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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 14, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

BILL C-15—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or to use the raise hand function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are sorry to see the government shutting down debate yet again. I want to ask a specific question about the legislation, though.

Right now in Canadian law, we have a duty to consult around the development of resource projects. The government has said that this legislation does not create a veto for all communities that may be affected. The existing law has duty to consult, and the Liberals are saying it is not a veto. FPIC, the doctrine of free, prior and informed consent, is ostensibly somewhere in between these two extremes, according to the government, but there is still a lot of clarity

required. What does “free, prior and informed consent” mean if it is not a duty to consult and it is not a veto?

What precisely is meant in the context of this legislation by “free, prior and informed consent” if it is something more than the duty to consult, but something less than a veto?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked this question a number of times, and I will give what I believe is the same clear answer that I have given a number of times before.

FPIC is a process. FPIC is about meaningful consultation, discussion and dialogue with indigenous peoples affected by a particular decision, say a resource development project, that they be at the table from the beginning. Yes, there is a duty to consult under Canadian law. That has had further refinement and guidance from the Federal Court of Appeal in the Trans Mountain process. We, as a government, were taken to task for not having meaningfully consulted the first time through, and we got it right the second time through.

FPIC is a process. It is going to continue to be a process. It will be contextual, so there is no way to precisely define it at the outset, and there is no way it should be precisely defined at the outset. The hon. member knows that. It is about discussion and dialogue. It is about putting indigenous peoples at the table, where, heretofore, they have not—

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is a little ironic because, yesterday, when we were debating the Bloc Québécois's opposition day motion, I talked about how one can be for a bill but against using closure to pass that bill.

The same principle applies here. I agree with Bill C-15. I realize that it needs to go through quickly. However, I do not agree with the government's approach. It has clearly done a poor job of managing its legislative calendar, and now it is shutting down debate on a very important subject that many members wanted to speak to. We got just two hours of debate on this.

Government Orders

Is this because we will not be able to debate it in September because there will be an election between now and then? Is that why the government had no choice but to bring in time allocation?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

The answer is no. This is a priority for the government, for indigenous peoples, and for indigenous leaders across the country.

The fact is, we have already covered this. We have already debated the substance of Bill C-15 because we debated its previous iteration, Bill C-262, which was introduced by our former colleague, Romeo Saganash. The previous Parliament passed that bill after a debate to which the Bloc Québécois contributed its opinion.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples itself has been around for 15 years, so it is not new.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government is certainly using speed to get this bill through. Fair enough, but one wonders why it does not use speed to resolve community issues that have come up. First nations communities have desperate need to end boil water advisories, and we have heard the government is now extending the deadline. For over a decade, first nations communities continue to wait for that government support. Indigenous-led housing is also something the government has not tackled with any speed whatsoever, and we have seen first nations kids taken repeatedly to court rather than having their basic needs met.

The question is very simple. Liberals are using speed when it comes to this bill. Why do they not use the same speed to meet the needs of indigenous peoples in this country?

• (1010)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his support on this bill generally, as well as the support of his party. I obviously also salute the work that Romeo Saganash did in the last Parliament and continues to do in support and promotion of this bill.

We are working hard to solve infrastructure problems, drinking water problems. We have done a great deal of work on it, but we have admitted honestly that more work needs to be done. The same is true for resolving cases around Jordan's principle. We are working very hard to resolve those cases out of court where possible, and we are doing our best to move all of those files forward.

I think the hon. member and I share the same end point and the same goals, and we are pushing hard to make them happen.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share the concern on this side of the House at the way the government is ramming through this piece of legislation. We heard at committee many times from indigenous groups themselves that said they have not had the opportunity to be consulted. We still have the outstanding question about the very important piece of FPIC, free, prior and informed consent, and what it means, and the minister, in his previous response to my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, was quite dismissive of it. The fact that the legislative branch is not doing its job in creating a

definition so that industry and first nations communities themselves have an idea of what this means, and then chart a path forward that is best for them, is quite concerning.

Why will the government not do its work and get that definition done here so it is not challenged in the courts later, further delaying this process?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work on committee. The answer is the same. The best expert opinions we have received throughout this and the most convincing arguments made have been that FPIC should not be defined in the legislation, cannot be defined in the legislation, because the very nature of FPIC is in a process.

We said from the beginning that we would consult as many indigenous leadership groups as we possibly could before the tabling of the bill. We did that. Those groups had an impact on the form of the bill before it was tabled. We continued to consult after the bill was tabled, and the indigenous groups, in making appearances at committee and in working with the government, have proposed a number of amendments, many of which we have accepted. Again, that consultation process continues, and the consultation process with indigenous leadership groups across Canada will continue as we move through the action plan and the co-development of it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called upon all levels of government in Canada to adopt and implement the UN declaration as the framework for reconciliation. I am wondering if the minister could provide his thoughts as to why it is so important in moving forward with reconciliation that the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister continue to push this bill so it ultimately can get passed.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his commitment to the reconciliation process generally. It is an important question. TRC called UNDRIP a road map to reconciliation, and we firmly believe that. This bill is about human rights. It is about the human rights of indigenous peoples. It behooves me to understand why people could be opposed to recognizing human rights for indigenous people, who simply want to have the same rights that other people in this country have.

Yes, this is a priority for our government. Yes, this helps the road map to reconciliation. It is fundamentally important. People like Dr. Wilton Littlechild, former Conservative member of Parliament and one of the architects of UNDRIP, have said that precisely.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for this morning's debate, which will be very short.

As the critic for the status of women, I would have liked to see the government have the same sense of urgency when it came to applying the recommendations of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as it did this morning for Bill C-15.

How much time has been spent so far debating a document as important as Bill C-15? I will give the House just one guess: barely an hour and 43 minutes and the minister is already imposing time allocation.

Does the minister think that one hour and 43 minutes is enough time to debate this important issue? What about the time allocation on Bill C-19, prorogation of Parliament and obstruction in committee? This government behaves like a majority government when voters gave it a minority mandate.

• (1015)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. It is true that she was not here in the last Parliament when we fully debated Bill C-262, which is the foundation for the current Bill C-15. The House even passed Bill C-262, but it died on the Order Paper in the Senate because of the Conservative senators' political games.

This is therefore the second time the House is studying this issue, so much of it is very familiar. Everyone is indeed aware of the content of the bill and we are proceeding in this way because it is a priority for the country.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. This issue is obviously a priority for the country. I must point out that Bill C-262 was introduced by our former colleague, Romeo Saganash, as an NDP initiative. Therefore, we are in agreement with the substance of Bill C-15.

However, if this bill were truly a priority for the government, why was it incapable of managing its legislative agenda and the activities of the House in such a way as to move it forward without having to resort to time allocation? This is another example of inept management by the Liberals, who now claim the bill is a priority.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his support for the substance of this bill.

I will once again highlight Romeo Saganash's work on the previous bill, which is the basis for Bill C-15. I also want to remind members that Mr. Saganash continues to promote Bill C-15 to this day.

Government Orders

We must proceed in this way because, as the House has noticed, certain dilatory tactics are being used, especially by one opposition party.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am torn on this matter and I am going to be very candid with the minister. I am rarely less than decisive. I fully support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but the process by which we come to this place has left indigenous communities, first nations, M tis and Inuit, divided on the matter. The right path, the right way to vote, is not at all clear to me, and it certainly is the case that we cannot wait any longer to take the steps we need to take for reconciliation.

There are a number of very significant first nations policy analysts and a number of legal analysts who are on both sides, and of first nations themselves that say they were not consulted in the development of Bill C-15. It is therefore really important that we hear the different perspectives and we ask the hon. minister if he does not regret that there was—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): The hon. minister.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member's observation that it is rare that she is less than decisive on a matter. I always appreciate her opinions and I take this question very seriously.

Yes, in a minority government context, we consulted as many indigenous leadership groups in a variety of forms as we possibly could. As I said, they had an impact on the original Romeo Saganash bill before tabling. We continued to consult, and they had an impact on the bill at committee. I commit to the hon. member that I will continue to consult as many indigenous leadership groups as I possibly can, in particular in the development of the action plan as we move forward.

I would just point out to her that although there is disagreement, there is an increasing trend, particularly after the last set of amendments in committee, to be supportive of the bill on the part of indigenous leadership.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, for the better part of 16 years I have left it up to my colleagues to always comment on a hatchet closure motion, but I think it is time for me to speak up in this regard.

For 10 straight years I sat on the other side and listened to the weeping, gnashing and howling from the Liberal Party every time the Hon. Peter Van Loan stood and moved closure on a bill. The Liberals said that they would never do it, that it was undemocratic. They promised in an election that they would never do it. Now, at the height of hypocrisy, they continue to do it over and over again. As my NDP colleague said, it is simply because they cannot even manage their own House agenda.

This needs to stop. The Liberals need to start respecting the House and debate bills appropriately.

Government Orders

• (1020)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, the reason why we are here is because of the general dilatory tactics of the member's party on every single matter that comes up in front of the House. We can recall the fall economic statement, which got more debate time than a budget. The Conservatives keep throwing up tactic after tactic to delay debate, which has forced our hand.

I would imagine the hon. member was here in the last session and would remember the high-fiving of certain Conservative members who voted against Romeo Saganash's bill. That is not reconciliation; Bill C-15 is reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I just want to comment on the fact that the government cannot even manage its own legislative agenda properly. That is why we are in this situation today.

The government introduced Bill C-19 rather than prioritizing Bill C-15, and yet the Liberals claim they do not want an election. This government prorogued Parliament last summer, when we could have used that time to work faster and more responsibly.

I would just like to point out to the minister that there seems to be a real leadership problem when it comes to the government's legislative agenda.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her comments.

Obviously, I disagree. As she might well recall, we debated Bill C-262 in the previous Parliament, and it received significant support in the House. The foundations of this bill had already been laid and were well known before the debate began.

We are moving forward like this because it is a priority for indigenous people across Canada and it is important to our reconciliation process.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe this bill has strong support among indigenous people in northwest B.C., but there are also some misgivings. I wonder if the minister could inform Canadians, especially indigenous people in the region I represent of northwest British Columbia, about the tangible changes the bill would create in the near term for indigenous communities.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his commitment. I salute the leadership of British Columbia generally on UNDRIP. The Province of British Columbia has UNDRIP legislation and a road map. It is moving forward and doing quite well economically, among other things.

The bill is a reset for the path that indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have to walk together in our country. It would put us at the same table from the beginning with respect to major decisions that have an impact.

Symbolically and substantively, it articulates a set of rights for indigenous peoples. Symbolically and substantively, it rejects a number of doctrines—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when ministers rise usually a day before or a couple of days before to indicate that they will be moving this motion, the first thing they say is that an agreement could not be reached with the parties. Indeed, there is always the behind-the-scenes work of trying to come to some co-operation and agreement of when a bill can be put through the process and eventually voted on. However, as we are seeing time and again, the Conservatives are absolutely refusing to let certain legislation go through. It is their way of saying they do not want the legislation.

Could the minister comment on how frustrating it must be for him to go through this time after time?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I salute the member's resilience in the House of Commons, holding down the fort.

It is frustrating to watch the dilatory tactics of the Conservative Party on a number of important pieces of progressive legislation. MAID, for example, was something that Canadians wanted, that would reduce the suffering of Canadians, yet there was delay after delay. It is the same on this bill and on other bills I have had in front of the House. I have had a number, and still have a number.

It is important we get these bills through.

• (1025)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Chair, again, we are hearing over and over the fact that the government cannot seem to manage its legislative agenda. Again, we are being forced to undergo a closure motion, yet this bill has barely been debated in the House. Of course, the Liberals, which they do best, play the blame game, saying it has to be someone else's fault. No matter what goes wrong, it is never their fault, which is a common theme.

Why did we not debate this bill when Parliament was shut down? Why did we not keep going longer throughout the summer, rather than the one-day sitting a month, to debate this bill? Why did the Liberals prorogue Parliament?

This could have been done a lot better, and it was not. We still do not have certainty through indigenous communities that have relayed their concerns through committee. Those concerns have not been addressed. Why not?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, we are continuing to engage with indigenous leadership groups from across the country, particularly in the development of amendments to this bill. We have done that.

Government Orders

We will continue to work with indigenous leadership groups as we develop an action plan together. The law requires us to do that within a period of two years. That is intense, and it will be intense, but we will do it.

The hon. member should ask his Conservatives senators why they let this bill die. They used every procedural manoeuvre possible to let the previous bill die in the Senate. If they had not done that, we would not be here; we would be working on an action plan.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is another example of Liberal words not meeting their actions. It is another example of how the Liberals do not prioritize their actual work.

I am going to talk about Six Nations and 1492 Land Back. We have heard the government talk about how it is committed to working collaboratively to address historical claims at Six Nations and how it is willing to work with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council. It has been almost a year of a reclamation process happening there. The Liberals have not had the courtesy of taking the trip down the road to visit them and open up the negotiations.

Will the minister commit, today, to actually doing something toward reconciliation by visiting Six Nations and opening up the negotiations to finally settle that land claim?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, the member knows that this part of our mandate falls with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. I know she is working on that file. I support the minister in her efforts to settle land claims and to push for these kinds of settlements around the cabinet table.

While I have not been to the Six Nations reserve as a member of Parliament or a minister, I have visited other Haudenosaunee reserves and territories. I do my best to work closely with them.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, working on the INAN committee, we heard testimony from a lot of witnesses, a lot of indigenous people and organizations that did not feel they were adequately consulted in the process of this bill. That is very concerning for me and should be concerning for a lot of people.

I wonder if the minister would agree that pushing through legislation that would greatly impact indigenous people without proper consultation is contrary to the spirit of reconciliation.

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I certainly share the member's concern.

From the beginning, we have tried to consult with as many indigenous leadership groups as possible. It is a complex web with a complex variety of leadership groups. There are treaty nations, modern treaty nations, nations with no treaty, regional groups, national leadership groups and groups that focus on women.

