is an important step, but only one step that needs to be taken for new Canadian citizens to fully understand and respect our shared past with indigenous peoples. It is my sincere hope that a new study guide will be shared quickly, so we can fulfill both calls to action regarding newcomers to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill, because our party has also committed to being an ally to first nations.

That said, there is something in the Canadian oath of citizenship that fascinates me. The genetic lottery is when someone gets to be head of state based on succession and bloodline. That is essentially how it went for the Queen of England.

I wonder if my hon. colleague agrees with me that, in a country that advocates for equality and equal opportunities for everyone, it does not make sense to pledge allegiance to someone who is head of state by birth alone.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, we remain part of the Commonwealth and the Queen remains our head of state. Until that changes, the oath needs to remain as it is.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a teacher by training prior to being elected to the House. I of course took great interest in the member's comments on the role education plays in making this a meaningful reconciliation moment.

Right now, at the University of Alberta, we have a wonderful online course, "Indigenous Canada". Many people would know that it was recently taken by Daniel Levy. I have also taken the course.

Government Orders

Could the member talk a little about what the Liberal government has done so far in the five years it has been government to increase educational resources around this and make this true reconciliation?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, while I have not completed it yet, I have signed up for that course. I applaud Daniel Levy for what he has been doing to promote the course to have more Canadians take it.

As the hon. member knows, education curriculum is provincial. We stand ready to assist provinces if they need information. However, I know that in Ontario, changes were made when the government changed to reduce the amount of indigenous education taking place, certainly in my area of Halton. It is critical that this education take place. I encourage all provinces to move forward with better education in the schools.

Having said that, I think young people know far more than I did when I was in elementary school. On Orange Shirt Day, I was delighted to see so many wearing orange shirts in recognition of what the day meant.

• (1620)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague really hit on a number of points. One point that really resonated with me was when she mentioned that there were countries in the world that had 5,000 years of tradition, culture and heritage and that they seemed to embrace, celebrate and reflect on all of it. However, for some reason in Canada we have had a very difficult time seeing further back than a couple of hundreds years.

Could the member provide her insight as to why she thinks that is, but, more important, why it is so important that we change to properly tell the stories of our past that go back much longer than few hundred years.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, basically it comes down to racism and colonialism. As a country, we failed to acknowledge that indigenous peoples were on these lands before we arrived, which has been perpetrated for 150 years. Only now are we starting to try to right those wrongs. Changing the oath of citizenship is a good first step. It is certainly not the only step, but it is an important one and it achieves one of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the education system and that it was a provincial jurisdiction, but it is not really. Education on reserves is a federal jurisdiction. I wonder if the member would like to comment on that and on what role the federal Liberal government will decide on for reserves in the country going forward.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right that education on reserves is a federal responsibility, except I think the students on reserve know only too well, sadly, the legacy of residential schools; they live it. They live not just residential schools but colonialism. Therefore, the education piece needs to be for Canadians across the country who have never learned about this. The kids on reserve, sadly, do not need to learn about it; they live it every single day.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very hon. and distinguished member for Newmarket—Aurora.

It is an honour for me to speak in this venerable House on behalf of the riding of Davenport. I first want to acknowledge that the House of Commons is on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

I will be speaking on Bill C-8, an act to amend the citizenship act. It is directly a response to ensure that we implement Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action number 94, which is one of the recommendations of that study.

As colleagues know, in order to become a citizen of this great nation of ours, all newcomers 14 years and older must take an oath of citizenship. In reciting the oath, these new citizens agree to obey the laws of this country and to fulfill their duties as Canadians. The citizenship oath may only consist of a few words, but its significance is profound. Indeed, the citizenship oath is an important symbol of our values and what we share as citizens of Canada.

When newcomers take the oath, they make a solemn promise to their fellow Canadians. It is a public declaration that they are joining the Canadian family and are committed to Canadian values and traditions. It is an important promise because newcomers are helping to shape Canada.

I am sure that my colleagues have had the chance to visit a number of citizenship ceremonies, as I have. It is very special to hear the just-about-new Canadians take the oath for the first time. It is very moving to them. They practise it and are very thoughtful about how they say it. After they say it, it is very moving not only in terms of them becoming Canadian citizens, but also joining a whole new nation with a new Constitution, new rules, new laws and a new start for their lives.

We currently have citizens representing more than 200 ethnic origins. Thirteen of these groups have Canadian populations of more than one million people. Today, more than one-fifth of Canadians were born outside of Canada. They are people who chose to come to Canada. I am pleased to say that over 40% of my riding of Davenport's constituents were born in another country. They came from many different nations and deliberately selected Canada to be their home. We are absolutely the richer because of it.

The fact that Canada has one of the highest naturalization rates in the world underscores the value of Canadian citizenship. Over the last decade, Canada has welcomed nearly 1.7 million new Canadian citizens. We are looking to increase this in coming years not only because we truly, and from the bottom of our hearts, believe that diversity makes us stronger, but because moving forward the health of our economy will depend on a strong immigration policy so that we can ensure we have the labour, the ideas and the innovation that we need to succeed in the 21st century.

Government Orders

Starting in 2021, we aim to blow past the 1% immigration targets that we had in the past. We are looking to increase the target to 401,000 in 2021, 411,000 in 2022 and 421,000 in 2023. As my colleagues can tell, we very much value our new Canadian citizens. We know how much they contribute to our country.

At the same time, Canada values the important contributions that indigenous peoples have made throughout our history. First nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have all played a role in building a strong Canada, and will continue to do so moving forward.

The federal government is committed to implementing all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. This particular bill, as I mentioned earlier, aims to fulfill call to action number 94, which calls on the government to amend the oath of citizenship by adding a reference to treaties with indigenous peoples.

The federal government's proposed amendment of the citizenship oath would allow new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect how indigenous peoples are a critical part of Canada's history and identity. The new oath would also reflect an expectation that new Canadians demonstrate an understanding of indigenous peoples and of their constitutional rights.

• (1625)

In addition to fostering better appreciation and recognition among new citizens for the important contributions of indigenous people, the proposed new citizenship oath would reflect our government's commitment to reconciliation. Indeed, the federal government is committed to a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on respect, rights, co-operation and partnership. This commitment is absolutely critical, because for too many Canadians of various backgrounds, systemic racism is a lived reality, and we know that it certainly did not take a pause during the pandemic.

The proposed new citizenship oath would respond to a call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and is the result of consultations with national indigenous organizations. I know that those consultations actually go back to 2016. We have been engaged. We have made sure that we have heard and listened, and we have absolutely incorporated their recommendations in addition to ensuring that we follow the spirit of recommendation number 94 of the truth and reconciliation recommendations.

The revised text would also remind all Canadians that recognition of aboriginal treaty rights is not a political or administrative gesture, but is in fact enshrined in our Constitution. While Canada's Constitution recognizes and affirms the rights of indigenous people, our federal government believes that all Canadians should have a deeper appreciation of the role of indigenous peoples in the history and culture of Canada.

Whether we were born here or chose to become citizens, as Canadians it is important to respect fundamental rights and freedoms, value equality for all and celebrate our diverse cultures, traditions and languages. In recognizing these important parts of our Canadian identity, we must always include those of indigenous peoples in Canada, because all Canadians are responsible for participating in the process of reconciliation. That refers to each and every single one of us, and this participation absolutely must include our newest citizens. That way, new Canadians can join all Canadians in

moving forward on the road to reconciliation and leaving a proper legacy for future generations.

With these changes to the citizenship oath, let us take this opportunity to both acknowledge our country's past and move forward toward a renewed relationship with indigenous people based on inherent rights, respect and partnership. The federal government is proud to propose these historic changes to the oath of citizenship, so that new Canadians can promise to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This would serve to reinforce our indigenous heritage and institutions, contribute to closing the socio-economic gaps in Canada and help to foster strong indigenous communities for future generations.

I would also say that the reality is the oath of citizenship is just one of many, many steps we need to take, but to me it is an important one, because right from the very start we want to mention that the treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of this country are absolutely critical and are important for us to know. I think this will also lend to a lot of the dialogue and the conversation that I believe we need to continue to have, and continue to build, in this country in order to truly have a new nation-to-nation relationship with our first peoples.

I will end off by relating the story of my mother. She came to Canada from Mexico, and I remember her practising for her citizenship test. I remember her memorizing all the provinces and territories, and I remember her memorizing all the prime ministers and preparing for all the questions for the citizenship test. I think it would have been worthwhile and valuable for us to have had something included on the test at that time about the aboriginal peoples of our country. Again, I think it is important for not only all Canadians, but our new Canadians from the very start, to be informed about the aboriginal peoples, their history in our country, how they are helping us to create a great country and how we are working on a new nation-to-nation relationship as we move forward.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents of Davenport.

• (1630)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, I have never had the privilege of attending a citizenship ceremony during my short time as an MP. This is probably because of all the COVID restrictions and things going on. I am looking forward to having that opportunity some day.

I fully agree that it is important for us to build positive relationships with indigenous people across the country. This is a good step toward doing that. Along with doing these types of things, we have to come back to very practical things like the water issue on first nations and some of the serious issues in Neskantaga or in my riding in Fond du Lac this week.

Could the member comment on how important it is for us to get to those solutions beyond these more symbolic ones?

Government Orders

• (1635)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I would say first that the inclusion of recognizing treaty rights in our oath of citizenship is, to me, more than symbolic. It really is something that is important for people to know about and commit to as they become new Canadians. I agree that there are many other things we need to do in order to build that new nation-to-nation relationship.

We have eliminated 96 long-term boil water advisories. There are about 150 in total, so we still have a way to go, but I am proud of the progress we have made to date. One of the things that traumatized me, when I was running for office, was the fact that we were not giving indigenous children the same amount of money to be educated and receive health care as we were to other Canadians. We have spent over \$20 billion over the last five years. Those have been two key things we have worked to address, in addition to proper housing, proper community centres and more money for mental health, so—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today proves that it is possible to change something like the oath that must be taken to become a citizen.

In my view, this bill does not go far enough. There is a first principle that we can only agree with, and that is our recognition of indigenous nations. I think that is essential. Canada is a multiethnic country made up of many ethnicities, but it is also made up of many nations. There are indigenous nations, but there is also the Quebec nation. I do not understand why this bill did not go further when it started off so well.

This bill easily could have recognized that Canada has two founding peoples, namely French Canadians, who are now Quebeckers, and English Canadians, as well as the indigenous nation. At the same time, we could have gotten rid of something that no longer reflects what Canada is today, namely allegiance to the Queen.

Does my colleague agree?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I will be much shorter in my response this time. There are many conversations around what our oath of citizenship should include. For now, Bill C-8 is very much focused on incorporating one of the key recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is number 94. It is the recommendation to acknowledge the treaty rights of the aboriginal people of our country. In that, this bill absolutely succeeds. That is the focus at this moment, and I encourage all members of the House to support that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was prompted to join in the conversation because I was moved by the member for Davenport's recollection of her mother studying for the citizenship test.

I was also born in another country, and through good fortune, my parents moved the family to Cape Breton Island in the early 1970s.

I got my citizenship the earliest moment I could, in 1978. I will never forget my parents teasing me, saying that I would never pass the citizenship exam because I would never remember all the rules of hockey. Fortunately for me, those were not on the citizenship exam.

I welcome this change to include recognition of indigenous inherent rights in our Constitution when new citizens swear their oaths. I want to thank the member for Davenport for reminding us that, unless we are the indigenous people on this land, we have all come from somewhere else.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her comments. She is absolutely right. Part of the reason I wanted to bring my mother into the debate is that I love the thought of her studying for her citizenship exam. I was the big studier in the family and all of a sudden I saw my mom studying as well.

I think including in the oath the treaty rights of our aboriginal people is critical. Right from the start we want new Canadians to know about treaty rights and be part of the broader conversation, dialogue and actions that will move us toward a true, new nation-to-nation relationship in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, 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 Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, COVID-19 Emergency Response; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Indigenous Affairs.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the House of Commons, where this debate is based today, sits on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe.

As my hon. colleagues have noted, indigenous peoples have played a fundamental role in Canada's past and continue to do so today. Canada must continue to stand up for the values that define this country, whether it is in welcoming newcomers, celebrating with pride the contributions of the LGBTQ2 communities or embracing two official languages.

To walk the road of reconciliation, there is still much work to be done, such as the need to address systemic racism and its impact on all communities, including indigenous communities. However, as we have indicated, Canada is firmly committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The Government of Canada has made significant efforts to implement the calls to action, and these proposed changes regarding the oath of citizenship demonstrate our firm commitment to achieving this goal.

Our goal is to renew the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples. To move forward together, we need to be true partners in this Confederation. Advancing reconciliation remains a Canadian imperative, and it will take partners at all levels to make real progress. We know there is more to do, and we will continue to work together.

One of the most important ways we demonstrate this support is to highlight it at citizenship ceremonies throughout this country, whether they are the virtual ceremonies that have taken place in recent months or the traditional in-person events. Recognizing the role that indigenous peoples have played in this country is a fundamental part of our citizenship ceremony.

To this end, at our in-person ceremonies, judges and those presiding over the ceremonies have traditionally acknowledged the indigenous territory on which the ceremony takes place, and also speak of the history of indigenous peoples in Canada in their welcome remarks to new Canadians. The stories of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are the stories of Canada itself, and indigenous peoples will continue to play a critical role in Canada's development as we go forward.

During these ceremonies, participants accept the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by taking the oath of citizenship. The oath of citizenship is a public declaration that someone is joining the Canadian family and is committed to Canadian values and traditions.

For this declaration to be truthful and inclusive, it must include the recognition of indigenous peoples in Canada. Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), proposes to change Canada's oath of citizenship to recognize and affirm the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, as referenced in the Constitution.

The proposed amendment to the oath demonstrates the Canadian government's commitment to responding to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also signals a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

Reconciliation is an important thing to all people in Canada. The proposed changes to the oath would help advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada. This would demonstrate support for the diversity that people of all origins contribute to Canada and our country's history, fabric and identity.

• (1640)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's remarks about this important legislation.

One thing we have heard mentioned a fair bit in this debate is the slow progress being made on the 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I believe the Yellowhead Institute estimated that at the current pace, it will be 2057 before all of the calls are implemented.