We have done our best to consult with as many as possible. In fact, we prioritized those groups that we had not met in our recommendations to committee, so these groups would be heard. I continue to do this. I have continued to work through this. Even now, I continue to schedule meetings with groups that I have yet to meet to push this process forward in a truly consultative fashion.

• (1030)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his hard work on Bill C-15 and for getting it to this point. I want to ask him about the amendments made by committee and his comments with respect to going forward. Does he believe they strengthened the bill and is he satisfied with the amendments made at the committee stage?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work on the committee and his leadership as well as the fact he is posing this substantive question.

I am very pleased with the amendments. They are things I have believed in for a long time, such as a better recognition of systemic racism in the preamble, an explicit rejection of the doctrines of discovery and *terra nullius*, which for 20 years teaching in a law faculty property, I consistently reminded my students. I will put this euphemistically of the real meaninglessness of these doctrines and the historical distortion and the colonial basis that existed for them.

The other is that indigenous rights are not frozen. This is an important amendment that is in accord with Supreme Court of Canada jurisprudence.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples speaks to free, prior and informed consent. The same government is trying to ram through the Trans Mountain pipeline at nearly \$20 billion despite the fact that there is strong opposition from first nation communities.

Will the passage of this bill mean that the government will finally halt ramming through this pipeline over the objections of first nations?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, we did get elected saying that we would redo the consultation process for Trans Mountain. We redid it. We redid it imperfectly, and the Federal Court reminded us of that. Therefore, we went back to the table again, with one consultation group being led by Justice Iacobucci and the other being led by Justice Department officials, and we did a better job to the satisfaction of the Federal Court.

The kind of process that FPIC in UNDRIP represents is one that hopefully allows us to avoid these kinds of questions down the road. They will put indigenous peoples at the table from the get-go, as they should be.

Government Orders

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has claimed that somehow there has been Conservative dilatory tactics used and he has to move time allocation, yet that has not been the case. Maybe the minister could give us the real reasons why time allocation is being moved.

I know he has so far refused to attend the heritage committee hearings on Bill C-10, even though he has been ordered to do so. Perhaps, is he moving time allocation so he can clear his schedule to enable him to appear at that committee as he has been asked to?

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the real sense of humour that he has in posing that question.

There is nothing but government priority represented in the use of time allocation on this, priority for indigenous peoples, the importance of the law. This should have been passed in the last Parliament. It was the will of Parliament and the will of most of the Senate except for dilatory tactics used by Conservative senators. We have seen dilatory tactics in this minority Parliament used very effectively by the Conservative Party only to impede, not on any good, substantive ground. This is an important bill. It is about human rights. It is about the human rights of indigenous peoples.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is high time that we passed Bill C-15.

First nations peoples are human beings, and that is precisely what Bill C-15 says. As human beings, they must enjoy the same rights as all other human beings. This is 2021, and it is about time that was acknowledged and implemented.

However, it is not right for parliamentarians, who represent the people, to be denied the right to speak to and discuss these issues.

• (1035)

Hon. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, this is not the first time we are debating this bill in the House. Members of the Bloc Québécois have already participated in the debate.

This bill is already well known. It is based on a former bill, so it is not surprising—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville on a point of order.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I am quite concerned about the fact that we are not allowed to lie or mislead in this House and that we are not allowed to call it out when it does happen.

I would request that the minister apologize for his comments with regard to two young, newer members of Parliament who did a

high five at the back of the House at an untimely point. He is using that as an excuse to further mislead the House that the reason we are expressing concern about this legislation is simply as a stalling tactic. I would appreciate it if the minister would apologize for making a comment that was misleading to the House and to Canadians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, before there is a ruling on this point of order I would like the opportunity to provide some comments, then we can dig into the number of times we can reference of that happening on the other side of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are getting into debate on both issues. We have started the process, so we will take it up for consideration.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, pardon me for what might be a rookie mistake here, but I need to go back to my indigenous constituents and tell them why this minister is, in my opinion, misleading the House about why this is only getting one hour of debate on the floor of the House of Commons. There will be unparliamentary language—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but this is getting into debate. We will look into the matter and the Speaker will come back to the House with the ruling.

* * *

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

BILL C-15—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 117*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Battiste

Government Orders

Beech	Bendayan	Tabbara	Tassi
Bennett	Bessette	Trudeau	Turnbull
Bibeau	Bittle	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Blaikie	Blair	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois	Vaughan	Virani
Boulerice	Bratina	Weiler	Wilkinson
Brière	Cannings	Wilson-Raybould	Yip
Carr	Casey	Young	Zahid
Chagger	Champagne	Zann	Zuberi— 178
Chen	Cormier		
Dabrusin	Damoff		
Davies	Dhaliwal		
Dhillon	Dong		
Drouin	Dubourg	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Duclos	Duguid	Albas	Alleslev
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duval	Allison	Arnold
Dzerowicz	Easter	Atwin	Baldinelli
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Barlow	Barrett
Ellis	Erskine-Smith	Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Fergus	Fillmore	Benzen	Bergen
Finnigan	Fisher	Bergeron	Berthold
Fonseca	Fortier	Bérubé	Bezan
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Freeland	Fry	Block	Boudrias
Garneau	Garrison	Bragdon	Brassard
Gaudreau	Gazan	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Gerretsen	Gould	Carrie	Chabot
Green	Guilbeault	Champoux	Charbonneau
Hajdu	Hardie	Chiu	Chong
Harris	Holland	Cooper	Cumming
Housefather	Hughes	Dalton	Dancho
Hussen	Hutchings	Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Iacono	Ien	Deltell	d'Entremont
Jaczek	Johns	Desbiens	Desilets
Joly	Jones	Diotte	Doherty
Jordan	Jowhari	Dowdall	Dreeschen
Julian	Kelloway	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Khalid	Khera	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Fast	Findlay
Kwan	Lalonde	Fortin	Gallant
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Généreux	Genuis
Lamoureux	Lattanzio	Gill	Gladu
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Godin	Gourde
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre	Gray	Hallan
Lightbound	Long	Harder	Hoback
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Jansen	Jeneroux
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Kelly	Kent
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Kitchen	Kmiec
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Kram	Kurek
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Kusie	Lake
McCrimmon	McDonald	Larouche	Lawrence
McGuinty	McKay	Lehoux	Lemire
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson	Lloyd	Lobb
Mendicino	Miller	Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Monsef	Morrissey	Maguire	Manly
Murray	Ng	Marcil	Martel
O'Connell	Oliphant	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Powlowski	Qaqqaq	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Michaud	Moore
Regan	Robillard	Morantz	Morrison
Rodriguez	Rogers	Motz	Nater
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Normandin	Patzer
Saini	Sajjan	Paul-Hus	Paupé
Saks	Samson	Perron	Plamondon
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Poilievre	Rayes
Schieffe	Schulte	Redekopp	Reid
Serré	Sgro	Rempel Garner	Richards
Shanahan	Sheehan	Rood	Ruff
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Simms	Singh	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Sorbara	Spengemann	Schmale	Seeback

NAYS

Members

Statements by Members

Shields	Shin
Shipley	Simard
Sloan	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Therrien
Tochor	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 151	

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

*[English]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, notwithstanding any Standing Orders, special order or usual practice, the House now proceed to Statements by Members followed by Oral Questions and that the usual allotment of time be accorded for each rubric.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing none, the motion is carried.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[English]***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on May 18, Tamils in Canada and around the world will mark the 12th anniversary of the Mullivaikkal genocide. They will mourn, they will grieve, they will commemorate and they will resolve to never again be witness to such genocide and atrocity in our world. Sadly, this right to commemorate itself is under attack. The Sri Lankan state continues to desecrate memorials and threaten those who commemorate.

Despite these restrictions, Tamils on the island and around the world will join hands on May 18 in person or virtually to pay tribute to our fallen brothers and sisters, and recommit to ensuring that Tamils can live on the island with freedom, equality and self-determination. We will continue to be resilient and never be silenced.

The monuments to those who were lost is etched in our collective memory and in our hearts. The march towards justice is long and painful, but we will continue until justice is served.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we remember the victims of the Pontian Greek genocide, who were brutally exterminated and oppressed a century ago. The Ottoman Empire carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against its Christian Greek population during the first World War.

A period of horrific violence took place until 1922, during which hundreds of thousands of Greek Pontians were incarcerated, deported, forced into death marches or systematically executed. Sadly, since these acts of intolerance, violence and hate took place, the world must still learn from our past to prevent similar acts from ever taking place again.

On behalf of our Conservative caucus, I join with the Greek community and all Canadians in remembrance of this horrific chapter in human history. We must never again let atrocities like these happen and always speak out against systemic discrimination and injustices.

* * *

● (1125)

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, did colleagues know that Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world? It is not only the COVID-19 pandemic that has had a more pronounced impact on women. Sadly, so does MS, as 75% of Canadians living with MS are women. The pandemic has amplified the significant challenges those with MS face, including barriers to appropriate treatment and care, employment and housing, which makes this MS Awareness Month all the more important.

Organizations like the MS Society of Canada are working to ensure Canadians living with MS can participate in all aspects of life. Every day, people living with MS, like my friend Dave Millar, do everything in their power to persevere.

We must continue to raise awareness about MS, not just during the month of May, but throughout the year and provide funding for significant research, so that one day there can be a world free of MS.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND BIPHOBIA

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I rise to call on all Canadians to come together in the fight against hate next Monday on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

Too many members of my community still face hatred and violence here in Canada and around the world. Last year, here at home, hate crimes based on sexual orientation rose by 41%. We must do better for our neighbours, friends and family members. In particular, we must do better for queer, trans and gender non-conforming youth, who are just trying to find their place in this world in the face of incredible hostility.

We cannot remain silent when we hear of people jailed, tortured and too often murdered for who they are or who they love. Yes, we must speak out against this hate at home and abroad, but we must also make sure that Canada is a place where people can find refuge when their own country is not safe because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

I look forward to the day we can simply celebrate inclusion and put the fight against homophobia and transphobia behind us once and for all. Let us work together toward that day.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this pandemic has been extremely difficult for many low-income families with young children.

I am proud that Bill C-14 has received Royal Assent. This will make it possible to provide a \$1,200 supplement to the Canada child benefit for low-income families with children under the age of six.

Canadians are feeling the financial burden of the pandemic, and this targeted support will provide some much-needed relief to thousands of families in my riding of Vimy and will help more than two million children in Canada.

The Government of Canada has provided 80% of all the pandemic-related support to Canadians, and we will continue to be there for families until this crisis is over.

* * *

[English]

ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report on a very successful event that was held in my riding. Each year, the Alexandra Hospital in Ingersoll has a gala fundraiser organized by the hospital board of trust foundation to raise funds for the purchase of equipment for the hospital.

Obviously, due to COVID restrictions, the usual annual event could not be held. Robin Schultz, the executive director of the foundation, and a group of volunteers put on the Stay Home ... Stay Safe virtual gala this past Saturday evening.

Statements by Members

The gala was the usual ticket price, but instead of attending for dinner and entertainment, the guests received a charcuterie box that fed two people, prepared by the Elm Hurst Inn. Online entertainment was provided by Ken Archer, Bob Breen, Ted Comiskey, Jim Gonder, Kiley Joe Masson and the Ingersoll Pipe Band.

It was a very enjoyable evening and a successful event. Over 200 tickets were sold, and the attendees could dress up or down as they wished. It was a great event hosted by Robin and her volunteer team, another great gala in a different format. I thank them all.

* * *

SPEECH AND HEARING MONTH

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, May is Speech and Hearing Month in Canada. Masks and screens have kept us safe but are also barriers to communication during this pandemic, fundamentally changing how we connect and communicate with one another.

Picture a nurse struggling to provide information to patients through layers of PPE, a newcomer trying to follow conversations without the help of facial expressions, a student straining to learn as the teacher freezes on screen yet again, an infant trying to understand the world through people's faces or a senior navigating ever-changing technology. These communication breakdowns encourage a sense of empathy for people with communication disorders, who live with this reality every day.

This May, we thank the speech language pathologists, including my wife Rose, audiologists and communication health assistants, who, during this pandemic and beyond, are committed to helping Canadians of all ages to speak well, hear well and live well.

* * *

● (1130)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great concern that I rise today to report that Ms. Cristina Palabay of the Philippines, who last week appeared before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights as a witness, is now experiencing harassment and threats because of her testimony.

Statements by Members

Ms. Palabay testified about human rights abuses occurring in the Philippines, and after the committee meeting she was subject to harmful lies and accusations. Ms. Palabay noted in her testimony that she has been subjected to continuing harassment and death threats. There are many documented cases in the Philippines of human rights defenders facing extrajudicial killings following a similar pattern.

I urge the authorities in the Philippines to ensure Ms. Palabay and other witnesses be protected from state reprisal, in keeping with the parliamentary privilege extended to individuals who testify before parliamentary committees. I know all members of this House join me in calling for action to ensure the safety of Ms. Palabay and all other witnesses.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ANDRÉ GAUTHIER

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, in December 2015, Quebec geologist André Gauthier was arrested in Dubai for reporting irregular transactions to the authorities of the United Arab Emirates. Detained by that country and separated from his family, he continued fighting to return home.

When his family asked me for help in the spring of 2019, I immediately agreed even though I had just been in politics a short while. We never gave up. I would like to thank all those who helped in this matter. Thanks to my colleagues at Global Affairs Canada, the media and André's many friends and family members, we managed to bring him home safe and sound after many years.

It is extremely important to persevere and not lose hope in parliamentary affairs. André's story is a perfect example of that. Canada never forgets one of its own, and we must continue to protect our citizens at home and around the world. I am extremely pleased about the outcome for André, and I look forward to seeing him in Saguenay soon.