Could the hon. member provide his thoughts on what the federal government could do differently to accelerate the pace of implementation and ensure that indigenous people in this country do not have to wait until 2057 to see these important changes implemented?

• (1645)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, the member's question reminds me of something my father always reminded me to do: Act

Government Orders

in haste and repent at leisure. This reconciliation needs to have a process that engages all parties, so it is important that we carefully consider the perspectives of the individuals we are working with and build on a partnership that everybody supports. That, unfortunately, does take time. There are a lot of things we would like to go forward with far more quickly, which we heard about earlier, but we need to be very careful that we engage all parties, are sensitive to what is important to them and try to build a collaboration that is long-lasting and not fraught with peril and conflict in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just listened to my hon. colleague's response. He said that we must listen to what first nations want. He is absolutely right.

I fully support Bill C-8. However, I am wondering why the government is prioritizing this type of measure, which is definitely important but rather symbolic, instead of focusing on implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for example.

Does the member opposite agree with me that that would make a more meaningful difference in the lives of first nations people?

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe these things need to be mutually exclusive. Both initiatives are important, so we should be moving forward on the UNDRIP commitments as well. I agree with the member.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, partnerships with indigenous groups are key in my province of Saskatchewan. I have seen this with the Saskatchewan school boards. In Saskatchewan, many of the kids come from the reserves into the city and then go back to the reserves later.

On the citizenship oath aspect of the bill, I note that many of us have attended numerous Canadian citizenship ceremonies. They are always scheduled in advance, by two or three months. I suggest that many of the Canadian citizenship ceremonies should be done now on reserve to show partnership. In the city of Saskatoon, there is the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Dakota Dunes and a number of other organizations, and the hon. member from up north in Saskatchewan has many more.

The bill is good on words, but maybe now, with truth and reconciliation and the citizenship oath, we can take these ceremonies to reserves.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, to the extent it is possible, I think that is a great recommendation. My daughter teaches in an Ontario school and has actively engaged in many of those experiences. I went through the Canadian citizenship oath with my parents, with 11 kids in tow, and I know how important that ceremony is.

Government Orders

To the extent we are able to do that, it is a great recommendation, and I thank the member for his suggestion.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick comment from the traditional territory of the Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the Kwanlin Dun, which both have signed modern treaties and self-government agreements.

I want people watching to think about how they would feel if they bought a house and when they went to move into it someone decided the house was not theirs and it was not being given to them. They can imagine how first nations and indigenous people felt when they signed treaties that were not honoured. It would be the same feeling.

This bill would give comfort and acknowledgement to immigrants. As I mentioned in a recent previous debate, we did not learn about this in school in any sufficient amount so this would give recognition of indigenous rights, which is in the Constitution, and the sanctity of the treaties we must abide by and, by the honour of the Crown, we should have been abiding by them from the very beginning. It would be a great recognition of that.

• (1650)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there is a question, but if the statement is that we should be committed to and go forward with the commitments from the Crown to indigenous peoples, I fully agree with him.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill C-8 at second reading. It is a bill that seeks to amend the oath of citizenship to include reference to the aboriginal and treaty rights of indigenous people.

I support the bill, firstly, because it reflects call to action 94 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, secondly, because in my consultation with indigenous leaders in northwest B.C., the region I am so privileged to represent, it seems to be a welcome step forward.

I want to recognize the leadership of former member of Parliament, Romeo Saganash, and the current member for Vancouver East. Their leadership helped move this change forward as well and they should be recognized.

It has been mentioned by previous speakers that progress on implementing the TRC's calls to action has been far too slow. Five years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its calls to action, only 10 of the 94 have been implemented, and none since 2018. We are debating this relatively small, relatively symbolic change at a time when our government is still fighting indigenous kids in court, when far too many communities in this country still lack clean drinking water and when we continue to see evidence of systemic racism against indigenous people in our country's institutions.

An oath is a promise. Perhaps as we ponder requiring new Canadians to make a solemn promise to indigenous people, we in this chamber should ask if we are keeping the ones we ourselves have made. This is the third time a version of the bill has been intro-

duced in the House, and it does beg the question of how the more significant calls to action will be legislated when such a simple change has suffered so many false starts. Yet, Bill C-8 does represent a step forward and should be passed into law as quickly as possible.

It has been rightly noted that the true value of the bill will not come through the 19 words to be inserted into the oath but rather if this change creates an educational framework within which new Canadians can learn about and reflect on the rights of indigenous people, which will truly be a step forward.

Northwest British Columbia comprises the unceded lands of the Tahltan, the Tlingit, the Tsimshian, the Haida, the Heiltsuk, the Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Wuikinuxv, Haisla, Nuxalk, Wet'suwet'en, Gitksan, Carrier Sekani and Kaska nations. It is also the homeland of the Nisga'a people who are so proudly signatory to British Columbia's first modern treaty.

In reflecting on the bill, I asked myself what new Canadians living in Prince Rupert, Terrace, Houston, Smithers and Fraser Lake might learn about the first peoples of their adopted home. Of course, and in light of the bill's origin, new Canadians must learn about the atrocity of residential schools, that such a thing may never happen again in our country. They might also learn about Delgamuukw, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en landmark Supreme Court case that affirmed the fact that indigenous title was never extinguished by colonization. They might learn that the indigenous rights referenced in the amended oath of citizenship are still very much contested, and that there is so much work left to be done on the path to a just coexistence. They might learn about the Nisga'a Treaty, which took the Nisga'a people, including leaders such as the late Joseph Gosnell, 113 years to achieve. They might learn about the feast system, a pillar of traditional governance and about Canada's efforts to eliminate it forever in the name of assimilation.

I spoke briefly on the weekend with the Gitksan hereditary Chief Gwininitxw, Yvonne Lattie, a wonderful woman who shared an hour of her time. I talked to her about this legislation to get her thoughts. She shared her hope that new Canadians will learn about her people's way of life and about how their system still works for them today. New Canadians might learn about indigenous resources stewardship that has been practised for millennia, and how many nations are once again taking a lead role in managing their resources, including wild salmon, which are so important to the region I represent.

• (1655)

They might learn the tragic story of the Lake Babine people's fishing weirs on the Babine River, destroyed by the federal government in 1904, or the fishing site at Hagwilget, destroyed by DFO's blasting of rock in 1959. They might learn about the nation-building efforts of nations that are crafting modern constitutions based on both their traditional governance systems and the contemporary needs of their communities. Similarly they might learn about the many indigenous languages and the fight to revitalize them. Those efforts in communities throughout northwest B.C. have been so inspiring. It is incredible to watch indigenous people, especially young indigenous people, learn these languages from the elders, and it is work we must support and resource, now more than ever.

Most of all, I hope that new Canadians will learn of the incredible resilience of indigenous people in the face of a politics of extinguishment. In the words of Chad Day, the president of the Tahltan central government, "It would be good if they learned that we are still here."

In consulting indigenous leaders in northwest B.C., a question came up regarding the wording of the amended oath, which we have heard read many times over the course of this debate, but I will read it again. The amended oath would read:

I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples....

Increasingly, the term "first nation" is used to refer to a band created under the Indian Act, and "indigenous nation" to refer to larger groups of indigenous peoples, and I want to recognize the CBC journalist, Angela Sterritt, for helping me understand this important distinction. For instance, the Gitsxan Nation includes five bands, many of which have changed their names to use the term "first nation" instead of "band", and members can understand why this might be the case. The word "band", of course has its origin in the Indian Act, which is so problematic. In the case of the Wet'suwet'en, there now exists both a Wet'suwet'en Nation and a Wet'suwet'en First Nation, the latter of which used to be called the Broman Lake Indian Band.

This may seem like somewhat of a pedantic technical point, but the question of which group is the proper rights holder under section 35 of our Constitution is very much contested. One has only to look at recent conflicts over resource development in northwest British Columbia and across Canada to see how this is playing out and the tensions it is creating.

In northwest B.C. there are many examples where the indigenous group pursuing affirmation of indigenous rights is an indigenous nation, not a band, constituted under the Indian Act. The Haida, the Heiltsuk, the Gitsxan, the Wet'suwet'en and the Nuxalk are all examples of this. It will be important, therefore, for the amended oath to recognize them as the proper holders of those section 35 rights. I would note I recently consulted British Columbia's new declaration act, which brings the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into B.C. law. I did a word search for the term "first nations", and it does not seem to appear in that legislation, so it is clear that there is an evolution in the words used to describe indigenous groups.

Government Orders

I am certain that the wording of the amended oath has undergone a legal review, however it would be helpful if the government clarified whether the term "first nation" refers to a band or to a larger nation of rights holders.

We have heard from other members in this place of the significance of citizenship ceremonies. There have been some very moving stories. We heard one just a few moments ago, and I would like to share a story of my own.

• (1700)

In 2012, very shortly after being elected the mayor of Smithers, I was invited to a local citizenship ceremony. It was held in the gymnasium of Muheim Elementary School in the community of Smithers. About 20 Smithereens, and yes, that is what residents of Smithers are called, were gathered to complete their journey toward becoming Canadian citizens. Some of these Smithereens were new to Canada and they had worked very hard to get to this point as quickly as possible. Others had lived in our country for decades and were only just then coming to the point of taking their citizenship oath.

A citizenship judge had travelled to Smithers, I believe from Victoria, to deliver a speech and to officiate the taking of the oath. I do not recall the exact content of his speech, but I remember that it was eloquent and inspiring. A group of school kids sang at the ceremony. They sang in English, French and Wet'suwet'en, the language of the place.

What I remember most was the audience of family, friends and community members who had come out that day to watch their loved ones take the oath of citizenship and take this important step. It was really moving and I remember thinking at the time that, as mayor, I should promote this ceremony so that next year the entire community could come out and bear witness to this important event and share in what I had just experienced.

I never got that chance because later that year the federal government cut funding for citizenship ceremonies in small towns across rural Canada. Residents of my home community of Smithers now have to drive four hours in all kinds of weather to take their citizenship oath in Prince George.

I understand that, now, with the circumstances we are living in, people are taking their citizenship oaths virtually. However, even before the pandemic, I do not believe there was a single in-person citizenship ceremony in all of northwest B.C.

The taking of the citizenship oath is a significant moment for many people. All the more significant if it is done in one's home community in front of one's family, friends and loved ones. Let us not only amend the oath of citizenship. Let us also take steps to restore citizenship ceremonies across rural Canada so that new Canadians may take their oath on the lands belonging to the people whose rights they will be pledging to uphold.

Government Orders

I will conclude my remarks with the words of Murray Sinclair from the preface to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in which he writes, “Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered.”

The oath of citizenship is one very small component of Canadian society. Let us make this change swiftly and move on to the most pressing challenges facing our relationship with indigenous people.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my colleague’s concerns in relation to where citizenship ceremonies take place. Over the last 30 years, I have had the opportunity to participate in many. What I have found is that the department is exceptionally flexible. In fact, often it is the local citizenship judge who really motivates going out into the communities.

For example, for me they have been in different parts of the riding of Winnipeg North, in downtown Winnipeg, in the legislative building, in armouries and all sorts of different settings. I suspect that if the member was to inquire, he will find there is a great deal of discretion among citizenship judges and the administration to look at different ways.

We can talk about schools. I love the idea of reserves. That would be a wonderful place to witness a citizenship oath, and I suspect that we will, if we already have not. I suspect we probably have already, but it would be nice to reinforce just how wonderful it would be to see more citizenship ceremonies taking place. Maybe even some of the non-profit organizations that are out there—

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the parliamentary secretary to familiarize himself with the geography of the region I represent in northwest B.C. The citizenship judges are mostly located in the larger urban centres. If it is at their discretion where they deliver the oaths, I believe there needs to be a more concerted effort on the part of the government to ensure that those ceremonies get delivered in people’s home communities.

I believe every region of this country deserves a chance to witness those ceremonies and forcing new Canadians to travel four, six or eight hours by highway to take the oath of citizenship, to me, does not feel like we are doing justice to this important step in their journey to becoming Canadians.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member’s speech and presentation on Bill C-8. I was fortunate to be a member of the legislative assembly when the Government of Saskatchewan introduced treaty education to the curriculum throughout the province, as a big part of our walk toward truth and reconciliation, to ensure young people and students throughout elementary school were learning about treaty education, what happened and how treaties were signed. It is incumbent on all of us to take up that mantle and be advocates, and talk to our provincial governments.

In B.C., is there a move toward treaty education? I am not quite familiar with it. In the member’s own area, has he been a strong advocate for treaty education throughout the curriculum in elementary and high schools?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is familiar, but northwest British Columbia is home to only one treaty. Yes, treaty education is very important. When I talk to the Nisga’a leadership, they would very much like non-indigenous people to become more familiar with the terms of their treaty.

However, the larger importance of education rests with an understanding of unceded indigenous title and indigenous rights, which represent such an important part of our work together in northwest British Columbia. There are many people who do not understand the Supreme Court case law and the evolution of our understanding of indigenous title and rights. That is very much an important part of education, moving forward. I believe that the B.C. government has made some important steps on moving it into the curriculum in British Columbia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his very heartfelt speech. I would like to tell him that I believe he has hit the nail on the head when it comes to recognition.

Bill C-8 recognizes the fundamental character of indigenous peoples. My colleague used several examples to point this out and spoke of the particular way in which indigenous people identify with nature, and we could learn a lot from that relationship. This also applies to cultural life. Back home, at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, a group known as the Nikanite is trying to revitalize indigenous culture. I believe that is key. I think that the member has clearly identified that recognition is very important. I will now ask my question.

In my opinion, what is missing from this bill is the recognition of the francophone nation. People who take an oath of citizenship should be aware that one of the founding peoples is francophone and that one of the founding peoples has not yet signed the Constitution. It seems to me that there needs to be some education about that as well.

Does my colleague have any thoughts on that?

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, indeed I believe that warrants discussion. My concern would be that the topic we have in front of us is a very specific one that relates to our relationship with indigenous peoples, which is a fundamental one. This is not to take away from what the hon. member has offered, but I believe that topic is probably best discussed at a separate time. The change we have before us has suffered many false starts. I believe it should be passed into law swiftly so that we can move on to other discussions about citizenship where perhaps the ideas the member presented could be discussed at a later time.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know this is a very important matter to us. To the NDP, it is a step forward toward many changes that need to be made. Some people might think changing the citizenship oath is symbolic, but it is an important step going forward. However, it has taken the government almost five years to implement this. It is very concerning that with all the other issues there are, such as missing and murdered indigenous girls, access to clean water, the mould they are living with and all kinds of different issues, it has taken the government five years just to do this.