* * *

EID AL-FITR

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday Muslims in Hull—Aylmer celebrated the end of the month of Ramadan. This religious tradition gives believers an opportunity to reflect on values such as peace, harmony, forgiveness, and many other values that we all hold dear whether we are Muslim or not.

Yesterday evening, many people observed Eid al-Fitr to mark the end of this sacred month despite the difficulties brought on by the pandemic. Unfortunately, this year, what is normally a warm celebration full of joy, happiness and communion was marred by tragedy: the death of a number of Muslims around the world.

Now more than ever, these horrific acts demand that we reflect deeply on the values that Ramadan promotes and intensify our efforts to protect all members of the human family.

[*English*]

TRIBUTES BY THE MEMBER FOR BRUCE—GREY—OWEN SOUND

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to a few people.

First, on a sad note, this past week the community of Tobermory and the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 290 lost its last World War II veteran, Norman Stevens. He leaves behind his son, Larry; daughter, Brenda; and many grandchildren, along with a grateful community for all he did for the Legion, in particular, the meals on wheels program. We thank Norman for his service. May he rest in peace.

Next, on a more positive note, I would like to pass birthday wishes on to my cousins David McLean, Tyler DeVries and my good friend Brian Macdonald. Brian turns 50 today. It may be a good thing we have a lockdown going on right now, because knowing Brian, his birthday party would have been epic otherwise.

Finally, I want to wish my mother, Mabel, a happy birthday. She raised five of us boys, with only six and a half years between the five of us. I am not sure what Dad is getting Mom for her birthday this year, however, it is hard to top the Jersey cow he got her over 30 years ago that she got to milk by hand for over a decade.

On behalf of the whole family, I wish Mom a happy birthday.

* * *

● (1135)

KAMLOOPS—THOMPSON—CARIBOO GRADUATES

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, the COVID pandemic has affected and changed our lives in many ways. However, many people continued to persevere and show up to achieve their goals.

The high-school and university graduates in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo riding have not only done the hard work necessary to receive their diplomas and degrees, but they have done so in an unexpected and extraordinary time. Many students have had to learn quickly to navigate online school. Students have been told to keep their social bubble small, and many have lost the chance to partake in their important extracurricular activities.

All the graduates have worked through these circumstances and still managed to succeed. Not many people can say that they graduated during a pandemic, and I hope all of these students realize just how proud I and everyone around them truly are of their efforts. The traditional in-person celebrations may not be possible, but that does not diminish the support that these exceptional students have.

I encourage members, if they know a graduate, to reach out to them and share their congratulations and enthusiasm that surrounds their accomplishments.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to lend my voice to a Palestinian Canadian.

These are her words:

What we see in Sheikh Jarrah, Gaza, and all of Palestine is not new. Decades of Israel's dehumanizing occupation has robbed: Palestinian children of their youth, parents of their children, children of their parents, and elders of their dignity. Palestinian deaths must be understood as vanished dreams and mourning families, not merely as statistics. Israel is forcefully removing Palestinian families from their homes, demolishing their neighbourhoods, expanding illegal settlements, and desecrating our places of worship. The necessity to put pressure on Israel to stop these human rights violations is long overdue. Canada must show courage and act now. As a start, we must stop the sale of arms to Israel. Because Palestinian lives matter. Hear us: our lives matter.

Those in the House who speak up will be remembered. Those who stay silent will be remembered. History will never forget.

* * *

[Translation]

POSTAL SERVICE ON THE LOWER NORTH SHORE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the people of the Lower North Shore are sick and tired of all the problems with Canada Post. Their air mail service is being cut back more and more each year, without any justification. Mail delivery takes too long, assuming it happens at all and the items are not simply lost. Postage fees are higher for them than for other citizens, but they depend on this service for food, health care and clothing.

The worst thing about Canada Post's monopoly is the delivery times, especially for medication. This winter, one resident did not receive her chemotherapy drugs on time, while a child in my community did not get his insulin injections. It is inhumane and unacceptable.

I have attended meetings with other elected officials and representatives of this Crown corporation. The right questions were asked and the right solutions were proposed, and yet Canada Post refused to give us any answers or do anything. Why?

* * *

[English]

BILL C-10

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the heritage minister has dismissed and insulted critics of Bill C-10 as "extremist" while peddling his own tin-hatted conspiracy theory about big tech being in cahoots with Canadian academics just to spread disinformation about his bill.

Despite all the backlash and the minister's vague promises of future clarity amid his own incoherent and contradictory statements, the bill remains "a full-blown assault" on freedom of expression.

Remember, this minister is a lifelong, radical, anti-energy activist. He admits that the whole point of Bill C-69 was to ensure that no Canadian energy project ever gets built again, and now he wants the power to regulate online content to be, in his words, consistent with the government's vision.

To the energy workers who have lost their jobs at the hands of this government's vision, the prospect of this minister and his gov-

Oral Questions

ernment regulating their posts should be terrifying. However, if this deeply flawed bill passes in this Parliament, do not worry, a Conservative government will appeal it in the next one.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tomorrow, May 15, is the International Day of Families. What an appropriate time to observe the day, as our government has just announced the Canada child benefit young child supplement. Through this benefit, families could be receiving up to \$1,200 per child under the age of six. This benefit will help 1.6 million families and over two million children.

During these very challenging times, since the start of the pandemic, our government has recognized that families have been largely impacted by the unpredictable expenses of COVID-19. This additional support will help pay for necessities such as child care, food, medicine and clothing. I am proud of our government and its commitment to supporting families, from our children to our seniors, through affordable housing, the Canada child benefit and increases to the GIS and OAS, which have lifted over half a million children and seniors out of poverty.

To all our Canadian families and seniors, we will get through this together.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1140)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance were properly handled. Who said that? It was the feminist Prime Minister of course, during an interview. He said with a straight face that far too many sexual assault survivors, both women and men, do not feel safe when it comes to testifying, and that is why we must make changes. What a joke. He has been Prime Minister for six years. He could have made these changes.

Why is the Prime Minister insulting Canadians' intelligence?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government takes allegations of sexual misconduct extremely seriously, and no one should feel unsafe at work. That is why we passed Bill C-77, a declaration of victims rights that puts victims at the core of the military justice system, which reviews unfounded cases.

We also created a sexual misconduct response centre. We know that we have a lot more work to do, and we are going to get it done.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the same interview, the Prime Minister was asked why he was keeping his Minister of National Defence on. He said that the Minister of National Defence had done an outstanding job. Those words came from someone who treated two of his ministers callously, behaved inappropriately towards a journalist, and did nothing in six years to fix the problem of sexual abuse in the Canadian Forces. The bar is so low, no wonder he has such warped reasoning.

Does the Prime Minister think that Canadian women are experiencing this fiasco differently?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will let the member opposite continue on with the partisan attack. We are going to stay focused on making sure that we have an inclusive environment inside the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we have implemented the path to dignity and respect, a strategy for long-term culture change to eliminate sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

We know we have a lot more work to do. We also have a lot more work to do when it comes to systemic racism, which is why we have an independent panel working on that as well. We will get this done.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is not partisan to state the facts.

The fact is that the Deschamps report was filed in 2015, and it spelled out everything. The Prime Minister did not do anything, and neither did his Minister of National Defence. In 2018, everyone was aware that there were allegations against General Vance, but we are being asked to believe that the Prime Minister knew nothing.

Does he honestly take Canadian women for fools?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we have stated, any time information was brought forward on any type of allegations, we always immediately forwarded it to the appropriate agencies for the appropriate action, which is something the member opposite and the former government also did when allegations were brought forward. However, the Conservatives still appointed General Vance when there was an investigation going on at that time.

We know that we have a lot more work to do. It is something that we, as a government, are absolutely committed to.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, when it comes to content creation on YouTube, Canadians punch above their weight. Now, the government wants to step in and determine who gets to be noticed and who has to be hidden; who gets to succeed and, well, who gets to lose.

If Bill C-10 had been in place when Justin Bieber was just a kid posting his music on YouTube, he probably would not have been discovered because his songs just are not Canadian enough, according to the government's approval test. I ask members to let that sink in, for just a moment. Why is the minister moving ahead with a bill that punishes young artists?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are modernizing the Broadcasting Act, which has not been updated in 30 years, since we rented videos from video stores. We are asking web giants who profit in Canada to contribute to the creation of Canadian stories and music. This would support creators across our country.

The bill would apply to social media companies only. It would ask social media companies to advise us of Canadian revenues, contribute a portion of those revenues to Canadian cultural production funds and make our creators discoverable. Individuals posting to social media are excluded.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me clarify: When the member says that the bill would make certain artists discoverable, what she means is that it would move some up in the queue and some down in the queue; it would pick winners and losers. It is sneaky, controlling and wrong.

If this bill had been in place when Shawn Mendes was a young, aspiring artist posting to YouTube, where his popularity began, the government's Internet czar likely would have demoted him because his songs are, well, just not Canadian enough.

Will the minister truly support Canada's young artists and cancel Bill C-10? The question is for the minister, please.

● (1145)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's analysis confirms that Bill C-10 remains consistent with the Charter's guarantee of freedom of speech. As a government, we have upheld, and we will continue to uphold, Canadians' fundamental rights.

I would like to confirm once again that individuals posting to social media are specifically excluded in Bill C-10. Also, to be clear, of the obligations for social media companies in the bill, none would require them to restrict or review posts by individuals.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday, Quebec introduced a bill to promote and protect the French language. Many Quebecers have the future of French at heart, but obviously not all. The Minister of Indigenous Services said that the bill was worrisome. He believes that promoting our common language is being done at the expense of minorities. However, his own government recognizes the special situation of French speakers in an ocean of more than 360 million people, most of them English speakers.

Will the Prime Minister correct his minister?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify for my colleague that the protection and promotion of the French language in Quebec and across Canada is a priority for the government.

We tabled a reform document in the House and, for the first time ever, the federal government has said that we must do more to protect the French fact. That is why we intend to take the necessary steps, in our area of jurisdiction, to protect the French fact.

At the same time, we will do so by protecting—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question was about the statement made by the Minister of Indigenous Services who, I must say, made a mistake. He thought he was defending a minority, but yesterday he took the side of the huge anglophone majority in North America over the future of a minority language that is the common language in Quebec alone.

Once again, we are forced to remind members that the only official language at risk in Canada is French.

I cannot believe this needs to be repeated once again, to a minister from Quebec no less.

Will the Prime Minister give his minister a reality check?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is trying to make something out of nothing.

What is most important is that we all recognize that protecting and promoting the French language is important and that we ensure that linguistic minorities in Quebec and across the country are protected.

That is what we said and that is what we are doing. We are walking the talk and we are the first federal government in history to do so.

Oral Questions

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, Hydro-Québec is a renewable energy pioneer and it thinks big. It intends to provide electricity to Boston and New York City, and Quebec is very proud of that.

However, we have learned that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is getting in Hydro-Québec's way by funding a gas company in Texas that is challenging Hydro-Québec's new transmission lines.

Will the government commit to finally letting Hydro-Québec grow, create good jobs and thus reduce our overall greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague knows full well that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is completely independent. I hope that he is not telling us that politicians should be deciding how to invest Canadians' pensions, because that is not our job.

Hydro-Québec's project in Maine is a very good project for the environment, for Quebec and for all of New England. Everyone here is in favour of that project.

I want to reassure my colleague that we are on the same team.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, access to clean water is a basic human right. In this country, indigenous communities have repeatedly been promised that this would be honoured.

In 1991, it was promised that by 2001 there would be clean water. It did not happen. The Prime Minister promised it by 2021, 20 years later. Oh wait, he meant 2023. I ask the minister to stop explaining. The point is the promise has been broken too many times.

When will the government ensure that this basic human right is honoured for every human being in this country?

● (1150)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member failed to note that there are now no longer any long-term water advisories in the province of British Columbia, thanks to the work that has been done and the plans put into place throughout the past years. This includes the Semiahmoo first nation, which lifted its advisory last month.

There is much more to be done. We continue to invest in indigenous communities to ensure they lift their long-term water advisories and that the safety and security of clean water in communities is assured well into 2023, 2024, 2025—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, despite the Liberals' lip service and lofty promises, gay men are still stigmatized when it comes to giving blood.

The Prime Minister promised in 2015, and again in 2019, that he would put an end to the ban on gay men donating blood. This ban, based on sexual orientation rather than high-risk behaviours, is discriminatory.

Why is the Prime Minister fostering homophobia by not keeping his word?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we agree the blood ban is discriminatory. That is precisely why we worked and provided the funding needed to Héma-Québec, as well as Canadian Blood Services, to make these changes. We look forward to their bringing forward an application. It is not a decision the government can make on its own, but we encourage Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services to make this application so we can finally end this discriminatory practice.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, why should a man who has been in a relationship with the same man for 20 years be banned from giving blood, even if he has not been abstinent for three months?

Giving blood means giving life, and gay men have just as much right as anyone to fully participate in our society without being prejudged just because they are gay.

Monday is the International Day Against Homophobia. Will the Prime Minister keep his promises by lifting the ban on gay men donating blood and putting an end to this unfair discrimination that is depriving Canadians of blood that could save lives?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yes, we absolutely agree this is a discriminatory practice. That is precisely why we put in place the funding needed for Héma-Québec and the Canadian Blood Services to do the studies that were needed.

I will not take lessons from the Conservatives, who continually talk in this House against LGBTQ2+ rights. They have sat on this issue for more than 10 years. We took action right away and we worked to end—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the federal government has been trying to block Christopher Karas's court challenge, which argues that Health Canada discriminates against him on the basis of sexual orientation because Health Canada is preventing him as a gay man from donating blood.

Subsection 13(5) of the blood regulations annex of the Food and Drugs Act clearly lays out that the Minister of Health may remove the ban on accepting blood from gay men. This is not about the provinces; this is about the Minister of Health not acting. Why has she not?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the decision to change the discriminatory practice of the blood ban is not one the government can do on its own; it has to be done in conjunction with Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services. We want this decision to be made. That is why we provided the funding.

I would ask the member opposite this. When she sat around the cabinet table with the Harper Conservatives, why did they do nothing to end this discriminatory practice?

We are taking action and moving forward.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am waiting for the day the member calls me homophobic or something, but here is the absolute truth about the current Liberal government: It wants the votes of gay men; it just does not want their blood. The Liberals are the first people to show up to a photo op or attack a premier or somebody else, but it is their record that is under scrutiny because of their virtue signalling and broken promises.

Stop the holding lines, stop the legal proceedings and keep your promise. On what date will you keep your promise and allow gay men to finally donate blood in this country?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that I made no promises.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, leave it to the Conservatives, when we agree this practice is discriminatory and want to change it, to consider that virtue signalling. May I remind members that a member of the Conservative Party recently had to apologize for calling the LGBTQ2+ community "unclean"?

We take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to ending the discriminatory practice in this country. They sat on this for more than 10 years. We are actually moving forward to end this discriminatory practice.

• (1155)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the federal Liberal government has taken no action to end the discriminatory and homophobic gay blood ban. Health Canada is the regulator of the blood system, and the law states that the health minister may remove a condition around giving blood if she determines the condition is no longer necessary. There is no scientific basis for the ban. The law states that the health minister can make this change today. Instead, the Liberals are blocking Christopher Karas in court.

Oral Questions

The minister should exercise her powers today and end it. Why will she not? Why is she perpetuating this homophobic practice?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the practice could have been ended simply by a stroke of the government's pen, why did the member opposite not do so when she sat around the cabinet table? It is because this process has to move forward with Héma-Québec, as well as Canadian Blood Services. However, we actually did fund more than 15 projects to move forward in ending this discriminatory practice because we are committed to doing so, unlike the Conservatives, who are trying to clean up a mess on this file where they have made outrageous and horrifying comments—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is trying to pivot away, but it is her record. It is the ability of the Liberal government, Health Canada and the health minister that can end it. She just heard how the health minister can end the blood ban right now, whenever the Liberals choose to.

The government did not promise to study it, do more research or take six years. It promised to end it because it is discrimination. She knows the answer. The Canadian Medical Association, the All Blood is Equal campaign and Canadians everywhere agree that this needs to go, not after more studies; they want action now. On what date will the government keep its promise, end the court cases—

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

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are trying to pretend that the process that exists does not include anyone outside of government. If government could have made this change alone, why did the Conservatives in 10 years not do so? This process has to be made in conjunction with an application through Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services. It is a discriminatory practice that we absolutely want to end, and that is precisely why we have moved forward with it, including reducing the months down to three, again, something Conservatives never did in 10 years. I take no—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, while Quebec is introducing a bill to protect French, French language services in Ottawa continue to decline.

Ottawa gave Switch Health the task of testing travellers for COVID-19, but the company is unable to provide services in French and is forcing Quebecers to quarantine for up to a month before giving them their results. We already knew this spring that Switch Health had failed to properly manage COVID-19 testing for foreign workers, so it was clear the company was not going to be able to properly manage the testing for all of Quebec.

When will the government replace Switch Health with a company that can operate in French?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we absolutely agree that testing needs to be done in a safe, fast and efficient manner in both official languages. This is precisely why we worked with Switch Health originally to make sure that any issues were being dealt with. However, we have also moved forward with additional service providers, because, again, our commitment to making sure that we get through this pandemic is ensuring that we have all the tools being utilized, and those tools need to be utilized in both official languages in an efficient—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, while Quebec is introducing a bill to protect French, French language services in Ottawa continue to decline. That is the case for our veterans.

In 2018, the veterans ombudsman showed that it took 19 weeks to process a claim in English and 52 weeks to process the same claim in French. That is a year of waiting. Three years later, the minister admitted in committee that this unfair situation still persists.

After three years with no results, what is the minister doing today to ensure that French language services—

• (1200)

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

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here in Ottawa, we take our responsibilities seriously, and we know we have to do more for French.

That is exactly why we will make sure that complaints in both French and English receive equal treatment. We will make sure the public service meets its obligations in terms of bilingualism. We will try to improve coordination significantly by creating a new central agency, and we will strengthen the Commissioner of Official Languages' powers.

Here in Ottawa, we take our responsibilities seriously.

Oral Questions

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, violence has erupted in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas has fired thousands of rockets into civilian areas, demonstrating its obvious intent to kill as many Israeli citizens as possible. This, along with deliberately setting up bases in civilian areas using Palestinian civilians as human shields, constitutes war crimes.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs' statements to date on this violence have been ambiguous at best. Will the minister state unequivocally today that he supports Israel's right to defend itself, just as President Biden has done?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our comments and statements have been crystal clear. The indiscriminate barrage of rocket attacks fired by Hamas into populated areas of Israel is absolutely unacceptable and must cease immediately. Canada supports Israel's right to live in peace with its neighbours within secure boundaries and recognizes Israel's right and duty to ensure its own security. Canada remains fully committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Canada remains a steadfast ally of Israel and a friend to the Palestinian people.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, the U.K. has announced its restart plan for international travel, using the traffic light system, but here in Canada we are still stuck under the Liberals' third wave and the hotel quarantine program, with no end in sight. It is not just like flipping a light off and on; both airports and airlines will need time to get things up and running again.

When will the government do the right thing, provide some hope for Canadians and come up with a comprehensive restart strategy for air travel?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

The Minister of Transport has worked on a number of files that are important to Canada, such as support for the air transportation sector and the fight against COVID-19, as well as on projects that are national in scope to develop a safe, efficient transportation system.

The minister will be looking at this very issue, and I would be happy to work on it with my colleague going forward.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, clearly no one in the Liberal government has had to buy a two-by-

four lately. Even the most essential items have become unaffordable, like plywood to fix a roof or food to go on the barbecue. It is unbelievable. The Liberals' out-of-control spending is putting inflationary pressures on the middle class, students and seniors, who are struggling just to make ends meet.

Why is the Liberal government forcing working Canadians to pay a hidden tax through growing inflation and the rising cost of living?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the hon. member's assertion, I would point him to the testimony of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who appeared before the finance committee and explained in clear terms that the inflation we have seen in the Canadian economy is precisely where he predicted it would be and is well within the 1% to 3% goal.

I would remind the hon. member, however, that his solution to this problem, to stop government spending, would result in the government removing essential benefits that are helping support families and businesses in their time of need. Canadians can rest assured that our government will be there for them, as long as it takes, no matter what it takes, unlike the Conservatives.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians have been shocked by the housing crisis in Nunavut, where thousands of families are on wait-lists and many homes are overcrowded, in poor condition or riddled with mould. Yet, somehow Nunavut's housing needs have been completely overlooked under the rapid housing program and are once again underfunded in the latest Liberal budget.

Why is the government so reluctant to support northern housing?

● (1205)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me first correct the record. Our government has made historic investments in housing, not just in Nunavut but also in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. With the rapid housing initiative, close to 40% of the projects went to indigenous housing providers.

The north presents some challenges. We await the tabling of the HUMA report on the urban, rural and northern housing strategy to take next steps. The minister has engaged the housing advisory council to create this new program, which will provide additional support for those people in the north looking for housing, in particular in Nunavut.

We look forward to the progress we are making and will build on the \$70-billion national housing strategy, which commits to success in just this area.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, flooding along the Mackenzie River has already devastated Fort Simpson and Jean Marie River, and is threatening four more communities. Yesterday, people from nearby communities generously organized an airlift of vital supplies into the flooded towns. Meanwhile, the Liberal government's response is that it will consider future funding requests.

Will the government act immediately to help the people in Northwest Territories who have been flooded out of their homes?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our government is actively monitoring the flood levels. We need to determine which measures to take, and we will certainly support the provinces and territories if they ask for help.

Through the Government Operations Centre, Public Safety Canada is closely monitoring high-risk zones, including in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and across the country. We are certainly ready to support the provinces and territories that might need the federal government's help in case of flooding.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Manitoba government violated the constitutional rights of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin and Tataskweyak Cree Nations by approving a final licence to Manitoba Hydro that includes parameters to further devastate these communities.

In the past, the federal government has helped first nations to defend their rights. This led to the negotiation of the historic Northern Flood Agreement, but what about today in this era of reconciliation? Where is the federal government?

Will the federal government step in and support OPCN and TCN as they defend their rights and protect their nations?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we take very seriously the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples, including in the case that has been mentioned by the member opposite. I would be happy to follow up with her at a later date to get more details about the matter and see what can be pursued.

Oral Questions

HOUSING

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, but far too many people in my riding of Etobicoke Centre are forced to make the impossible choice between paying their rent or buying groceries. That is why this week I was so proud that our government announced \$30.5 million in new funding to build 113 new affordable homes as part of a new project located at 75 Tandrige Crescent in Etobicoke. This new project will build affordable homes for those who need them most, including those who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing) update the House on what the government—

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

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the rapid housing initiative has been a remarkable success. In just over six months, we have created the \$1-billion investment for close to 4,700 housing units that will house well over 5,000 people who were previously homeless or at risk.

In budget 2021, we added another \$1.5 billion to the rapid housing initiative. This will hopefully make even further inroads into eliminating chronic homelessness in the country, in particular in places like Etobicoke where the member comes from.

I will also add that the previous question asked about what we did in Nunavut. There were three projects under the rapid housing initiative approved in Nunavut, all with the Nunavut Housing Corporation. We are making a difference in people's lives—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

* * *

STATISTICS CANADA

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week, Al in my riding received his census form in the mail, only to learn that it must be completed online by this week. Al and other constituents, particularly seniors, do not have a computer in their home. With public health restrictions in place, they cannot go to a library or a friend's house to access one. That is more stress for Canadians in the middle of this preventable third wave.

When will the Liberal government stop leaving Canadians behind?

Oral Questions

● (1210)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to reach out to the member and ensure we take down the information and do everything we possibly can.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, farmers back home are working long hours to get their crops in the ground. Many of them have reached out to report that StatsCan workers are going around farm to farm with the 2021 census and are needlessly holding up production. To make matters worse, they show up the day before the census is due, making it impossible for it to be filled out on time. This is no way to treat farmers who are in the middle of their busy season.

Why can StatsCan not send surveys in the mail, on time, instead of driving around rural Saskatchewan?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we understand full well how incredibly important it is to make informed decisions. We have made every effort to ensure that Canadians are aware and that this information is put to good use.

However, I will undertake to reach out to my friend to ensure we do an incredible job in receiving information from our farmers.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, federal leadership on this pandemic has been confusing and chaotic every step of the way. The risk is low, the risk is high; do not wear masks, wear masks; we are not closing the borders, we are closing the borders. Canadians just want their lives back.

Yesterday, the CDC issued guidance that fully vaccinated Americans could ditch the mask if they were outdoors or indoors. That is how we combat vaccine hesitancy. In Canada, we are just not that fortunate.

How do the lives of half-vaccinated Canadians change? Does anything change? Is there any guidance on this or is that too much to ask?

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saint-Jean on a point of order.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, there was no interpretation during the last intervention.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The translation does not seem to be working. It is working now.

I would ask the member for Cariboo—Prince George to restart his question.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, federal leadership on this pandemic has been confusing and chaotic every step of the way. The risk is low, the risk is high; do not wear masks, wear masks; we

are not closing the borders, we are closing the borders. Canadians just want their lives back.

Yesterday, the CDC issued guidance that fully vaccinated Americans could ditch the mask if they were outdoors or indoors. That is how we combat vaccine hesitancy. In Canada, we are just not that fortunate.

How do the lives of half-vaccinated Canadians change? Does anything change? Is there any guidance on this or is that just too much to ask?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every country around the world is looking at life post-COVID, and Canada is no exception. We all want to return to normal.

Our government has been working hard with provinces and territories to provide the best science and evidence-based guidance. In fact, we will have more to say on this later today.

However, I want to remind Canadians that the best way to get through this pandemic is to keep signing up for vaccinations and to follow local public health measures.

* * *

● (1215)

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fight to end violence against women is a critical issue for our country and one that requires action and political decisions. All leaders in the House of Commons and the Senate need to set partisanship aside and take a firm stand on this issue.

Will the government support Bill S-231 and Bill C-293 and help move them forward as quickly as possible before this session of Parliament ends?

[English]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, everyone has a right to live free of violence and our hearts go out to everyone who has been impacted by this. Our government is fully behind the address to end and support a national action plan to end gender-based violence. Our investments alone support over 1,500 organizations that deliver essential services to end gender-based violence.

We will work tirelessly to end gender-based violence.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, while legislation to protect the French language is being introduced in Quebec City, the decline of services in our language continues in Ottawa.

We see this at the RCMP. Access to information requests take a very long time at the RCMP. It is far from a model of transparency. The situation is even worse on the French side, as the organization openly admitted to La Presse. It candidly admitted that most employees speak only English, which means that only a few people can handle French requests.

Will the government take action to ensure that the RCMP treats francophones with the respect they deserve?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, francophones are absolutely entitled to the same respect as all anglophones in Canada. That is why we decided to modernize the Official Languages Act and introduce an ambitious reform document that will give the public service more resources and tools to ensure that institutional bilingualism is implemented and respected. It will be a pleasure to work with my colleague on this issue.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, at a time when Quebec is rallying and its government is introducing a bill on its national language, in Ottawa, the provision of federal services in French continues to decline.

The current act requires federal departments and agencies to report on their services in the official languages. Half of them are not even doing it. They would rather break the law than report on their services in French.

The Liberals talk a good game, but what is preventing them from taking action and enforcing the existing act?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that we enforce the Official Languages Act.

However, we do need to give it more teeth, which is why we made a historic decision this winter to make ambitious reforms to the act. We want to provide more tools to enforce language rights in Canada, and in particular to protect the French language, which is a minority language.