Does my friend feel the government has been procrastinating on these issues and does he see some of the Liberal Party members speaking so positively that they might take a better stance at moving some of these other issues forward at a faster pace?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, certainly this question around the pace of change has been one that has come up several times. Members may have heard me just ask my colleague across the way a similar question. I do not believe the current government is the right party to ask if the pace of change is fast enough. Of course, it is going to defend the glacially slow pace at which these changes are being implemented. The proper people to be asking are the leaders of the indigenous nations within this country. I am almost positive if we ask indigenous leaders if the pace of change on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action has been adequate, they will almost unanimously say it has not been.

Much more needs to be done. This is some of the most important work we can do together as a country. It is time to stop dragging our feet and get on with it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the leadership of the Council of the Haida Nation has always been remarkable to me on the subject of reconciliation. I remember clearly the words of the former president of the Council of the Haida Nation, Miles Richardson, who defined “reconciliation”, something we grapple with, as such: We will have reconciliation when “you can see me as I see myself, and I can see you as you see yourself”.

I want to know how the member feels about how this slow pace of reconciliation from settler culture Canadians can meet the aspirations of indigenous leadership across Canada.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the slow pace of change really can meet the needs of indigenous people. That is why we need to accelerate the pace of change and redouble

Government Orders

our efforts in this place and across the country in all our institutions.

Just today we heard the revelations about the interaction that took place in Vancouver at BMO. A member of the Heiltsuk Nation and his granddaughter were arrested for the alleged crime of trying to open a bank account using their status card and the role the federal government may have played in that situation. We are far too far from where we need to be, and we need to accelerate the pace of change in a dramatic way.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that I get to follow the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He just informed us he is from Smithers. The story of Viersens in Canada starts in Smithers.

My grandfather immigrated there as a 21-year-old adventurer from the Netherlands. He made his fortune there logging. He has a lot of great stories of the bush in northern British Columbia, fighting forest fires, building logging camps, a saw mill and looking for timber rights. That was always the big thing. He said that he could build a saw mill every day of the week, but trying to find timber rights was always a big challenge.

I get to follow the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley in talking about the immigration oath, one of the things my grandfather took. He is now a Canadian citizen along with my grandmother. She moved to Telkwa, which is just up the road from Smithers. She was 14 years old when she came to Canada. She worked in the general store there. My grandfather happened to show up there one day to buy some supplies for the logging camp. His English was not very good and neither was her, but they communicated well in Dutch. That is how my family was born. It is how the Viersens ended up in Canada.

Not very many of us have the last name Viersen. My grandparents had 11 children but only two sons. I have a lot of relatives all over, including in Skeena—Bulkley Valley, but the last name Viersen is not found very often, given that I have mostly aunts who married other folks. The Viersen name is a limited edition.

My grandparents are very proud Canadians. They are both still alive and in their 90s now. They survived the Second World War. They both remember Canadians liberating the Netherlands. My grandfather was 14 when that happened and my grandmother was 10. It is a memory that is forever burned in their minds, but has also animated the rest of their lives. My grandfather as a young man seeking adventure came to Canada all by himself. My grandmother came with her family.

Government Orders

Canada was seen as the land of opportunity and the land of saviours. It was seen as the place of boundless opportunities. It was where they chose to raise their family.

The NDP was elected in B.C. just prior to 1976, maybe to the chagrin of my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. In 1976, my grandparents pulled up roots and moved to the promised land of northern Alberta. They said that the NDP had been devastating to the economy in northern B.C., so they moved to Alberta. In more ways than one, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is connected to my heritage, more than he probably even realizes.

My grandparents have been married now for over 60 years. That is a big level of commitment. Taking the oath of citizenship is also a big level of commitment. People swear allegiance to the country and to the Queen and they swear to fulfill their duties in our country. I would like to point out that the Queen has been married for 73 years, a very high level of commitment. We do not hear about that very often anymore. I want to salute that in my speech today.

I am great admirer of the Queen. I inherit that from my mother. She is a big royal watcher and has been for my whole life. She instilled in me a great appreciation for the royals, particularly the Queen.

I understand there is a show on Netflix called *The Crown*. It does not matter where I go, people tell me about it. I have not watched it yet. The Speaker tells me I have to see it, so it must be really good. I do not have a Netflix subscription yet, so I have not had the opportunity. I suppose I could probably buy it in a box set or something like that.

● (1715)

Because I am a born Canadian, I never took the oath of citizenship. However, I remember very distinctly the oath that I took when I was sworn into this place, swearing allegiance to the Queen and upholding all her laws in this place. That was very much a moment of pride in my life. I got to feel a bit of what it must mean when immigrants take their oath, as my grandparents did when they came to this country. I am very excited about that.

The Queen has been on the throne for a very long time. She has been the keeper of the British Empire, the keeper of British common law and she has been a very stabilizing force in the world. For that, I am eternally grateful. She has a great title, the keeper of the Commonwealth and the keeper of the faith. She will be sadly missed. She is growing older every year. Her husband now has quit driving on public roads. I know she still likes to drive her Land Rover around. That is one thing she and I have in common. We both like to drive our 4x4s around, so I appreciate that about her. I am more of a Jeep guy.

I appreciate the fact that we live in the heritage of the British Commonwealth, the heritage of the British common law system and we have that stabilizing force. We have an entity from which comes the authority of this place, recognized here with the mace, the authority of government. There is an identifying area from where the authority flows. We often take that for granted in our country. That is one of the reasons that Canada is a much more stable country than, say, our neighbours to the south. They do not necessarily have that figurehead or authority figure that is a constant in

their political and power structure. In Canada, we have the Queen. She has been there for a long time. She is very stable. It is a stable entity and institution that is identified with authority.

I very much appreciate the Queen and I am very glad we swear allegiance to her, not only when sworn into this place but when people become citizens of Canada. They also then recognize the requirements of being a citizen. They must abide by the rules that govern this place, which have been put in place through the authority of the Queen, and the treaties. This bill would recognize the treaties that the Crown, the Queen, has signed, the peace treaties.

I am from Treaty 8 territory. Where I live is Treaty 6 territory, but just across the river, about 10 kilometres away, is Treaty 8 territory. The vast majority of my riding is Treaty 8 territory. That treaty was signed in 1899 in Grouard on the banks of the Lesser Slave Lake, the biggest lake in Alberta. Since that time, there has been peace.

We often say “treaties”, but these were peace treaties. These negotiations happened between different groups of people, saying that we would abide by a common set of rules, that we would not go to war with one another, that justice would be provided to the inhabitants of our country on the basis of British common law, that cows and plows would be supplied, a medicine box would be supplied and a one-room schoolhouse would be supplied. All of these things were in the treaty and it was signed by the Indian agent.

● (1720)

Oftentimes, the treaties were in Alberta. These treaties were helped along by a gentleman named Father Lacombe. A town in Alberta called Lacombe was named after him. He was a great friend of the first nations and somebody who spoke Cree fluently. He could communicate and advocate on behalf of the Cree people. He did a great job in helping to establish these treaties. Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 are represented in Alberta. Ever since, we have lived under these treaties.

I often call my riding the promised land. I do not know if members have heard this before, but the town of Falher is the honey capital of Canada and we also have about 7,500 dairy animals. The town is literally flowing with milk and honey. We also have the municipal districts of Peace and Opportunity. It is all based on a promise called Treaty 8. I always advocate that where I come from is truly the promised land, a land flowing if not with honey, it is peace and opportunity. Everybody should live there. We have a lot of land to go around. My riding of Peace River—Westlock is the size of a mid-sized European country. The Netherlands, where my ancestors come from, is two-and-a-half times smaller than the riding of Peace River—Westlock, just to give some idea of the scale of the riding.

Government Orders

I have the privilege of representing 14 first nations in northern Alberta, all Cree people who speak Cree. They live across the landscape right beside the town of Slave Lake in the Sawridge band to a very remote community on the edge of the Wood Buffalo National Park in Garden Creek or Garden River, depending on who is talking. These communities are vibrant. They are surviving very well in northern Alberta due to natural resource development. Many of them have road construction companies. They have logging companies. They have oil service companies. They have been blessed by the abundance of natural resources.

However, more recently the lack of pipelines being built in the country has led to a reduction in the number of jobs in northern Alberta. Therefore, many of these bands are beginning to struggle. They are laying off their own people, given the fact that they do not have access to markets for our products. Because of that, there is a massive discount for our products. When oil hits all-time lows, Alberta oil goes into negative territory. We need to ensure that we have market access and we need to ensure that our first nation brothers and sisters get to participate in the economy the same as everybody else, such as those from Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. We need to ensure that those living in northern Alberta, those living in Treaty 8 have the opportunities.

While the bill is an important one, it will not necessarily bring the tangible results we are looking for on some of these major issues around employment in first nations, around drinking water on reserve and around whether the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies on reserves. I bring this up often. The town I live nearest to is the town of Barrhead, Alberta. In about 30 seconds, I can google and find the financial statements of the town. I can see how much the mayor makes. I can see where the money has been spent. It is all publicly disclosed.

Our first nation brothers and sisters do not have the ability to do that. Many times the documentation is not up to date. It is not readily available on the band's website, all those kinds of things. This is part of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act that our former government put in and that the current government is not enforcing. I hear this all the time from the band members who come to see me.

• (1725)

Most recently I have been dealing with Denise from northern Alberta, and she is very concerned about the fact that there has been a disbursement of funds, known as the cows and plows settlement. There have been multiple bands that have reached agreements with the federal government around cows and plows, yet there has not been a consistent outlay of these funds.

From one band to the next there are discrepancies, and so Denise would like to know where these funds are going and how these funds are being managed. The answers are not forthcoming, so this is another one of the areas where we would like to see some action from the government to ensure that the relationship between Canada and the first nations, given we are all treaty people, is strong.

The other thing I want to point out is around that very issue. Does the Charter of Rights and Freedoms apply on reserve? That is a question that does not get asked often. Do band leaders owe their

band members the same rights and privileges as any other level of government is required to provide?

Under the treaties, particularly where I am from with Treaty 8, I would argue that is the case, and I do argue that is the case. We work hard advocating for individual band members to be given the same rights as Canadians in their relationship to any level of government in Canada, in regard to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applying to them. We also bring that to the first nations in my riding.

That is an interesting question. I remember in the previous Parliament the member for Winnipeg Centre and I had long discussions about that, and it is something that I think needs a little more work to ensure that is indeed the case. Those living on reserve should be availed with all the rights and privileges that are granted in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Constitution.

When they signed the treaty, they became Canadian. The Charter of Rights, therefore, applies to them. It is a document that they should be able to hold their own band leadership to account with, as well as the federal, provincial and municipal governments, depending on which government they live under.

Lastly, I want to talk a bit about prorogation and the fact that this bill was here in the beginning of Parliament and now it is back again, but it has a new number, and that just leads to a lot of confusion. I just want to point out that the only reason we had prorogation in this place is that the government is trying to avoid scrutiny on the WE scandal. In fact right now, as we speak, at the ethics committee the Liberals are delaying and ensuring that a study of the WE scandal does not come forward. That, as well, has impacted this bill.

We have seen that this bill now has a new number. It was introduced prior to prorogation. It had a number, and now we have reintroduced it after prorogation. It has caused a delay. This is a bill that has been widely adopted from all sides of the House. It is one that we were ensuring that we would have support for, but the prorogation has definitely stepped in the way and ensured that we are here with a new number and a bit of confusion around which bill we should be supporting and which bill we should not be supporting.

I had advocated for this bill with my own first nations in northern Alberta prior to prorogation. Now I am coming back to them having to explain why there is a new number, that we never passed the last one, there was a prorogation and all of that stuff.

I guess I will mention that the government is definitely ducking and jiving in order to get around having to answer questions around the WE scandal. In fact, they shut this whole place down to ensure that. The improprieties that have happened around the disbursement of the Canadian taxpayers' dollars have come to light.

With that, I would like to put on the record that I will be supporting this bill. I look forward to its passage and I want to thank the House for recognizing me today.

Government Orders

• (1730)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his support for this bill.

He began by speaking about the liberation of Holland, the liberation of the Netherlands, and the significant role the people of Canada had in that liberation. When I toured the sites of the liberation in the Netherlands for the 65th anniversary, I went with an indigenous soldier, who had helped liberate the Netherlands.

I would have much appreciated if the member had talked about the significant role that indigenous Canadians have played in those things, which would be a reason to want to recognize their treaty rights in our citizenship oath.

I want to quote Irene Plante, who said, "*Kahgee pohn noten took*", which in Cree means, "the fighting has ended". That symbolizes why we in this House need to stand, not to talk about prorogation or other things, but about the significant role that indigenous Canadians have played in the history of Canada and the world and make sure we honour them and their treaties.

I am wondering if the hon. member has an understanding of the role of indigenous people in the Canadian armed services and the liberation of the Netherlands.

• (1735)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I do in fact have a great appreciation for that. There is a monument in Peace River dedicated to the indigenous soldiers who fought in all of the wars. In particular, there was one very famous sniper who comes from northern Alberta, and I have acknowledged him several times. Every Remembrance Day, we make a statement remembering him in particular.

I would reach out across the aisle to the hon. member and see if he can support an initiative that Conservatives have been pushing to get an indigenous soldier on the \$5 bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin.

I want to congratulate my colleague on his completely surreal speech. We learned things about his grandparents. I quite like what he had to say about their 60 years of marriage.

We heard about prorogation, oil, the oil sector, and especially the Queen. The part of his speech on the Queen really stood out to me. When talking about the Queen to someone from Quebec, the first thing that comes to mind is conquest and imperialism. The only acceptable Queen in my view is the rock band. Otherwise, we do not see eye to eye.

The only interesting thing to me in this motion is the recognition it offers to first nations, and that gives me pause.

I have a question for my colleague. He said that a commitment is serious. In the oath of citizenship, the commitment is solemn. He referred to his grandparents who have been married for 60 years.

Since we are talking about a serious commitment, I do not think my political party can support this motion since Quebec never signed the Constitution referred to in this document.

If we are serious, we will not support this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague listened so intently to my speech. I do try to make them engaging, and I appreciate when I can see the engagement is working.

On the commitment, many Canadians disagreed with the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That said, there was a process put in place whereby 10 of the provinces representing 80% of the population needed to adopt it for it to be the Canadian Constitution. Quebec did not sign on to it, but that does not change the fact that since 1982, if my memory serves me well, we have lived under this Constitution. It has worked for us, and I do not hear anybody calling for the Constitution to be removed. If that is what the member is advocating for, I would be pleased to hear about it.

I also ask for his commitment to help us with the commemoration of Tommy Prince, an indigenous warrior, on the five-dollar bill.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that my colleague from Peace River—Westlock will be supporting Bill C-8.

I have a comment first. Before European colonization of North America, first nations and Inuit people all had very distinct legal customs and norms pre-contact. They had fully functioning societies with their own laws and rules. Then of course after contact, many of those were subsided under European contact.

If we are truly to acknowledge a nation-to-nation relationship, there has to be an acknowledgement of what existed pre-contact. With this new affirmation, we are recognizing the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. I am glad to hear his acknowledgement and support of that.

How does that stance jibe with his vote in the previous Parliament against Bill C-262, which affirmed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? How does he differentiate between those two sets of rights? I would like the member to comment on that.

• (1740)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, this question is very similar to the one I was asked by the Bloc about who the charter applies to. I addressed it a bit in my speech. Not all Canadians signed on to the charter when it was brought into place, but it has now existed for 30-some years. This speaks to the fact that it does not matter where someone lives in Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to them and that those rights and freedoms can be used in relation to any government.

Government Orders

As for the UN declaration, there are UN declarations on multiple things. One of the UN declarations I am working hard to advocate for in Canada is the Palermo protocol. This is a UN declaration that gives us the ability to identify whether somebody is being trafficked in Canada. This is not something we would just write into Canadian law. Instead, we would make Canadian law jibe with the Palermo protocol. I think the same applies for indigenous rights.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and especially for the comments he made about his riding. I spent several weeks in his riding when I was young and it is one of the best ridings in the country.

I did not hear him talk about francophone towns in his riding. Can the hon. member talk to us about those towns, which were populated by Canadians who came from Quebec to put down roots several years ago? There are francophone communities there now. There are also Métis communities.

Can the hon. member tell us more about that?

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, a lot of people do not know this, but northern Alberta is home to 4,000 French-speaking people. I remember that a couple of years back, a Ms. Bombardier took a swipe at them. She said that outside of Quebec there were no thriving French-speaking communities.

I would tell Ms. Bombardier to come to St. Isidore and check out the festival. It has a thriving French community. She can come to Guy, Marie Reine or Falher. There is “*arrêt*” on the stop signs and a French radio station everywhere we go. She can come on down and we will show her the French way of life in northern Alberta.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the speech by the member for Peace River—Westlock. I was looking for references to the bill we are debating and found that his remarks did “veersen” around a fair bit before getting to the gist of the matter.

The member and I share a connection to the beautiful Bulkley Valley, in northwest B.C. One of the most impactful parts of my time as mayor was helping tell the story, alongside the Wet'suwet'en people, of the relationship between the early settlers to that area and the Wet'suwet'en Nation.

I wonder if the member is familiar with some of that painful history. If not, maybe I can provide him with the book *Shared Histories*, which documents it in great detail.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know much at all about the Wet'suwet'en people from the member's riding. However, my family has had a great connection with the Carrier people around Babine Lake. I have holidayed in that area and have many friends from that area.

I recognize that the member and I recently shared the same obituary for a Mr. George from Smithers. I have many connections to that area, but not so much with the Wet'suwet'en.

• (1745)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I would like to inform the House that we have had more than five hours of debate on this motion. Consequently, the maximum time for all subsequent interventions shall be 10 minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a real shame because the Bloc Québécois has always stood faithfully by first nations people. We have always defended the rights of first nations peoples, be they treaty rights or rights arising from other agreements or laws.

Today we have to come out against Bill C-8. That is a real shame because all the Liberal government had to do was recognize the traditional treaty rights of first nations peoples, which it could have done any number of ways.

Instead, the government tried to make everyone swallow a poison pill by using first nations rights as a pretext for getting the House to agree that newcomers should swear to faithfully uphold the Canadian Constitution. That is what Bill C-8 is really about.

I am sorry, but the problem is that that is not the case in Quebec. Successive Quebec governments since the 1982 Constitution have always refused to recognize the authority of the Constitution and to sign it. I will give a few examples of unanimous resolutions adopted by the Quebec National Assembly. The first dates back to April 17, 2002, when Bernard Landry was premier of Quebec.

That the National Assembly reaffirm that it has never adhered to the Constitution Act, 1982, the effect of which has been to diminish the powers and rights of Quebec without the consent of the Government of Quebec and the National Assembly, and that it continues to be unacceptable to Quebec.

Here is another one that was adopted on June 14, 2007, when Jean Charest, a good Liberal, was premier of Quebec.

That the National Assembly of Québec recall that, 25 years ago this year, the Constitution Act, 1982 was enacted without Québec's approval, and that it formally reaffirm that it never acceded to this Act, whose effect was to diminish the powers and rights of Québec without its consent, and that the Constitution Act, 1982 still remains unacceptable for Québec.

I assume that my colleagues in the House will always be consistent and act with probity. I would like to mention that, at the time, the Liberal member for Bourassa was the member for Viau in the National Assembly when this resolution was adopted.

On November 16, 2011, the member for Bourassa was still a member of the National Assembly, as was my respected colleague, the House leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who was then the member for Chauveau in the National Assembly. These two members were in the National Assembly on November 16, 2011, when the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

That the National Assembly of Quebec recall that, 30 years ago this year, the Constitution Act, 1982 was enacted without Quebec's approval;

That it formally reaffirm that it never acceded to this Act, whose effect was to diminish the powers and rights of Quebec without its consent, and that the Constitution Act, 1982 still remains unacceptable for Quebec.

Government Orders

Obviously, I believe that my colleagues from Bourassa and Louis-Saint-Laurent will be consistent and not vote in favour of Bill C-8.

I will quote one last resolution, which dates back to April 17, 2012. Once again my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, the current House leader of the Conservative Party, was a member of the National Assembly of Quebec when this unanimous resolution was adopted on April 17, 2012.

THAT the National Assembly recall that, 30 years ago this year, the Constitution Act, 1982, was enacted without Québec's approval;

THAT it formally reaffirm that it never acceded to this act, whose effect was to diminish the powers and rights of Québec without its consent, and that the Constitution Act, 1982, still remains unacceptable for Québec.

Once again, I have too much faith in the integrity and constancy of my colleagues from Bourassa and Louis-Saint-Laurent to believe that they will be voting against Bill C-8, which would require newcomers to swear allegiance to and observe the Canadian Constitution. They used to recognize that Quebec did not accept the Constitution.

• (1750)

These were unanimous resolutions, but several Quebec premiers also made statements.

It will come as no surprise that René Lévesque said in 1978, "Québec will never agree, under the existing system, to the patriation of the Constitution." He made similar statements on several occasions, but I want to share a quote from Robert Bourassa, who was also a premier of Quebec and a good Liberal.

He said:

Québec must be able to say no to any constitutional amendment affecting the powers of the National Assembly as well as the institutions and main features of the Canadian federation. No Québec government can agree to a constitutional accord that does not include a veto.

On May 9, 1986, during Robert Bourassa's second term as the Liberal premier of Quebec, he said:

No government of Québec of whatever political leaning could sign the Constitution Act, 1982, as it is currently worded. However, if certain changes were made, this constitutional law could be acceptable to Québec.

He then listed the five historical conditions that would have to be met for Quebec to sign the Constitution. That was in 1986.

There was Robert Bourassa, who was a good Liberal, and René Lévesque. There were others who were better known to the House, such as Lucien Bouchard, who was a Quebec premier but who also sat here as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. In 1997, he said:

The government will not be associated with any future multilateral constitutional discussions, based on the lucid observation made by former Premier Robert Bourassa following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord according to which the existing constitutional reform process in Canada has been discredited.

Here is what Jacques Parizeau said in 1994 when he was premier of Quebec:

Twelve years ago, Pierre Trudeau's unilateral patriation dwindled the National Assembly's powers against our will, with a Constitution that Québec has never signed. Four years ago, the death of the Meech Lake Agreement sounded Canada's refusal in recognizing—albeit symbolically—our difference. As of today, the basic

law of Canada does not recognize Québec as a nation, a people or even as a distinct society. A sad state of affairs.

There are a lot of quotes like that, but I am going to stop there because I could go on for a long time. I do, however, want to clearly state that all of the Quebec premiers have considered the 1982 Constitution to be odious and felt that it was signed without Quebec's consent. It was never recognized by the Quebec National Assembly or the people of Quebec under any circumstance or any government, no matter how federalist.

I therefore appeal to my colleagues in the House, because I believe in respecting and recognizing the rights of indigenous people in their treaty. I do not think that members can then turn around and deny the Quebec nation's right to be recognized for what it is or to refuse to be bound by contracts it did not sign.

Once again, the Conservative House leader agreed with what I said a few years ago, and so did the member for Bourassa. I imagine that they are serious men and that they do not change their minds on a weekly basis. They will surely vote against this bill.

Given the peace of the Braves agreement, which was signed by Quebec and the Cree Nation in 2002, when Bernard Landry was the premier of Quebec, and considering everything I said and the Quebec nation's inalienable right to self-determination, we are going to vote against Bill C-8.

I urge my Conservative colleagues to follow their House leader and also vote against this bill. The same goes for my government colleagues, the members of the Liberal Party. They should talk to my colleague from Bourassa who will surely convince them that he was not crazy when he decided to vote in favour of these resolutions in Quebec City at the time.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must say that I am disappointed in the Bloc. I realize that, at times, those members feel they have to play a destructive role here on the floor of the House of Commons, but I think this is the wrong time.

I think that the Bloc members need to realize the many contributions and the history behind indigenous people throughout our great land. By voting against this legislation, they are not recognizing the importance of reconciliation. I believe that a good number of people across this land would want to see the Bloc be a little more constructive and support reconciliation.

Are the member and his party not concerned that they are clearly demonstrating a lack of respect towards reconciliation by voting against this legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, when it comes to respect, I would say that our Liberal colleagues are in no position to lecture anyone. It is their fault that we are voting against Bill C-8.

They are the ones who did the same thing with Bill C-8 that they do with omnibus bills, meaning that they inserted the infamous poison pill I just mentioned. We are in agreement. The Liberals know very well that the Bloc Québécois has always stood with indigenous nations and we will continue to do so. The Liberals are trying to exploit this to make us swallow the infamous poison pill of recognizing the Canadian Constitution.

I too am disappointed. I am a lot more disappointed in my Liberal colleagues than my Liberal colleague could ever be in the Bloc. I am disappointed in their approach, which is disloyal and could prevent the House from voting in favour of Bill C-8.

I would like to say that, if necessary, if we end up studying Bill C-8 in committee, we will move an amendment to remove that part, which, once again, is shameful, in my opinion.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really liked my hon. colleague's speech.

Could he refresh the memories of certain Liberals, and perhaps certain Conservatives, too, and explain why we never signed the Constitution and why not even the federalist Quebec premiers wanted to sign this patriation?

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

There are obviously the five historical conditions, set out for the first time in 1986 by Robert Bourassa, who was a Liberal premier. The conditions were the following: an explicit recognition of Quebec as a distinct society; a guarantee of broader powers in the realm of immigration; limitations on federal spending power; the recognition of Quebec's right of veto; and Quebec's participation in the appointment of judges. The topic of judges has come up quite a bit recently.

These claims are still relevant today, but the main reason we have never signed that agreement is that it is dishonourable. This agreement was signed at night during a meeting of the first ministers without the premier of Quebec. Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau managed to convince his provincial counterparts to sign this agreement while René Lévesque was asleep in his hotel room.

That is despicable. It should not happen. It shows an appalling lack of respect. I would never even think of doing something like that.

We have never signed the Constitution Act, 1982, for that reason. Quebec was disrespected, and there has always been an unwillingness to recognize Quebec as a founding nation. Now, the government wants Quebec to recognize the rights of the first nations while simultaneously denying the rights of the Quebec nation. That is obscene.

We agree that we must recognize the rights of the first nations. We will stand up and demand respect for our rights as a co-founding nation of this federation.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to once again stand in this place and enter into debate on Bill C-8, which is an important subject.

Reconciliation affects us all. It is one of those issues that we truly all need to take seriously. I want to start by sharing two stories that are fairly unrelated in one regard, but brought together by what we are debating here today.

I attended university in British Columbia and all the universities in British Columbia took a day off on the day the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was meeting at the Pacific National Exhibition grounds in Vancouver. All the universities in the Lower Mainland, and I think many high schools as well, took that day off so students could attend the culmination of the event that had been taking place over the course of a week. There were buses that were organized and took university students.

My wife and I decided we would go together. My first thought as I boarded the school bus that day was that this effort was being made by the university I attended and many others to ensure there was an opportunity for students to attend the reconciliation event and I was disappointed there were not more students to join, that these buses were not full and that the buses from the other universities were not full. A number of other students and I attended this TRC event, of which I think there were seven if memory serves me, and I may stand to be corrected, across the country.

It was an incredibly powerful opportunity to see the impacts the residential schools had on the lives of Canada's indigenous peoples. As somebody who does not have a personal indigenous history, experiencing the sights and sounds of walking through the halls and various rooms was powerful. I remember there were different stations set up with photos from the different residential schools on the arena floor of one of the event centres of the exhibition grounds. One would walk into this room and hear crying and laughing as the members of these schools had not seen each other for decades and were reliving their pain and experiences. It was an incredibly powerful moment of reconciliation. For somebody who grew up in a small prairie town, it was incredibly enlightening to see it and listen to the various speakers. There was a program that happened that evening and I heard about some of the traumatic experiences the indigenous people faced and learned about this scar on our nation's history. It was an incredibly powerful day for me. It left a lasting impression and it is something I certainly bring to my work now as a member of Parliament. That is the first story.