That is why I will have the opportunity to work with the President of the Treasury Board to enforce the act, but I hope that I will have the support of the Bloc Québécois when we introduce the bill to modernize the Official Languages Act.

* * *

[English]

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, one year later and the illegal occupation of the Lake Audy Campground in Riding Mountain National Park continues. This occupation violates the National Parks Act. However,

Oral Questions

Parks Canada has failed to act and instead deprived Canadians access to a national park.

Barricades, vandalism, theft and the prohibited use of cameras are only some of the consequences of this illegal occupation, not to mention numerous safety hazards.

Why has the minister failed to end this illegal occupation in Riding Mountain National Park?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, certainly it is an important time for Parks Canada as we begin to reopen for the coming year, and it is important that all Canadians have the ability to access our parks.

This is an ongoing issue, as the hon. member knows. We have discussed this in the past. It is something we are working through to try to find a mutually acceptable and appropriate solution to this ongoing challenge.

• (1220)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is not good enough.

Documents reveal that local law enforcement raised public safety concerns many times to Parks Canada, and that conflict has already occurred. We now know there is no plan to fully reopen the Lake Audy Campground. If public safety is further compromised because Parks Canada refuses to act, the minister will be directly responsible.

Why has the minister ignored public safety concerns and failed to ensure all Canadians can safely enjoy their national parks?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated before, public safety is of the utmost priority to this government, and I think to all members of the House. This has been an ongoing challenge that we are working to resolve. It is important this is done in a thoughtful and constructive way, and that is exactly what we are doing.

* * *

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my region of Canada, the forest industry needs help from the government. It is facing an epidemic caused by the mountain pine beetles. The species destroys many acres of pine trees every year and are expanding east, causing damage along the eastern slopes of the Rockies.

The mountain pine beetles in Jasper and Hinton are a genetic mix of the northern and southern mountain pine beetles that are stronger and more destructive.

Will the federal government take action to reduce the population of this harmful invasive species?

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are working closely with provinces and municipalities to help slow the spread and mitigate the impact of forest pests in Canada as well as reduce the risk of infestation in areas that are not affected.

Our government invested \$20 million annually in scientific research to address the risk posed to our forests. We remain focused on science-based solutions. We will continue working with our partners and invest to protect Canada's trees from infestation.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the people of Lac-Mégantic and all Quebecers will forever remember the rail disaster in Lac-Mégantic.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport tell the House what progress has been made on the rail bypass and what our government is doing to support the people of Lac-Mégantic?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her important question.

We are working tirelessly for the community of Lac-Mégantic. This week, our government reaffirmed its commitment to completing the rail bypass project by 2023. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2022, and the preparation of the plans and specifications will begin in the coming weeks.

We are keeping the community informed of the project's progress. We will do everything in our power to complete this project within the established timeframe.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, Zenari's has been an Edmonton favourite Italian restaurant for over 30 years, but because it reincorporated in 2020 it did not qualify for the federal relief programs. This business has lost its vast customer base due to the hollowing out of downtown Edmonton caused by this government's slow vaccine rollout. Statistics Canada reported over 200,000 jobs lost in April alone, and Zenari's may soon add another 20.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he has failed businesses like Zenari's, which, if it was south of the border, would be fully back in business?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with great respect, our government has put a series of programs in place to support households and businesses from the very beginning of this pandemic. That is why so many have been able to survive the storm. We have even made changes to

many of the programs, including for certain businesses that have had a change in ownership.

With respect to the member's assertion about vaccinations, I would remind the hon. member that Canada is currently third among all G20 countries in terms of the rate of people who have actually taken their first dose, and Canadians are being vaccinated faster than citizens of any other country today. I am looking forward this summer to enjoying some of the businesses and restaurants in my own community.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my constituent Abhi opened a restaurant, the Flame Kitchen, just before COVID. Since then he has been unable to draw a wage and the restaurant is at risk of permanently closing, yet his business has been completely shut out of the government's COVID supports because of a failure to include new businesses.

For a government that claims to have Canadians' backs, why after 14 months does the government not have Abhi's back and the backs of new business owners like him?

• (1225)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset of this pandemic we moved forward with a suite of policies that were designed to support as many businesses as possible, as quickly as possible. In order to protect the integrity of the systems that we put in place, we used the revenue from the year prior as a comparator to ensure that we were providing funding in a targeted way to help businesses survive.

Going forward, a number of programs that we put in place could help businesses keep their doors open and hire new workers, including new financing programs that are available for businesses to invest in themselves and purchase new pieces of equipment.

With respect to new businesses, we are going to continue to look for solutions to support those, so they can help contribute to the recovery going forward.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been over a year since the start of the pandemic. While other countries are emerging from this crisis, Canada is in the middle of a Liberal third wave.

Conservatives have consistently asked the government to provide a plan with benchmarks and targets for reopening so that businesses and families, such as those in my riding in northern Saskatchewan, can get back to normal. Last week, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its three-step reopening road map that clearly laid out a plan for the people of Saskatchewan.

Where is the government's plan?

Oral Questions

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important in the middle of a global public health emergency that we do not take our eyes off what is most important. We need to continue to support Canadians through the ongoing public health emergency that the COVID-19 pandemic represents.

I would remind the hon. member that during their time of need we supported 9 million Canadians with CERB, so they could keep food on the table. We have helped 5.3 million workers keep their jobs with the wage subsidy, and over 80% of the money that has been spent to help Canadians get through this pandemic has come from the federal government, including through the safe restart agreement, to help Canadians enjoy and succeed in their communities during this pandemic.

We will continue to be there for Canadians as long—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Guelph.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know good things grow in Ontario. The adoption of environmentally sustainable practices in agriculture is a priority for our government. We are proud of the Living Laboratories initiative that brings together farmers, scientists and other partners to develop, test and share innovative agricultural practices and technologies.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell us about our role in protecting important waterways and conserving soil health in Ontario?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is investing \$4.2 million to launch a living lab in Ontario. This will be the fourth of its kind, following similar collaborations in the Atlantic region, the Prairies and Quebec.

The research will focus on reducing runoff from agricultural land into Lake Erie, improving water quality, conserving soil health and increasing biodiversity. Those are the tools farmers need to set the stage for tomorrow's agriculture.

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TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, news that Greyhound is ending service in Canada is a huge blow for rural Canadians who depend on the bus. More than an inconvenience, it is also a safety concern for indigenous women and girls, seniors, students and Canadians who do not have their own cars.

Instead of ensuring services, the government stood by and did nothing for years as Greyhound cut routes. It has allowed rural communities to be left behind.

There can be no more half-measures. Will the minister commit to a national passenger transportation strategy that serves all Canadians?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Greyhound's decision to cease operations in Canada is disappointing. We know that many Canadians depend on this service for transportation, and the transportation industry has been hit hard this year.

We have been there from the beginning to provide financial support through various programs, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy. We will continue to be there to protect jobs and work with provincial partners to support the transportation industry.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Madam Speaker, speaking to the UNDRIP legislation today, the justice minister said that if Bill C-262 had not been delayed in the last Parliament, the government would be working on an action plan for its implementation.

Let us not kid ourselves. The fact is the government delayed the important work of true reconciliation due to political expediency. There have been over five years of promises, and very little action on rights recognition.

Bill C-15 is a small first step. Will the government stop making excuses, do its work, get its own house in order and change its laws, policies and operational practices to ensure indigenous peoples can be self-determining?

• (1230)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we take very seriously the issues that relate to indigenous reconciliation and UNDRIP.

We thank the member opposite for her contributions to this matter in her previous role as minister of justice. The government stood behind Romeo Saganash's private member's bill in the last Parliament. It is unfortunate that it did not secure passage at that time due to Conservative opposition in the Senate.

That is why we have tabled Bill C-15, why we are working with opposition parties to secure the passage of Bill C-15, and why we are very keen to have UNDRIP see the light of day and achieve royal assent.

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

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

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to Orders of the Day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the motion be carried on division.

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

Some hon members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]*

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, I know this is difficult, but in a situation where another member, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, has notified the Speaker's office of an emergency matter, with what just occurred it would seem that there is no rubric left for an appeal for an emergency debate.

I wonder if the hon. members are aware of that, and if there could be unanimous consent to allow the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith to present the call for an emergency debate. Clearly, by the time we assemble again, the emergency could be a full-scale war.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is correct that, with the Orders of the Day, there is no opportunity at this point to table a request for an emergency debate. However, since the hon. member has asked for unanimous consent to allow for the request for an emergency debate, I will test the House.

[Translation]

All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

*[English]***UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT**

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Oakville North—Burlington.

Today, I am speaking to members from the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, Anishinabe, Huron-Wendat, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

I would also like to acknowledge that I arrived here as an athlete. An Inuit invention, the kayak, was originally built and invented for transportation and hunting. I got to use it for sport, and I am very grateful for that.

Just over 10 years ago, Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Then, in 2019, the Prime Minister made a commitment to introduce legislation on its implementation before the end of 2020, and here we are today at its third reading in the House.

I wish to begin by acknowledging all of the hard work, especially the significant role that indigenous leaders from Canada, like Willie Littlechild, have played in the development of the declaration itself over the last 25 years. It is a lifetime of indigenous advocacy and tireless efforts championing indigenous and human rights that have brought us to this important milestone today.

Bill C-15 is a turning point. For far too long, and despite robust constitutional and legal protections, indigenous rights have not been fully respected. While progress continues to be made, it has been slow and grave harms have continued to occur, including to indigenous women and girls.

We have a responsibility, as a country, to recognize and respect the rights of indigenous peoples, to uphold the protections that are part of the fabric of our nation, and that as a government we take steps to ensure that those rights are reflected and considered when we make new laws or introduce new policies. We must work together with indigenous peoples to build our relationship and seek to avoid lengthy court cases whenever we can. No less important is for all of us, as Canadians, to understand why this is relevant for us, to our lives, and to debunk myths and misconceptions so that we can move forward inclusively with values that ensure dignity and respect for all.

Government Orders

Indigenous rights are not new rights. However, the declaration acknowledges and affirms the rights of indigenous peoples. Implementing the declaration is about respecting human rights. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called upon the Government of Canada to fully adopt and implement the declaration as the framework for reconciliation. Bill C-15 responds to call to action 43 to do just that.

The action plan that is required under Bill C-15 to be developed in consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples will also respond to the call to action 44. This call to action requires the Government of Canada to develop a national action plan, strategies and other concrete measures to achieve the goals of the declaration.

Development of an action plan will require broad and in-depth engagement with indigenous partners across the country to discuss their various priorities. Bill C-15 sets out minimum requirements for what the action plan must address. These elements of the legislation were included in direct response to what was heard consistently throughout the fall 2020 engagement process with indigenous partners. These measures are focused on three areas.

First are measures to address injustices, combatting prejudice and eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination, including systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples, indigenous elders, youth, children, women, men, persons with disabilities, gender-diverse persons and two-spirit persons. I would note that the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, of which I am a proud member and contributor, has unanimously adopted an important amendment to this provision, which is the addition of a specific reference to racism and systemic racism. The addition acknowledges that while there are linkages between discrimination and racism, there are specific harms and legacies in relation to racism that need to be identified and addressed. The Government of Canada wants to make its position clear that it will stand against racism and work toward eradicating it wherever it exists.

Second, the plan must also contain measures promoting mutual respect and understanding as well as good relations, including through human rights education.

Third are measures relating to monitoring, oversight, recourse or remedy, or other accountability measures that will need to be developed with respect to the implementation of the declaration. During one of our committee studies, a second amendment to clause 6 was adopted relating to the time frame associated with the development of the action plan.

• (1235)

Throughout engagement, and again through the committee process, we heard from indigenous peoples on the need to reduce the three-year maximum time frame to a shorter one. As a result, we did just that, bringing it down to a maximum of two years to reinforce the Government of Canada's commitment to work with indigenous peoples from coast to coast to elaborate how to turn commitments into action and to achieve the objectives of the declaration.

These are minimum requirements of the action plan. We recognize while we need to include measures for reviewing and amending the plan, this initial phase is the beginning of a process, one that

will continue to evolve over time in partnership with indigenous peoples.

In terms of implementation of the declaration, this is a whole-of-government responsibility. Bill C-15 implicates all federal ministers in the development and implementation of an action plan, as it should. Reconciliation is not the responsibility of a single minister or government department. Bringing about meaningful change requires action from all areas of government.

This government's Speech from the Throne and ministerial mandate letters have made it clear the path to reconciliation requires everyone's participation. Achieving the objectives of the declaration and further aligning federal laws with the declaration will take time. However, we are not starting from scratch and we are not sitting idle while we wait for the development of an action plan.

The Government of Canada has taken concrete measures to advance its relationship with indigenous peoples in a way that aligns with the principles set out in the declaration. This includes areas such as enabling self-determination and self-government through the recognition and implementation of rights, the establishment of permanent bilateral mechanisms to jointly identify priorities with indigenous leaders and an increased indigenous participation in decision-making on socio-economic and land matters, to name a few.

As of May 2020, there were nine federal laws that refer to and were created within the spirit of the declaration. They include laws regarding indigenous languages, indigenous child and family services, and indigenous participation in environmental impact assessments and other regulatory processes. We know much more work is required with indigenous peoples to ensure federal laws more fully protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the ongoing health, food security, housing, economic, governance, policing and other vulnerabilities and gaps that continue to impact indigenous peoples and communities. We are working hard to create new opportunities to turn the page on a colonial structure and build stronger and lasting relationships, close socio-economic gaps and promote greater prosperity for indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

Over the past months, we engaged closely with national indigenous organizations and heard from modern treaty and self-governing nations, rights holders, indigenous youth, and national and regional indigenous organizations, including those representing indigenous women and two-spirit and LGBTQ2+ peoples on the proposed legislation. The feedback we received has shaped the development of the legislative proposal.