The second story is that of a citizenship ceremony. My father-in-law came to Canada at a very young age, his parents came to Canada from the United States. I had the opportunity a number of years ago to attend a citizenship ceremony in a library auditorium in Saskatoon where I got to see my father-in-law and about 40 or 50 others stand on that stage and swear an oath of allegiance to this country. This was before I was involved in running for office and whatnot. I greatly appreciated that ceremony. Something that stood out to me specifically was the diversity represented on that stage. It was incredible.

Government Orders

● (1800)

There were people from all over the world, some like my father-in-law who has known nothing but Canada. He moved here too young to remember anything else. Then there were others who had been here for only a number of years, refugees and others who had come from a variety of circumstances. It was incredibly powerful.

The judge who did the swearing-in asked that each person on the stage share a brief moment or, if they had some difficulty with that, a letter that she would read of what Canada means to them. It was incredible to listen to story after story, these brief moments of a connection with Canada. Then when the judge led the oath, she invited every other person in that auditorium to say the oath as well. It was an incredibly powerful moment seeing these soon-to-be Canadians take the oath of citizenship.

I tell those two stories because the bill we have before us today is important in the way that it brings together that Canadian experience while acknowledging the depth of some of our history. It is important to acknowledge these things so that we can move forward as a country.

I want to talk a bit about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I am proud that as a Conservative, it was Prime Minister Stephen Harper who, in 2008, stood and apologized for the residential schools. He apologized for the more than 130 residential schools that took the livelihoods of so many indigenous children. I know these statistics have been read before, but I believe they bear repeating.

There were more than 130 residential schools across this country over the course of about 130 years, from shortly after Confederation until the 1990s when the last one closed down. There were 150,000 first nations, Métis and Inuit children who were subjected to them. There were seven generations of Canadians that were impacted.

One of the most impactful statistics is that we have learned since that more than 3,200 children died of tuberculosis, malnutrition and other diseases while attending the schools. As a parent, I cannot even imagine what it would be like to have children taken away and then not even learn that they had passed away. It is unbelievable that it took place in our country.

The name of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is powerful. We are here talking about what is an action and a symbol and how those two things come together. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is finding the truth of what happened. I mentioned my experience at the TRC event that took place in Vancouver back in 2013 and the truth of what was learned. It is important to see the truth and move forward in the reconciliation.

Although Bill C-8 would not necessarily solve the problems created by the lasting impacts faced by our indigenous populations, it takes a step that is a symbol, an acknowledgement and a recognition going forward that as a country, we can learn, grow and move forward as Canadians, acknowledging what happened in our past and building a brighter future together.

● (1805)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was not going to bring up Stephen Harper, but since the member did, Stephen Harper had absolutely nothing to say for the Truth and Reconciliation report. He had no desire to implement any of the recommendations and certainly never gave an opinion on it.

Can the member say whether he disagrees with Stephen Harper? I really respect what he had to say. I think he was very genuine in his comments. Would he then agree that Stephen Harper was wrong by basically ignoring the Truth and Reconciliation report?

● (1810)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that politics would be played at a moment such as this, which should be solemn. Although I do not have much good to say about Liberal policy, I plan to vote in favour of the bill. It is a step in the right direction.

That member refuses to acknowledge that the Conservatives took some steps moving forward, such as, I believe, changes to the Divorce Act and to property rights for first nations. There were steps that the Conservatives took. It is unfortunate that there seems to be a blindness in partisanship when it comes to trying to move our country forward together.

I believe that, on an issue like this, Canadians can come together. Canadians can move forward and ensure that we build a Canada that acknowledges the mistakes of our past to a better future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I really liked the first part of his speech on reconciliation, which is essential. I agree with him on the need to recognize first nations.

Speaking of reconciliation, I do not know if my colleague listened to the presentation by my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord earlier. Would he agree with removing the reference to the Constitution in order to make the bill acceptable, at least to francophones and Quebecers who never signed the Constitution?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question asked by the member, and I find it interesting. Recommendation 94 in the TRC report does not actually reference the Constitution. The wording is a little bit different. I wonder, and consider this a curious musing, if this is an attempt by the government to play politics on this issue: to try to divide Canadians instead of unite them. It is unfortunate if that is the case, because something as serious as this should be an opportunity to unite Canadians so that we can, as I said before, move forward to build a better Canada together.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments, but I have just one correction: It is not “our” indigenous people. We are not people who are owned. We are sovereign and independent people.

Government Orders

The member spoke a lot about the violation of human rights that took place in residential schools. I would like to thank him for acknowledging these human rights abuses, but I would ask him why the Conservative Party continues to vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is a minimum human rights document that recognizes the abuses of indigenous peoples around the globe: indigenous brothers and sisters that I will unapologetically always stand up for while we strive to realize these fundamental rights.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague will, in recognition of his deep comments about wanting to change the reality of ongoing human rights violations against indigenous people, vote in favour, if it should happen, of the full adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer the question, and I apologize if there was any offence. I talk that way about many people that I come into contact with to be inclusive in that regard, and I apologize if there was any offence.

When it comes to the UNDRIP that the member referenced, many things are said in that document that all nations that are part of the United Nations should aspire to, but the House of Commons and the Senate are the legislative bodies for our nation. Those documents are calling on nations around the world to ensure that there are those minimum standards of human rights and whatnot that she referred to, but it is the job of this place to develop a legislative framework to ensure that those sacred obligations are fulfilled.

● (1815)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to join the debate today and talk about Bill C-8, an act to change the Citizenship Act.

I want to talk a bit about my history. Everyone has to walk their own path of truth and reconciliation and do what they can to make sure they are advocates in supporting truth and reconciliation in their lives.

Growing up in southwest Saskatchewan, there were not a lot of indigenous reserves around. When I turned 18, I moved up to a small northern village in northern Saskatchewan called Air Ronge. I moved up there to play hockey in the SJHL. Being up there for the first time, as a kid from southwest Saskatchewan, the first thing I noticed was there are a lot more trees up in northern Saskatchewan than there are down in the southwest.

The second thing I noticed is that there was a different culture. It was a pleasure for me. My billets were Jimmy and Tina Roberts. Jimmy passed away a few years ago. They were wonderful billets for me. They had two small children, and as an 18-year-old, it was an eye-opening experience to move up north.

I was not there that long, but not because I did not like the community. I just was not a particularly good hockey player, so I did not spend a lot of time in La Ronge, but I have good memories of the time I did spend there. I went through a lot of different cultural experiences. I was only 18 years old. I am thankful that, up in northern Saskatchewan, I got to know quite a few members of the community up there quite well. I stay in touch with a couple of them.

During this most recent campaign, the husband of someone who I had not connected with for years walked into the campaign office. Her name was Taryn, and she lived up in La Ronge with her family for many years. It just so happened that she and her husband had taken up residence in Regina—Lewvan. They are great people, and it was nice to reconnect with someone I had not seen for a long time.

A few experiences I have had along the path of truth and reconciliation were during my former career as an MLA with the Government of Saskatchewan. In an earlier question to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I said we were the first provincial government to implement treaty education into school curriculums. I believe the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands was on the school board when this process was going forward. The school board trustees across the province and the Ministry of Education all helped out. We took it very seriously.

I believe Russ Marchuk was the minister when this initiative was brought forward. Russ is a valued friend, and he has been an educator in Regina for as long as I can remember. He is a great advocate for ensuring there is indigenous education within our curriculum. As the minister, he did a wonderful job promoting that and pushing it forward. It shows that one person and a group of people can make big changes.

I was born in 1982, and when I went to school, there was not a lot of indigenous curriculum in the education system in Saskatchewan. Being part of a government that brought that initiative forward is going to bode well for future generations to learn. This ties in with Bill C-8 and ensuring we are all doing our part to make sure we walk down the path of truth and reconciliation.

Another thing I was able to be a part of in the Government of Saskatchewan was the apology for the sixties scoop. It was a long process. We reached out to stakeholders across Saskatchewan, Métis and first nation. We did as much as we could to get stakeholders together because we did not want to give a blanket apology. We wanted to make sure the apology was meaningful to the groups who were hurt during the sixties scoop.

We also took the role very seriously as a government. We held sharing circles across the provinces where members across the community had to drive some distance, but not long distances. We were able to come into communities and take part in these sharing circles. The ministers and many people within the government took part and we had six or eight sharing circles across the province.

It took months to get the proper language and lay out how we and the groups we were apologizing to wanted to have the ceremony and apology move forward at the legislative assembly. Before the apology took place, one thing I will remember for a very long time is representatives from the stakeholder groups and affected groups came and spoke to our whole government's caucus, about 48 of us.

Government Orders

● (1820)

They spoke about their experiences and they spoke about what the words were going to mean when the apology came from the premier of the province in recognition of what happened and how the sixties scoop had affected generations of indigenous people in our province and beyond. I believe the Government of Manitoba has given an apology, and the Government of Alberta has also apologized for the sixties scoop. These are very true and meaningful steps towards reconciliation. I had the great privilege to be a part of a few as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

I keep those stories very much in mind when we are talking about moving forward and incorporating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 94 into the citizenship oath. I do not think there would be too many people who would see that as a problem. I think everyone sees it as a positive step forward in ensuring there is recognition.

In my former career I had the honour of attending many citizenship ceremonies. When these new Canadians take the oath, we can see the passion and the pride in their eyes that they are now a member of Canadian society. They are so proud to have the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens. They take it seriously. I am someone who was born in Canada and never went through that process, yet every time I attend a citizenship ceremony I can see that.

I was able to take part in a practice ceremony a couple of weeks ago. The Open Door Society in Regina does a lot of work with new Canadians. They have practice tests. I gave a practice speech. It is nice to do that sometimes with the new Canadian citizens. Just to see how much time and effort and practice they put in to ensure they pass that test to become Canadian citizens is something we should all have the opportunity to see, and to see what it means for someone to join our country, to join us in trying to ensure that Canada remains the greatest country in the world.

We get strength from those new citizens, and when they do the oath, having it include recognition of the treaties in our country is something that is very important. I am glad it was brought forward. Also, going a bit further, after this there is a lot more work to be done. The Liberals should realize that there is a lot more work to be done.

This is one step that should have been taken sooner, in many people's opinions. Also, we need to start working on reconciliation when it comes to economics and safe drinking water. The fundamental right of having safe drinking water on and off reserve is something that needs to be taken seriously. The Liberal government has not taken it seriously for the last five years. It has failed to move. It moved the goalpost again. I believe it promised safe drinking water on reserves within the next year or so, but the can has been kicked down the road again.

The Liberals cannot fundamentally follow through on a lot of their commitments. We saw it with the promise to plant two billion trees, which they never did. The Liberals promised to balance the budget, and who knows when that might happen.

What we need to focus on when it comes to truth and reconciliation is some of those tougher areas, some of the areas where we need to build partnerships to ensure that our indigenous communi-

ties can enjoy economic success as well. There is no reconciliation without economic reconciliation.

The government is not a big fan of our energy sector, and we all know that. We see it in the policies. However, the Teck Frontier would have helped 14 communities in northern Alberta build towards economic freedom and have economic opportunities for a generation. The government basically kicked Teck out of Canada. There is also Coastal GasLink, and we are still not sure where the government is going on that.

The government of the day needs to realize that there is no reconciliation without economic reconciliation. It is something the government should take very seriously to ensure that all Canadians can have success going forward, for generations to come.

● (1825)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really liked how the member touched on the fact that we do need to do more in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. I know the member brought up drinking water. This government has made significant progress, although there is still more to be done. There is no doubt about that.

Along those lines, I wonder if the member could fill us in on some other things within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that he thinks are important for us to implement as well.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, there are a lot of different Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations we should move forward on. As my friend from Saskatoon—Grasswood was saying, there is call to action 81, which is about monuments. I appreciate his intervention, and he will be up on questions sooner rather than later.

We can look at treaty rights and ensure the education of all young Canadians so they know what happened in our country, as well as ensure they have the knowledge of treaties so they are being upheld.

The member for Kingston and the Islands just really bypassed the idea of economic reconciliation, and this is something the Liberals really have not taken seriously enough. I will say it again and again, because without economic prosperity and freedom there will be no reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Thanks to bills like Bill C-8 being introduced and my Conservative colleagues' speeches on the matter, I am finding out more about their private lives. I am really pleased because I did not know them.

Despite the fact that he talked about a very interesting experience I wonder if my colleague would have the same sentiment in his presentation if he came to see Trois-Rivières. He may have had a better understanding of why the Bloc is asking that the Quebec nation be recognized in this bill.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, one commitment we all make as members of the legislative assembly is before we make a final decision on bills, we listen to all members in this House and their interventions on why they feel a bill should or should not be passed. On a bill by bill basis, that is what we should all do.

If the Bloc brings forward a motion or a private member's bill that looks at having conversations around changing the citizenship ceremony to include verbiage it would like to have, we should all look at it on its merit.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, I agree with him on many of the things he brought up. One of the things he spoke about that I am quite interested in is his discussion on economic justice. In my province of Alberta, there was a bill brought forward, Bill 1 from the provincial government, and at the time the Alberta justice minister, Doug Schweitzer, said that Albertans would not be held economic hostage to law-breaking extremists.

Many people have called this particular bill very racist because it very much targets indigenous people and interferes with their ability to ensure their own economic justice. I just wonder what the member would say about that and how there are important ways we need to support indigenous rights to economic justice, and I just wonder how that works in Alberta as well.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, on protests in public areas, people should be able to protest, gather and make their opinions known to people they do not agree with as long as it is safe and they are not breaking the law.

I look forward to having the conversation around the member for Foothills' private member's bill about not allowing protests on private property and whether we think people should be able to go on farms and protest, which I am not in favour of. That bill is coming up very soon and we can have a good conversation around that, but people have the right to protest safely on public property.

• (1830)

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here today to debate Bill C-8, an act designed to implement a change in the oath of citizenship, in response to recommendation 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a simple amendment to the Citizenship Act to pay lip service to respecting the treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

I find that there is little logic to support this bill when it is so glaringly exclusionary of many Métis, Inuit and B.C. first nations that are not under treaty rights. They have no effective treaties in their respective area.

What purpose does the bill serve beyond virtue signalling to hashtag-loving armchair activists on social media? It is more than mere symbolism to say that our nation is a nation of immigrants that stands on traditional territories of, and shoulder to shoulder with, our first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Canada is one of the few countries in the world where indigenous rights and treaty rights are entrenched and enshrined in our Constitution. I do believe that educating Canadians about these rights is an important part of the path to reconciliation.

Education is about more than platitudes. I am proud to say that in Canada this education is already taking place. New citizens, having completed their residency requirements, and having studied the handbook of history, responsibilities and obligations, are expected to be aware of the rights entrenched within the Constitution. This gives them at least a general view of the spectrum of resolved and unresolved treaty rights in different parts of our country. In learning about our nation's history, new Canadians develop respect for what is among Canada's existing body of laws. They learn to appreciate the need to fulfill the remaining unfulfilled treaty obligations within the process of reconciliation and aspire to see their new home improved for all.

Apparently, the Liberal government believes Canadians are so unsophisticated that they would think this task could be accomplished by merely changing the oath of citizenship. Such empty gestures show that the leadership of our government is more interested in patronizing minorities and photo ops than substantive policy development.

Over 30 years ago, I came to Canada as an immigrant. Like a few members of this House, I have taken the oath of citizenship of our great nation. The oath is simple. Unlike the government's promises, it is not a word salad. It represents the final step of a journey from the initial entry to planting roots and eventually becoming a citizen. The oath of citizenship need not be and should not be complicated, nor a thorough examination of the rights and obligations of what it is to be Canadian. It is merely an affirmation of loyalty to the Queen of Canada, representing the head of state of our constitutional monarchy, and an affirmation to obey our laws and obligations as Canadians. These laws include the Constitution. The Constitution, in turn, recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. To accept the proposed legislation is, therefore, an unnecessary redundancy.

I ask again: What purpose does this bill serve?

Government Orders

As I have mentioned, along the way to becoming a citizen, a new immigrant must read materials relating to the origins of Canada, including Canadian indigenous people. I believe Canada's indigenous peoples would be better served by emphasizing recommendation number 93, rather than 94, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, by strengthening this education. This recommendation calls upon the federal government, in collaboration with national aboriginal organizations to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship tests to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the treaties and histories of residential schools. My alternative to Bill C-8 is just this: implementing recommendation 93 would go further to educating new Canadians about history with our first nations and the obligations the Crown has to them.

● (1835)

Such content can also discuss part II of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 35 states, "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed." Despite many months and many new ideas being presented, the government continues to retable the bill verbatim. I and many other Canadians continue to have the same reaction now as we did each time the bill was brought forward. It is yet another insubstantial virtue signal by the Liberal government.

Canadians are growing tired of this cliché. The government consistently fumbles through crisis after crisis, desperate to take attention away from its failings when it comes to Canada's indigenous peoples. While the Trudeau government takes pride in this as a form of reconciliation, Canadian indigenous people are still—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is not allowed to mention anyone who sits in the House. He mentioned the Prime Minister by his last name and I would ask him to refrain from doing that in the remainder of his speech.

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, it is yet another substantive virtue signal by the Liberal government. Canadians are growing tired of this cliché. The government consistently fumbles through crisis after crisis, desperate to take attention away from its failings when it comes to Canada. While the government takes pride in this as a form of reconciliation, Canadian indigenous people are still dealing with drinking water and boil water advisories. The government should be putting more time and energy into steps to ensure such advisories are not necessary in the future, that the safety of drinking water is sustainable and that access to basic priorities like clean water is no longer a concern.

For a government to place such emphasis on reconciliation as a core priority, it must be willing to do what is necessary to provide equality of opportunity for all Canadian communities. Like every Canadian hurt throughout the pandemic, first nations people want to work and do what is best. They have had both opportunities denied under the Liberal government. Before the pandemic, Canada's first nations showed that they wanted to work and contribute to Canada. They sought opportunities by supporting the jobs and benefits to the economy that pipeline construction creates.

As the year has progressed, on the opposite side of the country we have seen first nations continue to seek economic advantage by

fighting for their moderate livelihood fisheries. In 2020, jobs have been lost and the deficit is skyrocketing. Canada cannot afford more indecision and meaningless gestures. Canadians need to see meaningful actions taken. Canada has a long and complicated relationship with its indigenous peoples, and I readily agree that further steps are required to strengthen our relationship.

Changing the oath of citizenship does not accomplish this great task. Work done should add to strengthening relations within the Canadian social fabric. For failing to act on this, the government will be held to account by the people. Canadians deserve better than another empty promise of sunny ways made by politicians wishing to cater sympathetic favour to reduce proud citizens of this country to tokens cynically used to curry political favour.

As a Conservative member of Parliament, I stand for the improvement of Canada. My party stands for the improvement of this country. We represent many Canadians who want better than a government that consistently failed in its mandates by changing the rules and not providing urgent or transparent actions to address the concerns. No matter the gravity of the issue facing Canada or the concerns of indigenous inhabitants, the government has served the House unappealing word salads in its responses.

Similarly, the bill is but another response devoid of any substance. Perhaps Bill C-6 is something that should be delayed until such time as call to action 93 or more meaningful action, such as ending all boil water advisories and making real, meaningful progress on reconciliation, is accomplished.

● (1840)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the member for Battle River—Crowfoot chastised me for being overly partisan, I actually started to feel maybe I was a little tough on him there, and then I heard that speech.

The member said in his speech that a lot of members in the House probably have not given that oath. I actually have. I am not an immigrant. Both of my parents came to Canada in the fifties, and they would have given that oath, but I also gave that oath on a number of occasions when I was a mayor. Before Stephen Harper got rid of all those great citizenship ceremonies in so many parts of the country, as a mayor I had the opportunity every few months to get up and recite the oath with those new citizens. It was quite an experience to see them experiencing that and being a part of that.

Would the member agree that adjusting that to properly reflect what Canada is, is incredibly important for newcomers to this country?

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members: there is a lot of back and forth, and I am sure that the member for Steveston—Richmond East is able to answer that question without any help.

The hon. member.

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, such is the burden to govern. I imagine the member would also understand that changing the oath is not something that will substantially benefit our first nations people. What I am saying is that if the government is actually genuine about reconciliation and helping improve the lives of our first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, it should actually consider what I recommend. It should either help restore the clean water provision or implement recommendation 93 instead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to what my Liberal colleague just said about an oath that properly reflects what Canada is.

This reminds me that I have often heard the Prime Minister say that Canada was the first post-national country in the world. That means there is no nation in Canada. There is no Quebec nation and no indigenous nations. It is a post-national country.

This brings up two possibilities. Either the Prime Minister is not consistent, or he realizes that there are nations in Canada, including indigenous nations.

I will therefore ask my colleague this question: Does he recognize that Canada is not a post-national country and that there are nations, including the Quebec nation and the indigenous nations?

[*English*]

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, in its early days the Harper Conservative government actually did recognize Quebec as a nation within a united Canada. That was a very bold step that would actually lead to the united Canada that we are enjoying so much today. What I am trying to say is that when we are facing reconciliation with our first nations peoples in Canada, there are many better things we could do, and more substantive actions we could take, than changing the oath of citizenship, as the Liberal government has proposed.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's remarks. I think I may have heard him describe the amendments before us as a word salad, and the assertion that these are changes brought forward by the government, I believe, is misplaced. These are changes that were recommended to us by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, so I am wondering if the hon. member has read through the other 93 calls to action from the TRC and whether there are other calls to action he would describe as a word salad.

Would he like to share those words with the commission itself?

• (1845)

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, my speech was addressing a long frustration that I have accumulated and what I have observed in the one year that I have had here in the House. There is a lot of promise here. There are a lot of sunny way promises, except it is still snowing and it is still cloudy out there. I am not directly refer-

ring to the current proposal of the oath of citizenship that we are looking at here.

Again, a mere changing of words would not help improve our aboriginal peoples' lives.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this chamber, and for this debate, it is a very big honour for me.

Members have alluded to their experiences with citizenship ceremonies. They are, of course, overwhelmingly emotional. They are, of course, overwhelmingly filled with gratitude by those who are getting their citizenship, as well as those who were born on these shores when we realize the great lottery we won by being born here, the best country in the world.

I have a number of memories, but I will just mention two of them. There is the citizenship ceremony in which my father-in-law, after many years of being a German citizen, received Canadian citizenship, and subsequently my own wife, who received Canadian citizenship. Those were big days.

I also want to recognize a phenomenal citizenship judge who happened to have been the mayor of Hamilton for eight years and then became a citizenship judge for six years. I want to recognize the late Robert Morrow, because he was one of the citizenship judges that I knew who could encapsulate the history of Canada, going from first nations, indigenous and Métis peoples all the way through to modern day. He could capture the entire room for 20 minutes while bringing that whole history to life, and what a beautiful history it is. I thank Bob Morrow very much for his contribution to citizenship.

I would also note what one of my colleagues alluded to earlier, the campaign to make sure that Sergeant Tommy Prince would be pictured on the five-dollar bill. Tommy Prince was the recipient of 11 medals, including battle honours. He served in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. I will read from a CBC article, which quoted my colleague for Calgary Shepard, who said:

He's a founding member of Canada's elite first Canadian parachute battalion, and the Devil's Brigade during the Second World War... He was one of the soldiers who defended hill 677 in the battle of Kapyong during the Korean War. He won 11 medals. That makes him the most decorated Indigenous war veteran, combat veteran, in the history of Canada.

I would encourage my colleagues, because we have talked a lot about not only a message in principle but doing the right thing, to support that initiative.

I will read the oath and note the wording that will be changed. It begins, "I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada," and then continues with the addition from Bill C-8, which reads, "including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen."

Government Orders

One way we can illuminate this is to get to know our first nations brothers and sisters. My best education about indigenous peoples came from all of the indigenous individuals I have known. I had a dark time in my life, which is public knowledge and I do not mind mentioning it. I was institutionalized when I was young, and there were two dozen first nations individuals I knew who were there from all across the country. They generally were there because they were very poor. In those days, one could be incarcerated as a youth if one was incorrigible, so many of them were incarcerated in what they called “training schools” in those days, which I have spoken about before in the House. They were really prison institutions for boys eight to 16 years old, and there were several institutions for girls in that respect as well. I do not want to dwell on that as much as to say that I got to know first nations boys at that time, and I had never met a first nations individual before.

I grew up in Kingston, Ontario, and the member for Kingston and the Islands may be happy about that or he might not, but I grew up on Alfred Street, Earl Street and Frontenac Street. My brothers went to KCVI, LCVI and QECVI. I went to the old Victoria School, which has now been repurposed for Queen's University. However, I had never met anyone from a reserve or an indigenous person who lived off reserve. It was not until I was there at that institution that I began my education about what it meant to be a first nations citizen.

● (1850)

To my great fortune, I met many more. I was on the board of a charity with an individual named Ross Maracle, a Mohawk leader from Tyendinaga. Ross will be happy that I still remember his Mohawk name, Rowedahowe. Another person I met was a Cree leader from Manitoba, Larry Wilson, who I just found out recently is now a chaplain in prisons helping individuals get back on their feet and into a better way of life. I remember meeting Chief David General too, at a very tough time, in Caledonia. I remember touring first nations with Chief Anita Hill.

All of these relationships were profoundly educational for me and made me understand the history. They also made me understand people's desire to be appreciated as individuals and not to be labelled as groups. So often when we try to solve problems, that is what we do.

I am happy for this addition to the oath, as long as we bring it to life.

One of my friends, and I hope he is okay with me calling him a friend, is named Nathan Tidridge. He recently won a Governor General's award for teaching history. He is one of the most significant Canadian citizens I know building bridges for reconciliation with first nations.

I got to know him most intimately after he raised money for a monument. In the riding I represent, there is a town called Waterdown. It is growing in leaps and bounds. That means there is lots of development, but traditional lands of first nations are being gobbled up in it. He wanted to make sure there was a marker there for the Souharissen people.

He raised the money for the monument, and got permission from the city to lay the monument. The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

was there, along with me and some others, to make sure there was not only a ceremony but a solemn oath in the community that the Souharissen natural area be remembered. It is the traditional territory for Neutral, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations peoples.

The more I got to know Nathan Tidridge, the more I admired him. I will quote something he wrote in regard to our stewardship of the promises we have made to our indigenous brothers and sisters:

An Indigenous teaching is that for non-Indigenous People, ceremony often bookends the real work of governments, whereas for Indigenous People, it is interwoven into the entire process. In Canada, the Queen and her representatives sit at the apex of our state and are therefore the keepers of our highest protocols and national ceremony.

The unique relationships between the Queen's representatives and First Nations provide vehicles for convening community—bringing together diverse stakeholders in a non-partisan way to focus on a particular issue—and fostering communication that are not available to politicians tied to a system dominated by a four-year election cycle.

Invitations from the governor general, an office bound to Indigenous People through Treaty and infused with centuries of history, are more readily accepted than those from a politician or government. This unique power allows members from different communities and perspectives to gather in the apolitical space that is required to reflect the values inherent in Treaty.

The power to convene community in no way interferes with the convention of responsible government. However, it can build on the Crown's traditional rights to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn, first articulated by the 19th-century British constitutional expert Walter Bagehot. The Crown's unique ability to convene community above the political fray is even more important in these polarized and volatile times.

It is my hope that not only will this be part of the new oath but the current government and future governments will consider empowering the office of the Governor General, the Queen's representative here, to really deal with the relationship aspect between us and first nations to bring about real change and real reconciliation.

● (1855)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a comment more than a question. It is always nice to hear stories from people who once lived in Kingston. The member's elementary school closed, and I regret to inform him that his high school is closing also. This is the last year KCVI will be open.

I was really taken by something the member said at the very beginning of his speech. He said that those who live in Canada have won the lottery, and I could not agree with him more. We live in the best country in the world with an incredible quality of life. Despite the differences we have in this place, I really hope we can all reflect on that comment he made, because it genuinely is the truth of what Canada is and what we are.

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I was hoping the member was going to call me a Kingstonian because only people from Kingston know that is the real name. I thank him for the kind comments.

This is a really passionate area for me. I think back to the spirit of 1967, our first centennial year, when we celebrated not only the nation but also our first nations people. If we remember that spirit and that time, I think we can have a renaissance and bring about some really powerful change with our first nations sisters and brothers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-8, and we certainly support a nation-to-nation dialogue with the first nations.

However, we believe the citizenship oath made to the Queen, to the monarchy, must be changed. It is repugnant to Quebeckers. It is a legacy of British colonialism of which Canada is still a part. It is a very questionable legacy right now. The numbers speak for themselves. According to a fairly recent Angus Reid poll conducted in January 2020, over 70% of Quebeckers do not want the country to continue as a constitutional monarchy.