Bill C-15 now includes an acknowledgement of the ongoing need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples, a respect for gender diversity, the importance of respecting treaties and agreements and the need to take distinctions into account while implementing the legislation, including with elders, youth, children, persons with disabilities, women, men, gender-diverse and two-spirit persons.

Government Orders

What is needed is a fundamental and foundational change. It is about respecting indigenous rights and respecting diversity. It is about righting historical wrongs. It is about shedding our colonial past. It is about writing the next chapter together, as partners, and building meaningful relationships and trust in that process.

This will not happen overnight, but we must take the necessary steps along that path, starting with implementing Bill C-15. I look forward to the journey we take to get there. It has been a sincere honour and privilege to serve on this committee with my colleagues.

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to questions and comments, I want to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, to my colleague, and following up on questions that were asked to the justice minister, he at one time referred to this bill as amounting to a reset. I am struggling to find out, particularly in the context of free, prior and informed consent, what the change would actually be.

In Canadian law right now, there is a duty to consult. The minister's description of FPIC sounds like a lot like a rehashing of the existing legal duty to consult. He talks about FPIC including engaging with indigenous communities from the beginning, including their perspectives and ensuring they are heard. That is, as I understand it, the existing legal duty to consult.

The government tells us FPIC is not a veto. It is also telling us this bill is a reset of some kind. It is ostensibly something more than the existing duty to consult, but it is not a veto, so in what way does FPIC differ from the existing duty to consult?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, the language around what FPIC was and how it greatly differs from a veto was debated thoroughly in committee. In fact, it does not bear any similarity to a veto. We are talking about a deep level of consultation and a deeper level of participation and involvement. The member used the term “free, prior and informed consent”, which is absolutely important, but the duty to consult does not require the duty to involve, the duty to ensure participation, the duty to fully listen and listen actively. It is a collaboration and a partnership.

That is part of shedding our colonial past and moving forward in partnership without this age-old paternalistic approach that has left people out of the conversation and out of important decisions.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot about how Bill C-15 could potentially affect Quebec and its ability to make sovereign decisions. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how Bill C-15 is connected to Quebec sovereignty.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and for her participation in the committee.

[*English*]

We are talking about full participation in decisions that have a great impact on indigenous people. This is not about the many nations that exist in Canada. This bill does not have great implications on Quebec's sovereignty. It is absolutely enshrined in Canada's Constitution, as it should be. This is about fairness and full participation. UNDRIP is a globally recognized step in the right direction toward truth and reconciliation and it is the right path forward.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the proudest moments of my parliamentary career was my vote in favour of Bill C-262 at third reading in the last Parliament. COVID-19 has demonstrated that the federal government is able to move quite quickly to address urgent situations with massive financial resources. We saw the hundreds of billions of dollars that were made available in very short order as liquidity supports for banks.

What I want to know from the parliamentary secretary is whether the Government of Canada will commit the same level of urgency to this bill when it receives royal assent so that indigenous peoples across Canada, who have been waiting for hundreds of years for this important step, can have confidence that this receives the same amount of attention as supports that were given for COVID-19.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I too feel a great sense of pride and obligation in working on this bill. I wish I had been around to vote for Bill C-262. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to move forward on this. This bill will, indeed, require multi-party support. I look forward to supporting this bill with my colleague and further discussing the urgency when there is more time.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *kwe, kwe. Ulaakut. Tansi. Hello. Bonjour.*

I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit first nation from my home in Oakville and my riding of Oakville North—Burlington.

Government Orders

I am happy to speak today on this proposed legislation as it represents a critical step forward on the path to reconciliation. This legislation has been strengthened through extensive engagement and consultation with indigenous peoples at every step in its development. I believe the greatest strength of Bill C-15's development was the input of indigenous peoples from coast to coast to coast, which positively shaped the bill. Collaborating with indigenous partners through the engagement process has been pivotal in ensuring that we get it right.

As members know, the legislation is based on Romeo Saganash's private members' bill, Bill C-262. Mr. Saganash was the first parliamentary champion to endorse The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, often referred to as UNDRIP, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude.

A consultation draft of this bill was shared during engagement sessions to seek feedback from indigenous organizations in order to improve and amend the draft. During engagement, the government received contributions from many groups. In total, over 700 virtual sessions took place. They included sessions with national and regional indigenous organizations, indigenous rights holders, modern treaty and self-governing nations, as well as with women, youth, two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual plus persons.

This included regional engagement sessions where more than 450 people participated providing feedback and advice on potential enhancements to the consultation draft. Provincial and territorial governments, experts and industry stakeholders also informed the development of the bill.

We heard consistent calls to include strong language in the preamble on the need to consider the diversity of indigenous peoples; recognize inherent rights and respect treaties; include a reference to the historic and ongoing injustices and discrimination suffered by indigenous peoples and marginalized groups; acknowledge the role of the declaration as a framework for reconciliation, justice, healing and peace; and address systemic racism and discrimination.

We also heard consistent calls to consider the importance of educating Canadians to ensure that indigenous rights are understood and valued; recognize the right of self-determination and self-government as vital, and that the need for a strong distinctions-based approach throughout the legislation is essential; emphasize the importance of respecting article 37, which outlines respect of treaty rights, self-government agreements and other constructive agreements, and is important for modern treaty partners; not interfere with work under way at regional and provincial levels; and include references to climate change and sustainable development.

Because of this valuable feedback, the bill includes strong language in the preamble on the need to consider the diversity of indigenous peoples, recognize inherent rights and respect treaties. I should point out that all Canadians have access to this wealth of ideas and input. We have produced the "What We Learned" report, which is publicly available on the Canada website.

Engagement with partners did not stop when the bill was introduced. Ministers, their offices and the departments have been meeting extensively with indigenous partners and other stakeholders

since introduction, and they will continue to do so throughout the parliamentary process. We learned from indigenous partners that there was much consensus around further suggested changes to the bill, including legislation that has been further improved by amendments as it was making its way through Parliament.

As an example, Bill C-15 required the development of the initial action plan as soon as possible and set a maximum three-year timeline. Based on feedback from indigenous partners during engagement sessions, the bill has now been amended to shorten the maximum timeline to a period of two years instead of three years for the development of the action plan in consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples.

We recognize that collaboration with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners takes time, but it should proceed with purpose. Bill C-15 now includes language from the declaration emphasizing that all doctrines, policies and practices based on racist or discriminatory notions are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust. An important amendment will modernize our laws by making specific reference to the fact that Canadian courts have stated that aboriginal and treaty rights are not frozen in time. Instead, they are capable of growth and evolution.

• (1250)

Most recently, we heard from the national indigenous organizations and indigenous women's organization at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. They stressed the urgency of passing this legislation, and I would like to share some of their testimony today in the House.

The president of the Women of the Métis Nation, Melanie Omenih, said:

Elders and representatives from across the Métis motherland have noted that this historic piece of legislation, if implemented according to its spirit and intent, could have the transformative power of an indigenous bill of rights. Bill C-15, the proposed UNDRIP act, represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reset both the scales of justice and the balance of power so that indigenous women, children and two-spirit and gender-diverse people are protected, safe and free.

The Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada vice-president Gerri Sharpe said:

Bill C-15 is a step forward for Inuit women and all Canadians on the journey towards reconciliation. It is important because it states that Inuit women will have the right to participate in decision-making in matters that affect them; the right to improvement of economic and social conditions including education, housing, health, employment and social security; the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and the same rights and freedoms guaranteed to Inuit men.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed said:

Bill C-15...is very focused on two particular concepts: one, the alignment of laws and policies within this country with the UN declaration; and two, the creation of an action plan.... Indigenous peoples' rights are human rights. This is a class of human rights that needs this particular legislation, and we do hope that Canadians accept the rights of indigenous peoples as human rights in this country.

Government Orders

Native Women's Association of Canada president Lorraine Whitman said:

UNDRIP is about us, our families, our communities, the thousands of pages of the national inquiry testimony and its calls for justice. Specifically, call to action 1.3 demands that government end the political marginalization of indigenous women.

David Chartrand of the Métis Nation Council said:

...change is coming and UNDRIP is another pathway that's going to really let us play catch-up so that indigenous and non-indigenous people can compare economically, educationally and so forth. It's about catching up. We're slowly catching up, which is something we should have done 50 years ago or 80 years ago.

If approved by Parliament, the bill will also require the Government of Canada, in consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples, to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of Canada are consistent with the declaration, prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the declaration's objectives and table an annual report. Co-development of the action plan will also be a further opportunity to work in close partnership on implementation.

We are ushering in a new era in which we build stronger and lasting relationships, close socio-economic gaps and promote greater prosperity for indigenous peoples and all Canadians. Together we are building a brighter future and a better Canada for today, tomorrow and into our shared future. That is why this legislation is so crucial. Built by extensive indigenous input and strengthened by committee amendments, Bill C-15 must now become the law of the land.

To conclude, I would like to affirm the words of AFN Chief Pery Bellegarde, who said, "We need to seize this moment and not miss the opportunity to get Bill C-15 passed. It is a road map to reconciliation."

• (1255)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too believe that the rights articulated in this bill are long overdue in being recognized in our laws.

The former justice minister has rightly characterized this as a small step forward and the most important work is going to be on the implementation side. Given how long it has taken to get to this point, as this bill has been introduced not two, but three times now, how can indigenous Canadians be assured and trust the government will implement these rights in a timely way?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, it was not because of the government that the bill did not pass the last time. In fact, we voted for it. I was in the last Parliament when we supported Mr. Saganash's private member's bill. Sadly, Conservative senators held up that bill so it could not get passed.

This is certainly not the end; it is indeed the beginning of a journey. We are committed to ensuring that UNDRIP is implemented, and I do not think the government can be blamed for Conservative senators holding up a piece of legislation. We certainly supported the bill, and we did everything we could to get it passed, but it was unfortunately held up in the Senate.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech on this important bill, Bill C-15. This is 2021. It is about time that we recognized and complied with

the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I hope to see meaningful action, such as the implementation of the recommendations from the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

How does my colleague envision the federal government working with Quebec and the provinces to implement this act?

• (1300)

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I share the same hopes of ensuring that not only is this legislation implemented, but that we are also taking action on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague and good friend about the amendments, especially with respect to the addition of the word "racism". How important was that to complete Bill C-15?

I know the parliamentary secretary has done a lot of work on systemic racism, so I would appreciate her comments on that, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for his work in ensuring that this bill is here before the House today.

We must end systemic racism in Canada, and this legislation is an important piece of that work. The added amendment is incredibly important to moving toward ending systemic racism across Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on this important debate today. I begin with a quote from the great indigenous leader, Manny Jules:

Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself....

We forget often that these freedoms were enjoyed by first nations people before the arrival of Europeans. Of course, when Europeans came, they adopted a colonial, paternalistic and coercive relationship with the first peoples who had long before been here and who had been the owners of what we now call Canadian property. They imposed a system that allowed governments and other authorities to dictate the destinies of first nations that had prior been self-sufficient and had very well-developed systems of trade, governance and commerce that allowed them to provide for themselves.

Government Orders

Chief Jules, who is now in Kamloops and is one of the great intellectual leaders of first nations across the country, would like to have those same freedoms restored. He points out that archeological evidence of objects that predate the arrival of Europeans demonstrate that very sophisticated systems of free trade and free commerce existed between first nations across the Americas, well before Europeans came and formalized in law the European, and in particular the Scottish, understanding of markets. We see, for example, objects in one part of the Americas that could only have originated in other parts, meaning they must have been traded.

Chief Jules believes that the future for prosperity and opportunity for his people lies in restoring those freedoms that were taken away by so many ill-conceived, paternalistic and colonial policies of the past. Unfortunately, this bill does not achieve that goal. To the contrary, it fails to extend and return those freedoms back to the first nations people who rightly had them before. Chief Jules points that out about the achievements that are now well documented, that predate Europeans. He says:

Do you think this was all achieved through divine intervention from the gods? Or was it because we somehow evolved into a "natural" socialist system that lasted thousands of years? Both of these ideas are nonsense.

What he seeks today is a solution that would allow his people to be masters of their own destiny by controlling the economic decisions that affect their lives. For example, right now the federal government takes \$700 million of revenue from first nations communities that is the result of the work and resource development that happens there. Then those same communities have to come to Ottawa and ask for some of that money back.

What Chief Jules has proposed is to allow first nations communities the autonomy to keep more of the revenues that they generate. That would allow more economic opportunities for jobs to fund local, clean water, health care and education initiatives in first nations communities. Instead, the government has attempted to maintain the colonial system which takes that money away from those to whom it naturally belongs and then requires that they come to talk to politicians in Ottawa to give back what is rightfully theirs.

• (1305)

This paternalistic system is not limited to taxation. The regulatory obstacles the federal government imposes on resource and commercial development in first nations communities is more obstructive than those imposed in neighbouring non-first nations communities.

I am splitting my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, Madam Speaker.

That means it is more difficult for communities that want to develop commerce and industry to provide for their people to do so. Therefore, he proposes to allow more autonomy in first nations communities and less interference from the governments in Ottawa and the provincial capitals. Naturally, if we want to allow first nations to regain the freedoms they lost with the arrival of the Europeans, this proposal is entirely justified.

Furthermore, leaders like Chief Bear in Saskatchewan have said that the federal government should work with willing first nations that want to change land use policies to allow their residents to buy

a home and collateralize it to get a mortgage. That would allow more first nations to develop net equity, the collateral and the credit rating that would then allow to build into the future. We cannot start a business if we do not have collateral to get a small business loan, but because of the colonial and paternalistic nature of the Ottawa-knows-best system we now have, it is very difficult for many first nations to achieve that basic right that every other Canadian off-reserve can aspire to achieve.

Furthermore, we see a double standard from the government and from all the political parties, except the one in which I am a member, and that is on the issue of resource development. None of the other parties are interested in the views of first nations on resource development, unless it is to use them to block those projects.

For example, we look at the northern gateway pipeline, a project that was supported by 75% of the first nations communities along the pipeline route. It would have generated \$2 billion in wages and other benefits for first nations people, and it would have had a first nations president and CEO overseeing it. It would have allowed young first nations to get positions as apprentices, so they could become welders or pipe fitters and obtain their Red Seal certification in many other high-paying, in-demand trades positions.

What did the Prime Minister do? Without honouring the duty to consult first nations that is embedded in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, he killed the project and vetoed it, even after extensive environmental approvals had been granted by independent, non-partisan authorities and even though 32 of 40 first nations communities supported it.

Dale Swampy is the national president of the National Coalition of Chiefs, which has as its singular mandate to defeat on-reserve poverty by allowing more development. He said that Bill C-15, "adds to the confusion about who has the authority to provide or deny consent on behalf of Indigenous peoples, be it chief and council, hereditary chiefs, or small groups of activists. It also implies that a single nation can deny consent — a veto in practice if not in name — on projects that cross dozens of territories, be they pipelines, railroads or electric transmission lines."

Is that not exactly the kind of colonialism we should be against, where 19 communities support a program and one does not, that the 19 are overpowered by one having the veto power? That is not the kind of opportunity and freedom that first nations should enjoy. Everyday first nations people want the opportunity that we all have: to work, to gain employment and to supply benefits to their own communities. We should allow those communities the freedom to extend those opportunities.

This bill would not do so, but let us work together with all first nations in the spirit of allowing them to fulfil their dreams and their ambitions.

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• (1310)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I noticed that the member hardly spoke about Bill C-15 and UNDRIP.

I do want to ask him a question. He was very much involved with the previous government. UNDRIP was accepted by the General Assembly 13 years ago. The previous Conservative government was in power for many of those years.

At what point would the Conservative Party accept UNDRIP and develop a plan to implement it or at least have a road map to success? The Conservative Party has consistently opposed it every step of the way, including with the blocking of Bill C-262 and Bill C-15.

At what point would the Conservative Party accept the principles of UNDRIP so it could be implemented into Canadian law?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I am very proud to say that I oppose this bill. The member asks when we will accept the principles in it, but he cannot even explain what the principles are. He cannot explain what free, prior and informed consent mean.

If we believe the words according to their dictionary definition, they would mean a veto. If 19 first nations communities supported a project and one opposed the project, the one would be able to overpower the 19. To me, that is not how we should function in a country that is a democracy. We should allow the first nations people to fulfill their destinies by making their own decisions rather than having the federal government obstruct those opportunities.

Frankly, that member should not be lecturing anyone. The Liberals still have not been able to fulfill their promise to provide clean drinking water on reserve to all communities. They have a shameful record as it relates to first nations and they should be lecturing no one on it.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am speaking from the traditional, unceded territory of the Qayqayt First Nation and of the Coast Salish peoples. I certainly want to thank Romeo Saganash, former NDP MP, whose leadership has inspired this legislation.

I have enjoyed working with my colleague from Carleton on the finance committee. He talked about the hypocrisy of the Liberals, the fact that they bring forward this legislation, but, at the same time, have a shocking record of not providing indigenous peoples with access to clean, safe drinking water or indigenous-led initiatives on the housing crisis we see in indigenous communities, and continue to take indigenous kids to court.

Could the member comment on the Liberal hypocrisy?

• (1315)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I have great respect for that member, who is extremely knowledgeable and with whom I have enjoyed working on the finance committee over the years.

He is quite right that the government talks a wonderful game about how much it cares and all it will do. The reality is that first nations have suffered a lack of clean drinking water, chronic under housing and systematic poverty. That is fundamentally why we

need to change the system to empower first nations to be masters of their own destinies. They should have the freedom to keep the money they earn in their communities. They should be able to decide whether or not projects are approved on their lands that would generate opportunity for their young people.

First nations should be in the driver's seat. If they were and if we, as politicians and governmental authorities, were to get out of their way, they would have more opportunity than they have now.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, protects the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations peoples, and here we are with another piece of legislation.

How do we know they will really be protected? How do we know this is not just for show, like the Constitution Act, 1982?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. The answer is that it does not mean anything. This too is just for show. It is a flashy statement that does nothing but give federal politicians an excuse to congratulate themselves. Federal politicians do not deserve congratulations. Federal politicians have failed.

What we do need is to give indigenous communities the freedom and independence to make their own decisions and move forward without federal government interference.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP.

The purpose of this legislation is to align Canadian laws with UNDRIP. The road to reconciliation has been a long and difficult one, with many ups and downs. Underlying it all is an understandable level of distrust on the part of indigenous peoples. Seen in that context, it could be said that at best, this is a well-intentioned piece of legislation, but even if that were so, it does not make it a good piece of legislation.

This legislation will likely move the process of reconciliation backward, rather than forward, and have grave impacts upon first nations communities to develop and prosper and achieve true self-determination. This legislation would undermine reconciliation, and nowhere is that clearer than in the complete failure on the part of the government in this bill to define what constitutes "free, prior and informed consent".

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What is free, prior and informed consent? If we were to look at the remarks of the Minister of Justice, we would be led to believe that it really means not much of anything, that the status quo ante would not be upended. In that regard, when the minister spoke in the House on this bill and the question of free, prior and informed consent, he said, “Free, prior and informed consent does not constitute veto power over the government’s decision-making process.” The minister went on to say it “will not change Canada’s existing duty to consult with indigenous peoples”. Clearly, that cannot be so.

Free, prior and informed consent is not the same as the duty to consult and accommodate, which is embedded in section 35 of our Constitution. There is a wide body of jurisprudence on that doctrine that makes clear that the right to be consulted and the right to be accommodated do not constitute a right of an absolute veto. When one looks at the words “free, prior and informed consent” on their face, they would seem to mean precisely the opposite of what the minister purports, namely that there would be a veto by someone.

Consistent with that, many persons who are authoritative on this matter have said as much. Let us take Senator Murray Sinclair, for example. Senator Sinclair championed Bill C-262 in the Senate in the last Parliament, which was the predecessor to this piece of legislation. Senator Sinclair is an esteemed retired justice of the Manitoba Court of Queen’s Bench.

● (1320)

On the question of what constitutes free, prior and informed consent, Senator Sinclair said this: “Free, prior and informed consent is a very simple concept.... And that is, before you affect my land, you need to talk to me, and you need to have my permission.” If “you need to have my permission” is not a veto, I do not know what is.

Assembly of First Nations chief Perry Bellegarde said that free, prior and informed consent, “very simply, is the right to say yes, and the right to say no”. He said it is “the right to say no”, full stop. If that does not constitute a veto, then I say I do not know what does.

It did not have to be this way. The one thing the government could have done was incorporate language expressly into the bill that made it clear that free, prior and informed consent does not constitute a veto. The Liberals could have provided a clearer definition of its meaning and its effect, thereby removing the considerable questions that currently exist about the implications of its meaning and effect, and what that will do to the development of major resource and other projects if this bill is passed.

One thing that is certain is that this lack of a definition would create considerable uncertainty and a torrent of new litigation around major development projects. It would undermine regulatory certainty, undermine investor confidence, and undermine the ability of individual first nations communities to determine their own destinies by seeking opportunities to engage and participate in projects that could help their people develop and prosper.

This is hardly a hypothetical. One need only look at Bill 41, passed by the B.C. NDP government in December 2019. That bill is quite similar to Bill C-15. It does not expressly enshrine UNDRIP into law in the Province of British Columbia, but it uses aspira-

tional language about aligning B.C.’s laws with UNDRIP, similar to Bill C-15.

Within two months of the passage of Bill 41, three major projects were challenged by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: the Kitimat LNG project, the Site C dam and Coastal GasLink. The UN committee said that UNDRIP did apply, and that there had not been free, prior and informed consent. Many indigenous communities and leaders also took that position. That was despite the fact that, in the case of Coastal GasLink, 20 indigenous communities had supported the project but one faction of unelected hereditary chiefs opposed it. It underscores the uncertainty that would result from the passage of this bill, and it is why I cannot support this bill.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, does my colleague not think we should strive for collaboration? From his speech, it sounds as though he thinks the United Nations is an adversary.

Personally, I believe in a model that enables us to work closely together. If my colleague does not support this bill, what are his thoughts on how we can make progress?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I reject in part the premise of the member’s question, which is to suggest that this has widespread support among indigenous communities. It is opposed by the National Coalition of Chiefs, the Indigenous Resource Network, the Indian Resource Council, Chief Dale Swampy, president of the National Coalition of Chiefs, and the Mohawks of Montreal. I could go on.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite spoke extensively about resource extraction. Throughout the debate, a number of his colleagues have stood and said the UNDRIP represents a veto and FPIC essentially means a veto.

Could the member highlight where in the text of Bill C-15 he finds the term “veto”, and if he could maybe give us more insight into why that misconception is being reiterated by his party and his colleagues throughout this debate?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, in response I will quote a letter sent from the National Coalition of Chiefs to the Prime Minister in December on that very question. They said:

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There are implications to this legislation, as currently drafted, that is likely to have negative impacts on the many Indigenous communities that rely on resource development...

It is unfortunate the government did not heed the concerns of the National Coalition of Chiefs.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are debating this bill today because we have to resume the work done by my friend and former colleague Romeo Saganash seeking to enshrine the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into federal law. This would be a great thing to do, and it would put us in a good position to move forward on reconciliation with first nations.

Unfortunately, despite the expressed will of the majority of House members, the bill died in the Senate, thanks to the scheming of the Conservative Senators. What does my colleague think about the fact that unelected senators blocked the will of the elected representatives of the people?

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, in response to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, I have a great amount of respect for Romeo Saganash. It was a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve with him in the last Parliament.

That being said, Bill C-262 was a flawed piece of legislation for many of the same reasons that Bill C-15 is a flawed piece of legislation. I was unable to support Bill C-262 and I am unable to support this bill.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague referred to the president of the National Coalition of Chiefs, Mr. Swampy, and I want to quickly highlight a quote from his committee testimony:

The federal government has imposed very high standards of consultation on industry... Now, with Bill C-15, I don't see you applying those standards to yourselves.

Would the member for St. Albert—Edmonton agree that in the introduction of this bill, the government does not meet the consultation threshold that the aspirations of UNDRIP require?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. The very simple answer is the member is absolutely right. Yes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to advise her that unfortunately she will not be able to have the whole amount of time allocated to her at this point. She has about 13 minutes for debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging the unceded Wolastoqiyik territory from which I speak today. I have commented in this House before about the importance of this recognition and, most importantly, the actions that must accompany it.

There has never been a more important time to highlight this than with our discussion of Bill C-15, an act to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples here in

Canada, in a colonial country, where land was extorted. In addition to threats and force, there were efforts to exterminate and bury the original peoples of this land. These efforts failed. Instead, they planted seeds, and what we are seeing is a reclamation, the ushering in of a new age. The time has come for reparations.

Many of my colleagues in this House know that my children are indigenous. I have also worked closely with hundreds of indigenous youth as a teacher. They have informed my work every step of the way. When I think of voting on this bill, I ask myself what their world will look like in five years, in 10 years and for the generations after them, with or without passing Bill C-15.

Bill C-15 introduces the notion of a national action plan to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law, with annual reporting mechanisms. It is important to note that the specifics of these measures are not articulated. This has brought with it uncertainty and a manifestation of a well-placed mistrust in government.

What Bill C-15 does well is lay out a robust preamble with ambitious, frankly incredible language. It includes value statements that acknowledge systemic discrimination, and now racism, thanks to an important amendment. It recognizes self-determination of indigenous peoples, including an acknowledgement of their legal systems. It actually says, “the Government of Canada rejects all forms of colonialism and is committed to advancing relations...that are based on good faith and on the principles of justice, democracy, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and respect for human rights”.

Can we take these words at face value, or in good faith, as the bill proclaims? The criticisms of Bill C-15 are nuanced. The most obvious issue is that the notion of good faith itself is on shaky ground. For a bill that enshrines the notion of free, prior and informed consent, consultation is severely lacking. I know that is a contested point, but I must say I believe it was lacking.

It is not enough to have closed-door meetings with national bodies or organizations. The individual rights holders have a right to be heard and to weigh in on legislation with such significant implications. All Canadians, Québécois and indigenous peoples of this land require an understanding of the declaration and what it truly means to affirm it as a universal international human rights instrument.

A more complex problem some are having with this bill is that indigenous people are tired of the gaslighting. Indigenous rights are inherent. People are born with them and no one can take them away. These rights have existed since time immemorial, and yet Canadian history presents things as though indigenous peoples were handed those rights with the coming into force of the 1982 Constitution Act. It is a nice idea, but it misses hundreds of years of colonialism and abuse rooted in the doctrine of discovery. The notions that the Crown holds sovereignty over indigenous peoples, that indigenous laws and legal traditions have no place and that the Crown has ultimate title to the land held in trust underpin all of Canadian law. They are embedded in the Canadian charter, and they have placed the burden of labour on indigenous peoples and nations to establish their rights in Canadian courts.

Bill C-15 also fails to enshrine a distinctions-based approach to implementing UNDRIP in Canada and stands more as pan-indigenous legislation, disregarding the incredible diversity within indigenous nations. It is possible that Bill C-15 may be a tool in the tool kit for future court cases, but I have to question what the future holds for Canada and indigenous nationhood with this implication. Are we preparing for years of expensive legal battles? Are we asking once again for indigenous people to bear the burden of proof in the protection of their collective inherent rights?

What will happen with the Mi'kmaq fishery dispute, with a new season set to start in June? Fishers and leadership have had to call on the United Nations for protection from violence and racist intimidation. Will the passing of Bill C-15 prevent this from happening? Will it remind the non-indigenous fishers of their treaty obligations, of their history of settlement in Unama'ki? If B.C.'s UNDRIP law is any indication, sadly, I do not think it will.