Nearly 45% of Canadians want to withdraw from the constitutional monarchy. It costs over \$50 million per year. I think that my Conservative colleagues would agree with me about saving money.

The former finance minister, who was thrown under the bus recently because of the WE Charity scandal, said that the only reason why he wanted to stay in the monarchy was to maintain a good relationship with the Commonwealth. There are 53 countries in the Commonwealth and 21 of them are monarchies, of which 16 fall under the authority of Elizabeth II and five have different monarchs. There are also 32 republics.

When will we stop being a monarchy so that we can finally be free of British neo-colonialism?

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I disagree with my colleague.

If I have a minute, I will speak to something I wanted to get to. When indigenous nations first encountered Europeans on Turtle Island they began incorporating them into a long-established protocol of treaty making. Treaties created the necessary diplomatic space in which very different societies could communicate and negotiate complex relationships despite radically different world views.

The Crown was a natural vehicle for settlers to enter into long-term relationships with their indigenous partners. A treaty, like the institution of monarchy, is an organic creation that evolves or devolves depending on those who are engaged with it. It is meant to be the best reflection of the constituents. Treaties also require personal relationships to be effective.

• (1900)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his comments. I have had the great pleasure of working with him on the international human rights committee, and I greatly respect his work.

One thing I would like to get his comments on is this. Knowing how important true meaningful reconciliation is to him, as the cur-

Government Orders

rent government brings forward UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, will he be supporting that legislation?

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I think the member may have been talking about UNDRIP. I am not entirely certain. The principles in UNDRIP are very good, but there are some aspects that are problematic. We are one of the few countries that has first nations rights in our Constitution. That is my position.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to speak to any matter in the House, particularly one as important as this.

Today, I am honoured to stand in the House of Commons on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe to speak to Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94.

Despite the fact that Canada is one of the few countries where indigenous rights and treaties are entrenched in our Constitution, our relationship with indigenous people is far from perfect. In many cases, it represents a dark chapter in Canada's history, which has left a damaging impact on the lives of indigenous people across our country. It is truly sad and disgraceful.

The Indian Act, which was introduced in 1876, was a statute through which the government administered Indian status, local indigenous governments and the management of reserve lands and communal money. This is used to this day, but has been amended over the years, most significantly in 1951 and 1985, with changes mainly focusing on the removal of particularly discriminatory sections. In this legislation, the government still holds some control over the indigenous people of Canada and shows how much more we still have to do on the road to reconciliation.

One of the most notable parts of Canada's history with indigenous people was the creation and involvement in the residential school system. This terrible act committed by the government saw thousands of children ripped away from their families and forced to assimilate with what was perceived as Canadian values, which could not be further from the truth.

Between 1831 and 1996, 130 schools were opened and operated. Within their walls, were 150,000 indigenous children who had been removed from their families and forced to live in terrible conditions, while their rich culture and history was stripped from them. As a parent of a five-year-old and a seven-year-old, I can only imagine the heartbreak and tragedy of having children ripped from one's home, taken and told that everything they believed and held true was not true. That would be one of my worst nightmares. The fact this happened in Canada and happened to thousands of children is disgraceful.

Adjournment Proceedings

The abuse endured by these poor children included sexual and physical assault, overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of medical care and forced labour. We lost over 6,000 indigenous children. One of those children could have grown up and found a cure cancer or a cure for COVID. Instead, we unfortunately and sadly we lost them.

Those who survived were found to have suffered historic trauma, which has left a lasting adverse effect on indigenous cultures for generations to come. This history of abuse is a shameful portion of Canadian history and reminds us of the respect and dignity that should be afforded all people, including indigenous people.

In this modern day and age, indigenous people across Canada continue to face many serious issues. As a country, we have a lot of work ahead of us on the path to reconciliation, to true and meaningful reconciliation.

I have been shocked and disgusted by some recent news articles outlining the way our indigenous people are being treated to this day. Many indigenous communities across Canada still do not have access to clean drinking water. It is—

• (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the time is up, but the hon. member will have six minutes the next time this matter is before the House for his speech and then questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I take this opportunity to thank the good people of my riding for their support and words of encouragement. It is an honour to represent them in the Parliament of Canada.

Earlier in this session, I asked a direct question for the Prime Minister about the disability tax credit promoters cottage industry that had prospered under his government. It collects exorbitant fees from disabled Canadians for a service that I provide free of charge to my constituents.

Seven years ago, I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-462, restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit. The Prime Minister at the time voted in favour of that legislation as did all the members of Parliament. My intention in sponsoring that legislation was straightforward. I wanted to see increased protection for disabled Canadians from the predatory practices of certain individuals who referred to themselves as tax credit promoters. When I found out that some individuals were being charged 20%, 30%, or 40% of the tax credit, I knew action had to be taken.

The last time I posed a question on this topic, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue chose to insult disabled Canadians by not giving them a relevant response in answering my question. This time, the member for Delta, aptly renamed the minister for virtue signalling to the disabled, was tagged by the Prime Minister to insult disabled Canadians by giving a different non-answer to why the government had not implemented Bill C-462, an act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit. The legislation to protect disabled Canadians was voted on and passed unanimously by Parliament.

The following is an email I received from a constituent about one of the biggest disability tax credit promoters in Canada. It is one of many emails I have received from disabled Canadians who have been taken advantage of, thanks to the policy of the government to ignore them. It illustrates the situation the government condones every day it delays implementing Bill C-462, an act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit. The email states:

“I live in Arrprior with my wife, 75 years old and basically bedridden. I'm contacting you because I don't know where else I can go, and I remembered a few years ago you were investigating into this company and were going to introduce a bill to halt their practices. Anyhow, about 10 years ago, my wife unwittingly contacted them to secure outstanding disability payments from CRA. She thought she was contacting a government agency, and they did get her a little over \$9,000, then sent her a bill for \$3,500. We thought that was unreasonable so we consulted Legal Aid. They told us that it was definitely unreasonable and ignore them. So my wife never recognized the debt. That was 10 years ago.

Then in January of this year, we received a bill for \$11,000 sent by a company called Veritas. I thought it was a scam because we didn't owe anyone \$11,000. About a month ago, we received another bill for over \$9,000 from a law firm, saying if we didn't pay them by November 14, they would file bankruptcy against my wife. They've since changed it to \$6,800. My wife earns \$1,800 a month from CPP, old age security and a small pension.

I'm sorry this is so long, but I'm hoping you can help us. Thank you.”

That charge is almost 40%, and I am told that this tax credit promoter drives a Maserati, which the Prime Minister knows is a very expensive Italian car.

The minister of virtue signalling to the disabled brags about doing things behind the scenes. How about working for disabled Canadians behind the scenes and getting the regulations to enact Bill C-462 done?

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1910)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we all agree that advocacy for the disabled is really important, but I will be answering the member's question on the Order Paper about the right to disconnect in federally regulated workplaces.

Canada and the world continue to deal with the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

[*Translation*]

As we continue to weather the storm together, I can confirm that employee health and safety is a priority for the Government of Canada and employers.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are no points of order during Adjournment Proceedings. I am, however, checking right now, but it could very well be that there is some confusion about which Order Paper question for the late show was put forward because the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour is here. I will allow the parliamentary secretary to continue. I am double-checking with the table at this point as to what the actual question for tonight was.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I understand the point of order. I am as confused as the member, but my understanding is that I am answering the question on the Order Paper for today. I will just continue, and we will figure this out.

We understand there may be concerns from employees and employers in federally regulated workplaces about COVID-19. That is why the labour program has reached out to employers and representatives to make sure they are aware and understand their responsibilities.

[*Translation*]

The Canada Labour Code requires employers to protect the health and safety of workers in the workplace. They must create and update their hazard prevention program and ensure that it covers biological hazards such as COVID-19.

[*English*]

We must also pay increased attention to the mental health of workers during these challenging times. Many changes have been accelerated by the pandemic, including a shift to more remote work. Mobile technologies and a variety of factors, including the fact that many more Canadians are now working from home, have blurred the boundaries between what it means to be at work and not at work.

This ability to be constantly connected to the workplace, while beneficial in many ways, can exacerbate certain psychosocial risks for employees, which can lead to anxiety, depression and burnout. This is why the Government of Canada is engaging with employers and labour groups, with the goal of coming up with the best way to give federally regulated workers the right to disconnect to better support workers' work-life balance and well-being.

Moreover, since the beginning of the pandemic, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has been providing valuable guidance to Canadian workers and businesses. It has published health and safety tips on its website, made e-learning courses available free of charge and provided an online space. To help the CCOHS continue its important work, the government is providing it with additional funding of \$2.5 million over two years.

[*Translation*]

All Canadians are entitled to a safe and secure workplace in times of crisis and normalcy alike. Nobody should work in dangerous conditions or conditions that jeopardize their safety.

[*English*]

As we continue to work through and deal with the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada will continue to consult and work with unions, workers, employers, experts and provincial and territorial governments. Together we will take the steps needed to create a healthy, safe workplace for everyone during the pandemic and our ongoing recovery. During this process, public health authorities such as the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, with the assistance of CCOHS, will continue to be available to provide guidance and support.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did check, and the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is correct that the question was about the disability tax credit. I will allow her to do her follow-up question on that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, once again the government is insulting disabled Canadians by refusing to answer the question I asked the Prime Minister on their behalf. It is time the government took the concerns of the disabled seriously.

Canadians know how the groping Prime Minister treats strong women, having purged the former health minister, Dr. Jane Philpott, along with the former female justice minister and a former female Liberal MP, who said of the Prime Minister, "You believe in them when it's convenient and you leave them when it's not." The former Liberal MP also had this to say on why she quit: "So there were just a number of different instances that just didn't sit right with me and the principles that I hold dear, and I wanted to make sure that I was able to look at myself in the mirror the next day."

Having a fancy title with "disability inclusion" in it and refusing to act is tokenism at its worst. The minister who includes disability in her virtue-signalling title has an opportunity to be more than a prime ministerial photo op. Include the regulations to enact Bill C-462, an act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit, in the disability inclusion plan now.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1915)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I apologize that I am not answering the question my hon. colleague asked, but I will respond to what she most recently stated.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Prime Minister for the last five years, and I can say there is no prime minister in Canadian history who has had more of a feminist agenda than this prime minister. Whether fighting for the rights of women abroad, standing up for a woman's right to choose in Canada, funding women's health care or making sure half of his cabinet was made up of women, our Prime Minister stands proud for the rights of women throughout Canada, and his team stands with him.

When it comes to the minister referred to, she is hardly a token. She is a woman of character, integrity, strength, determination and great intelligence, and she has done wonderful work for Canadians during the course of this pandemic.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this place and, as I did the last time I participated in Adjournment Proceedings, I have really great news, a very exciting announcement to share with the House and that is the birth of my son, Nathan. I am very excited. My wife, Amanda, is doing very well. Amanda is my best friend. I am incredibly proud of her. The strength and the example that she sets are inspiring to me. To welcome Nathan with her, we would also like to recognize the incredible staff at the Brockville General Hospital.

We had incredible care and a very personal experience, and they took care of my new son and my wife incredibly well. I will recognize a few of them, knowing I am going to leave a few people out. We had nurse Kate, Dr. Kristin Finkenzeller, nurses Coralie, Ellen, Riley, Jackie, Lisa and others as well, and I have to thank all of them. It was world class. We know that 2020 has presented incredible challenges to those working in health care, but members would not know it based on the care that my family received. We are blessed as a family by the birth of Nathan, but also by those health care practitioners who did what they did for my family. My other children, Luke, Ama, Michaela and James, are very excited that their new brother is home with us, and we look forward to Christmas and to all of the days ahead.

I have to ask the government and follow up on a question that I raised previously. It is with respect to the approach the government has taken on matters dealing with China. Specifically, I will ask this evening why the government persists in its failure to act. We saw it last week with the opposition motion dealing with Huawei and making a decision on banning the use of this technology in Canada. While our other Five Eyes partners have done so, the Liberal government even voted against all other members of the opposition, who put forward a timeline for the government to make a decision.

We know that former minister Ralph Goodale promised on May 1, 2019, that the government would make a decision. An election has passed, Mr. Goodale no longer joins us in the House and we have a new public safety minister who has also failed to act. Why will the government not be decisive when it comes to China? Why is it that the Liberals are always playing catch-up?

They say that they act in concert with our allies, but that could not be further from the truth. The decision on Huawei is case in point. Now we have the private sector making the decision to exclude this technology from its infrastructure, while the government continues to dither and act without decisiveness.

To the minister, when will the government follow through on its commitment to act in concert with our allies, to finally get tough on this issue, to finally get tough on China and to make a decision?

• (1920)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really pleased that I was given the chance to be the substitute for my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, so I can be one of the first, or at least one of the first who has now heard, to congratulate the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes and Amanda on the birth of Nathan.

I wish both of them a really hardy *mazel tov*. It is wonderful news. The member is one away from being equal to the Brady bunch at this point. Best of luck, and I hope the grandparents are really close to help babysit.

Allow me to start by challenging the member's misperception that nothing has changed in the government's approach to China. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said a number of times, the China of 2020 is not the China of 2016. In light of that, we are taking a corresponding approach to it.

Some aspects of our engagement with China have not changed. Let me highlight a few elements of this continuity. First, we will continue to speak out against the arbitrary detention of our citizens. In this regard, allow me to reprise the strong principled position, which my colleague the Minister of International Trade conveyed clearly to the CCBC audience. As she said, it remains an absolute priority to secure the immediate release of Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig and to secure clemency for Canadians facing the death penalty in China, including Robert Schellenberg.

Second, we will continue to work with like-minded countries to find ways to resist China's coercive diplomacy by insisting on mutual respect, reciprocity, and adherence to rules and principles, including human rights. For example, we joined with other countries and voiced our serious concerns over Beijing's imposition and implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong. Further, Canada has led by taking a number of actions, including suspending the Canada-Hong Kong extradition treaty, restricting exports of sensitive items to Hong Kong, and updating our travel advice and advisories for Hong Kong.

Third, notwithstanding difficult bilateral and global circumstances, we will continue to develop a commercial relationship with China, the world's second-largest economy and an important consumer of Canadian commodities, agri-food and other products. We will continue to boost much-needed jobs for Canadians by supporting our exporters, including firms that export to and do business with China. China is an important market for many Canadian companies across a wide variety of sectors. It is important that we push China to abide by its international obligations under trade agreements so as to ensure a level playing field for our businesses.

Standing up for our values and our interests requires us to listen to our stakeholders, including the members of the CCBC, while at the same time communicating our resolve to support our citizens abroad, including Messrs. Kovrig, Spavor and Schellenberg, standing up for human rights and making sure that those abuses by the Chinese government are well noted.

• (1925)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I will start by thanking the hon. member, my colleague for the good wishes of mazel tov. I will certainly convey those to my wife, Amanda.

My question, then, to the member is why vote against the motion that would have called for concrete action? It would have called for a timeline. It did not prescribe a decision for the government to take. It simply called for the government to make it within a period of time that is long overdue by the government's own promise.

To the member, why vote against a common-sense motion to resolve this, to bring certainty to the issue, and to demonstrate to the world that we are prepared to stand up against China?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I will refer the hon. member to the minister's comments and the parliamentary secretary's comments in that debate.

As we reframe our relationship with China, I can commit to the member that we will continue to stand up for Canadian values and interests. As the Minister of International Trade clearly stated when she addressed CCBC members on October 13, securing the immediate release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor remains an absolute priority.

We also commit that we will work with like-minded countries to resist China's coercive diplomacy and ensure adherence to rules and principles, including human rights. We will also continue to boost much-needed jobs for Canadians and support Canadian businesses doing business with China while always championing the rules-based international order.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, since we are starting off with personal greetings and messages, I would like to wish my grandmother, who turned 90 yesterday, a very happy birthday. I am so incredibly proud of her. She continues to be in good health. I am sad that I was not able to be with her.

Earlier this month, on November 5, I asked a question that I felt the government did not give a meaningful response to. The government has been told, repeatedly, by the Canadian Human Rights

Adjournment Proceedings

Commission that its discrimination against indigenous children has to stop.

We know that indigenous children in Canada are overrepresented in our child care system. It is very clear. We have looked at the numbers. We know that children from these communities are facing systemic racism, and that the resources given to other children are not the same as are given to these children.

We know the history of Canada. We know where we have come from. We know about residential schools and the colonial system, and we are still not seeing indigenous children given the respect they deserve.

I am here because indigenous children matter, and because they do not get a second childhood. The history of Canada is one of generations of indigenous children being stolen, and then having their childhoods stolen. Now we see the pattern is continuing and not ending.

In his response to me, the Minister of Indigenous Services said:

We intend to compensate first nations children harmed by the discriminatory child and family services policies. Throughout this process, our focus remains on advancing a plan that prioritizes the best interest of the individual child and puts the safety, well-being and security of that child at the forefront.

However, we know that the government is still taking indigenous children to court. We know that, repeatedly, the government has received non-compliance orders telling it that it is still not fulfilling its obligation. The problem is vast, but the core of it is that we do not see the care and concern for indigenous children that we need to see in this country.

I just want to remind all of us that there is a plan. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society has brought forward the Spirit Bear plan, which is looking to end the inequalities in public services for first nations children, youth and families. I am tired of hearing that the government has gotten another non-compliance order.

Indigenous children matter so very much, and we have to keep them safe. The only way we can do that is by making sure that they have the resources in those services to support them. We also have to start looking at our government departments and making sure that any part of our government that interacts with first nations is starting to look at the inequalities, and that the investment is there.

Even in Bill C-92, which the government assures will finally fix this, one of the biggest gaps in it continues to be the number of resources.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is time to get real and to get on to it. We know that in September 2017, the Assembly of First Nations passed a unanimous resolution supporting the Spirit Bear plan to end all inequalities in federally funded public services. Why has the federal government simply not implemented it, three years later?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for raising this issue and acknowledge that I am speaking to members this evening from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. I would like to join other members in the House in also wishing her grandmother a happy birthday.

The safety and well-being of children, families and communities will always be a priority for this government. The overrepresentation of indigenous children in care is a tragic part of our shared history. We cannot undo this reality, but by working together, we can right the past wrongs and ensure history does not repeat itself.

We introduced An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, and are continuing to work to reform the system that has given rise to this historic injustice. We acknowledge the prevalence of systemic racism in our country, we abhor the fact that it persists and we are committed to confronting it, to mitigating its devastating ongoing effects and to eliminating it.

We acknowledge a system that has historically and repeatedly failed children, youth and families, and we acknowledge the need to do what is right. This government has been crystal clear. We recognize that first nations children harmed by discriminatory child and family services must be compensated. That is why, together with partners, we are working toward a goal of comprehensive, fair and equitable compensation for those affected by historic inequities in first nations child welfare.

While there remain substantive unresolved questions on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction, we remain committed to a comprehensive, fair and just compensation for children. This way forward may lie outside the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's process. We continue to be in active consultation with all parties to move forward on this important matter.

My hon. colleague from North Island—Powell River and I have met to discuss the safety and well-being of indigenous children in care because of the great importance it holds for both of us. The Government of Canada is dedicated to working in full partnership with indigenous peoples to reform child and family services so that every indigenous child has the ability to grow up in their communities, immersed in their cultures and surrounded by loved ones.

To ensure a better future for indigenous children, we are actively implementing An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, which came into force on January 1,

2020. This historic legislation includes core provisions for first nations, Inuit and Métis to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and addresses concerns that have been expressed by indigenous peoples across the country for generations. Indigenous families and communities ought to decide what is in their best interest and what is in the best interest of their children and youth.

We continue to work and support communities that are developing their own child and family services programs, to provide historical funding to reform the system and are committed to putting the best interests of indigenous children, youth and families first.

● (1930)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for wishing my grandmother a happy birthday. Her name is Dona Aloise Letnes and I am very proud to carry her middle name.

When we come back to this issue, what I need to know here is why is the federal government choosing not to implement the Spirit Bear Plan? This is a plan that has been endorsed by multiple agencies that really addresses the core, which is that indigenous children deserve a childhood.

We know that in September 2019, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that Canada's discrimination toward first nations children was under the federal first nations child welfare program and that it was ongoing.

Does the parliamentary secretary acknowledge that Canada is still actively discriminating against first nations children in this country and that it is time to end that? That does not come with just compensation. It comes with making sure indigenous children have a childhood.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member and I agree it is critically important that first nations children have a childhood. That is why we continue to work not only to implement the compensation framework, which is intended to accurately reflect the CHRT's September 2019 order regarding compensation, but other related orders. The goal is comprehensive, fair and equitable compensation that will provide further healing for those affected by the historic inequities in first nations child welfare.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to wish Dona, the grandmother of the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, a happy birthday. That is quite the milestone.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:34 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, November 23, 2020

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act

Mr. Lawrence	2209
Bill C-206. Second reading	2209
Mr. Easter	2211
Mr. Perron	2211
Mr. MacGregor	2211
Ms. Lambropoulos	2212
Mr. Perron	2213
Mr. MacGregor	2214
Mr. Barlow	2216
Mr. Lamoureux	2217

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship Act

Bill C-8. Second reading	2218
Mr. Manly	2218
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	2219
Mr. Trudel	2220
Mr. Lamoureux	2220
Mr. Lamoureux	2220
Mr. Johns	2222
Mr. Genuis	2222
Ms. Gazan	2222
Mr. Manly	2223
Mr. Allison	2223
Mr. Anandasangaree	2225
Mr. Johns	2225
Mr. Genuis	2225
Mr. Saroya	2226
Mr. Lamoureux	2227
Mr. Johns	2227
Mr. Dhaliwal	2227
Mr. Genuis	2227
Mr. Lamoureux	2230
Mr. Trudel	2230
Ms. Gazan	2231
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2231
Mr. Dhaliwal	2231
Ms. Dzerowicz	2232

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Stanton	2232
-------------------	------

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month

Ms. Damoff	2233
------------------	------

Political Prisoners

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	2233
----------------------------	------

Seamus O'Regan Sr.

Mr. Rogers	2233
------------------	------

National Football League

Mr. Fast	2233
----------------	------

Longueuil Traditional Christmas Market and Fair

Mrs. Romanado	2234
---------------------	------

Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony

Mr. Louis	2234
-----------------	------

Holodomor

Mr. Diotte	2234
------------------	------

Holodomor

Mr. Baker	2234
-----------------	------

Interprovincial Trade

Mr. Steinley	2234
--------------------	------

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week

Mr. Lloyd	2235
-----------------	------

Okill Stuart

Mrs. Mendès	2235
-------------------	------

Coquitlam Small Business

Mr. McKinnon	2235
--------------------	------

Jean Beuchesne

Mrs. Charbonneau	2235
------------------------	------

Human Rights

Ms. Dancho	2236
------------------	------

Marc Hovingh

Mrs. Hughes	2236
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Ms. Bergen	2236
Ms. Freeland	2236
Ms. Bergen	2237
Ms. Freeland	2237
Ms. Bergen	2237
Ms. Freeland	2237
Mr. Paul-Hus	2237
Ms. Freeland	2237
Mr. Paul-Hus	2237
Ms. Freeland	2237

Official Languages

Mr. Therrien	2237
Ms. Freeland	2238
Mr. Therrien	2238
Ms. Freeland	2238

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mr. Singh	2238
Ms. Freeland	2238
Mr. Singh	2238
Ms. Freeland	2238

Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Vidal	2238
Mr. Miller	2238
Mr. Vidal	2239
Mr. Miller	2239
Mr. Vidal	2239
Mr. Miller	2239

Health

Mr. Deltell	2239
Ms. Hajdu	2239
Mr. Deltell	2239
Ms. Hajdu	2239
Mr. Deltell	2240
Ms. Hajdu	2240

Official Languages

Mr. Beaulieu	2240
Ms. Joly	2240
Mr. Beaulieu	2240
Ms. Joly	2240

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mr. Therrien	2240
Ms. Freeland	2240
Mr. Poilievre	2240
Mrs. Lebouthillier	2241
Mr. Poilievre	2241
Ms. Qualtrough	2241
Mr. Poilievre	2241
Ms. Qualtrough	2241

Health

Ms. McPherson	2241
Ms. Hajdu	2241

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Ms. Kwan	2241
Mr. Mendicino	2241

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mr. Badawey	2242
Ms. Freeland	2242

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Morantz	2242
Mr. Champagne	2242
Mr. Morantz	2242
Mr. Champagne	2242

Official Languages

Mr. Généreux	2242
Ms. Joly	2242

Canada Revenue Agency

Mr. Généreux	2243
Mrs. Lebouthillier	2243

Justice

Mr. Fortin	2243
Mr. Lametti	2243
Mr. Fortin	2243
Mr. Lametti	2243

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Ms. Dancho	2243
Mr. Mendicino	2243

Health

Mr. Chiu	2243
Ms. Hajdu	2244

Justice

Ms. Findlay	2244
Mr. Lametti	2244

The Environment

Ms. Koutrakis	2244
Mr. Schiefke	2244

Western Economic Diversification

Mr. Redekopp	2244
Ms. Joly	2244

CBC/Radio-Canada

Mr. Waugh	2244
Mr. Guilbeault	2244

Taxation

Mr. Davidson	2245
Ms. Freeland	2245

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East)	2245
Mr. Mendicino	2245

Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Johns	2245
Mr. Hussen	2245

Justice

Ms. Wilson-Raybould	2245
Mr. Lametti	2246

Points of Order

Oral Questions	
Mr. Johns	2246

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Judges Act**

Bill C-3. Third reading	2246
Motion agreed to	2247
(Bill read the third time and passed)	2247

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**Government Response to Petitions**

Mr. Lamoureux	2247
---------------------	------

Committees of the House**Official Languages**

Mr. Dubourg 2248

Health

Mr. McKinnon 2248

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act

Mrs. Gill 2248

Bill C-253. Introduction and first reading 2248

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 2248

Petitions**Human Rights**

Mr. Viersen 2248

Physician-Assisted Dying

Mr. Viersen 2248

Pornography

Mr. Viersen 2248

Palliative Care

Mr. Viersen 2248

Firearms

Mr. Viersen 2248

Sex Selection

Mr. Viersen 2249

Taxation

Mr. Généreux 2249

Human Rights

Mr. Sweet 2249

Sex Selection

Mr. Fast 2249

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 2249

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis 2249

Human Rights

Mr. Genuis 2249

Sex Selection

Mr. Genuis 2249

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Dowdall 2250

Public Safety

Ms. Dzerowicz 2250

Human Rights

Mr. Reid 2250

Sex Selection

Mr. Reid 2250

Human Rights

Mr. Waugh 2250

Mr. Vidal 2250

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 2250

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lamoureux 2253

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Citizenship Act**

Bill C-8. Second reading 2254

Mr. Lamoureux 2254

Mr. Dhaliwal 2254

Ms. Damoff 2254

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 2255

Ms. McPherson 2255

Mr. Gerretsen 2256

Mr. Waugh 2256

Ms. Dzerowicz 2256

Mr. Vidal 2257

Mr. Simard 2258

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 2258

Mr. Van Bynen 2258

Mr. Bachrach 2259

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 2259

Mr. Waugh 2259

Mr. Bagnell 2260

Mr. Bachrach 2260

Mr. Lamoureux 2262

Mr. Steinley 2262

Mr. Simard 2262

Mr. Duvall 2263

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 2263

Mr. Viersen 2263

Mr. Oliphant 2266

Mr. Simard 2266

Mr. MacGregor 2266

Mr. McLean 2267

Mr. Bachrach 2267

Mr. Fortin 2267

Mr. Lamoureux 2268

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 2269

Mr. Kurek 2269

Mr. Gerretsen 2270

Mr. Simard 2270

Ms. Gazan 2270

Mr. Steinley 2271

Mr. Gerretsen 2272

Mrs. Charbonneau 2272

Ms. McPherson 2273

Mr. Chiu 2273

Mr. Gerretsen 2274

Mr. Simard 2275

Mr. Bachrach 2275

Mr. Sweet 2275

Mr. Gerretsen 2276

Mr. Blanchette-Joncas 2277

Ms. McPherson 2277

Mr. Lawrence 2277

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mrs. Gallant 2278

Mr. Housefather 2279

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Barrett 2280

Mr. Housefather 2280

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 2281

Ms. Damoff 2282

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>