I want to take a moment to talk about the journey I have been on when it comes to the study of this bill. My first step was with the Wolastoqiyik Grand Council, under Grand Chief Spasaqsit Possesom and Wolastoqiyik grandmothers. My next step was to meet with the Wabanaki Peace & Friendship Alliance.

I reviewed numerous analyses and interpretations. I met with my hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre to learn more about the work of Romeo Saganash with Bill C-262. I met with local community leadership. I met with our local friendship centre. I met with the association of Iroquois and allied nations, with my hon. colleague from Vancouver Granville. I met with the Assembly of First Nations and staff from Chief Bellegarde's office. I listened and I learned.

• (1335)

My last stop was again with the Wolastoqiyik grandmothers, scholars and leaders in my riding. I would encourage all members of the House to also seek out that guidance.

The assertion of these critical voices from Fredericton, from my mentors and most trusted allies, is to reject Bill C-15 at third reading. This is not easy for me. The Green Party of Canada stands by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we campaigned on passing it into law. However, that is not what Bill C-15 would accomplish.

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I am told to celebrate Bill C-15 as it sets out the basic minimum standards for dignity and human rights for indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples already have these rights: charter rights. They already have title to their land and to hunt and fish for their livelihoods. They already have the right to self-determination. Canadians are the ones who have a problem upholding these rights, and Canada fails to enforce them.

We have a moral, legal and fiduciary responsibility as a nation to uphold our laws. However, we have broken these laws in pursuit of domination over indigenous nations, and there is significant work ahead in dismantling these systems and structures of oppression that got us here. There are no easy fixes, such as passing Bill C-15 to check the box of reconciliation.

Clarity on the implementation of UNDRIP would have been a golden opportunity to demonstrate what a new relationship could be, to demonstrate true respect and co-operation. Canada and sovereign indigenous nations could continue on a path in their own canoes, the lesson that the Two Row Wampum teaches us.

It is 2021, and it is time for us to face the truth. We cannot reconcile if we were never conciliatory; we can only work to repair the damage done. An essential part of these reparations is respecting the first treaty we all have as humans: the treaty with the land and with our planet. We forget far too often the interconnectedness of all life and our role and responsibility in preserving this place for future generations. What we have now is a race to consume resources.

There is a component of the bill that reflects sustainable development, but what this conversation must include is a re-evaluation of what that means. What is the value of protecting old-growth forests, food security and cultural safety? How are we to measure the success of Bill C-15? There are too many questions left unanswered.

The study of Bill C-15 has been a roller-coaster ride for me, and I wish to recognize the immense privilege I have as a non-indigenous person in pursuing this study. It has been difficult to see the infighting and division among people I look up to, among some of my personal heroes. I want to say for the record that it is okay to support the bill, and it is okay to reject it. What is not okay is ignoring our role and responsibilities as treaty people and treating each other with disrespect, which is a legacy that remains, with or without this bill.

Finally, whether Bill C-15 receives royal assent or not will not determine the future for my children. They are Wolastoqiyik. They are people of the beautiful and bountiful river. They are rooted to this land. They know who they are, and they know their rights.

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• (1340)

[*Translation*]

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

I would like her to tell us what more should be added to a federal legislative measure to better respect the rights of first nations and indigenous people and to lead us toward meaningful reconciliation in Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, it is a reiteration of what we have heard a little about in this House, a more hands-off approach. Indigenous leadership and government structures are ready to lead in their own right. That is what self-determination means.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an excellent international covenant, and I stand by those principles. However, the bill is a plan to implement the plan and to enshrine it into law, so it just does not go far enough.

The consultation piece is highly debated, and it is a hot topic. The people in my riding have not had adequate consultation. They should be the ones to steer the direction of what real reconciliation would look like.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's comments, but I have to express a bit of disappointment in the position she is taking.

There has been extensive consultation. With respect to Bill C-262, I was with Romeo Saganash in many communities and on many travels with the INAN committee, where many people came out and talked about his direct engagement. The foundation of Bill C-15 is from Bill C-262, and our ministers, as well as other colleagues and I, were part of extensive consultations across Canada, even during the pandemic. In fact, during the INAN study itself we had many more people who came forward and spoke.

I do believe we have had a wide range of consultations, not perfect but extensive. We cannot say that we support UNDRIP in principle but are not ready to implement it. I would urge my colleague to reconsider her position, because this is a historic moment—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I must reiterate my respect, as well, for Romeo Saganash and the work he put in. I have to say, in the extensive conversations I have had in my home province of New Brunswick with the community members and inherent rights holders, they do not know what this bill means. They do not know what the implications are and they have not had adequate time to study the bill for themselves. These are scholars, activists and leaders. To say there has been extensive consultation, and to talk to actual indigenous people on the ground, who have not been consulted, does not add up to me. My role here is to represent Fredericton, and that is what I am doing.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not think my hon. colleague and I agree on much often, but today we do. My big criticism of the Liberals on this partic-

ular bill is that they should do what they say and say what they do. It does not come out any more clearly than when they say they have done extensive consultation. I sit on the committee. Everybody who appeared at committee had a recommendation for an amendment for the bill. All of the three major indigenous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry; I have to cut the hon. member off, because we only have 30 seconds left for an answer before time is up.

The hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I do not know how much solace it brings me to be in agreeance with the Conservative Party of Canada on some of these issues.

I will go back to that consultation piece. The people I care about, who I speak to on a daily basis, have not had that thorough consultation. He is right that there were important amendments brought forward, and not all were adopted, including that important one about distinctions-based rights and the diversity that exists across this country. To say that there is consensus—

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 1:45 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at two o'clock, so we can start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-204, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (final disposal of plastic waste), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request that the motion be agreed to on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried on division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Scot Davidson moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, York—Simcoe is a great riding, the soup and salad bowl of Canada.

It is a privilege to rise in this House and speak once more to Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, final disposal of plastic waste. I am very grateful to my colleagues who have supported this proposed legislation and who worked to study and improve it over the last few months. I am also greatly appreciative of the contributions of the many experts, advocacy groups, industry organizations and other interested Canadians who offered their insight and expertise on Bill C-204 and the issues it will address.

It has been 462 days since I first introduced Bill C-204 in this chamber. We have lost a lot of time already. The impacts of plastic waste remains a significant and pressing concern here in Canada and around the world. Over time, discarded plastic breaks down, and if not dealt with properly, it ends up contaminating our lakes, oceans and rivers. It also threatens our ecosystem with drastic implications for wildlife and our natural environment.

Canada has both a national and global responsibility to step up and show leadership to address the impact of plastic waste. Sadly, under the government, we are doing the exact opposite. One of the

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greatest contributors to global plastic pollution has been the export of plastic waste from countries such as Canada to other countries around the world. Between 2015 and 2018, almost 400,000 tonnes of plastic waste were exported from Canada to foreign countries. We continue to ship almost 90,000 tonnes overseas every year. This is a serious problem.

Since China banned the import of all types of plastic waste in January of 2018, much of our plastic waste has been sent to South-east Asia to countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Many of these countries lack the regulatory controls or waste management capabilities to properly dispose of plastic waste imported from Canada and elsewhere. Consequently, it has all too often been disposed of improperly. It is ending up in landfills, dumped in the ocean or burned.

This is having a harmful impact on the environment and on the population of these countries. In Indonesia, for example, the burning of plastic waste has increased the air pollution and caused contamination in the local food chain because of high toxin levels. These toxin levels are linked to serious, long-term health problems, such as cancer, respiratory illness, diabetes and compromised immune systems.

It is no wonder that many of the countries that have been inundated with plastic waste from abroad are now looking to put a stop to these imports. Last year, Malaysia returned more than 150 shipping containers of non-recyclable plastic waste to Canada and other developed countries. The Malaysian environment minister justified this decision by declaring, “we do not want to be the garbage bin of the world”. We all remember this incident.

Globally, many of Canada's counterparts around the world have already recognized how unsustainable and harmful the impacts of exporting plastic waste are. This includes countries that share our strong commitment to open global trade. Both Australia and New Zealand have brought in strict domestic controls on plastics, which include prohibiting plastic waste from their respective countries.

The United Kingdom is pursuing similar legislation, as have every member state of the European Union and 70 other countries. Additionally, 98 countries have ratified an amendment to the Basel Convention, which governs the transboundary movement of waste. This amendment bans the export of plastic waste from OECD countries to non-OECD countries.

Unfortunately, there has been no effort by Canada's Liberal government to address the continuing export of non-recyclable plastic waste and the devastating effects it is having on the environment. The Liberals have refused to establish a prohibition on plastic waste within our domestic laws. They have refused to ratify the comprehensive Basel Convention amendment that would address these issues.

● (1350)

In fact, they actively worked to negotiate a gaping loophole to get around existing international obligations governing the plastic waste trade. This cannot be allowed to continue. Now is the time for Canada to prohibit the export of non-recyclable plastic waste to foreign countries. This is why we are all here today.

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Bill C-204 amends the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to prohibit the export of plastic waste for final disposal. The bill establishes this prohibition in a reasonable and effective manner that protects the environment while supporting the many innovative recycling and plastic reuse businesses that operate right here in Canada.

Bill C-204 targets plastic waste exports destined for final disposal. This is a specifically defined term that is clearly established within our domestic regulations and recognized within our international agreements. By doing so, this bill ensures that plastic waste will be recycled, reused, recovered or reclaimed in an environmentally sound manner. Plastic waste will continue to be exported, but plastic waste being exported just to be dumped in a landfill, released into the ocean or burned will no longer be permitted.

Bill C-204 strikes an important and delicate balance. It will put in place an export ban on non-recyclable plastic waste that will protect the environment. It will make sure that when Canadians throw something in their blue bin, it will not end up floating in the ocean halfway around the world. Critically, this would be accomplished in a responsible way that would provide certainty and clarity to Canadian industry. We need to support the many Canadian businesses involved in plastic recycling, which are doing so much to innovate and responsibly manage our plastic waste.

Bill C-204 further strengthens our ability to control what happens to our plastic waste when it is exported. Currently, once plastic waste leaves our borders, we lose much of our ability to ensure it is being handled properly. Most of our plastic waste is being sent to the United States across our shared border, the amount of which has been increasing significantly every year. More than 60,000 tonnes was shipped from Canada to the U.S. annually between 2017 and 2019. Last year that amount increased to over 83,000 tonnes.

Just last fall, the Liberal government negotiated a special agreement between Canada and the United States concerning plastic waste that has been criticized for being both opaque and uncontrolled. This arrangement allows for Canadian plastic waste exports to be shipped onward from the U.S. for final disposal in developing countries.

I ask members to bear in mind that the United States is not a party to the Basel Convention, and plastic waste exported from their country is not subject to the same controls. As such, many environmental groups are very concerned. They believe that Canada's plastic waste exports to the U.S. exploit a significant loophole in our global obligations on plastic waste that directly contravenes international law.

To address these concerns, Bill C-204 prohibits the export of non-recyclable plastic waste to all foreign countries. This ensures that the same environmental standards are applied to exported plastic waste, no matter where in the world it ends up, so that it is disposed of properly and our environment is protected.

Another key element of Bill C-204 is ensuring that the various types of plastic waste exported from Canada are addressed. That is why the list of plastic waste outlined in schedule 7 of Bill C-204 is derived directly from the internationally recognized annex IV(B) of

the Basel Convention on plastic waste. Any of the items on the list can be added or removed by the minister through the Governor in Council as necessary.

I note that at committee, the member for Victoria successfully moved an amendment for schedule 7 to include PVC. This constructive addition to the list strengthens Bill C-204 further. I would like to thank the hon. member for her contribution.

Of course, any federal legislation concerning plastic waste will have implications on the provinces and the municipalities. At the local level, Canadians participate in recycling and curbside waste programs with the expectation that their plastic waste will be dealt with properly and in an environmentally sound manner.

• (1355)

Bill C-204 will do this. With the inclusion of subsection 1.4, we can be assured that it would respect all these constitutional jurisdictions. I would like to extend my appreciation to the hon. member for Repentigny for this important addition.

Bill C-204 would apply fines and penalties against anyone who contravenes it, as they are already established in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Unfortunately, there are some bad actors who will try and get around these sorts of prohibitions. These fines will ensure that the law will be enforced and followed.

I have always believed that no one has a monopoly on good ideas, that the best solutions and the right way forward can come from anywhere, and it is becoming more important than ever to work together to make a difference. That is why it was so unfortunate that the Liberal government has opposed, delayed and blocked Bill C-204 at every turn. It opposes this bill, simply because it was sponsored by a Conservative member of Parliament, and continues to ignore the serious issues that it seeks to address.

Last month, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said, "We need to explore and capitalize on all our options for reducing plastic waste and pollution", but by opposing Bill C-204, the Liberals are rejecting a meaningful and effective measure to put an end to the plastic pollution of non-recycled plastic waste exports.

The Liberals' inaction on this issue is very unfortunate, but not unexpected. They have called the practice of sending non-recyclable plastic waste to developing countries beneficial. They refuse to see the deficiencies with our current legislation on plastic waste. Worst of all, they refuse to acknowledge the serious impacts plastic waste exports are having on the environment.

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It is not just inaction. Unfortunately, during the environment committee study of Bill C-204, Liberal members on the committee repeatedly and actively sought to undermine the legislative process and the will of the House with their conduct. This was very disappointing. Protecting the environment by addressing the export of plastic waste should not be a partisan issue. That is why I am pleased to have the support of the members of the NDP, the Bloc, the Green Party, and all of my Conservative colleagues. Sadly, the same cannot be said of the Liberals.

I think Canadians would be very disappointed to see the Liberal government failing to act on the environment yet again. We have seen this many times before. After all, this is the same Liberal government that cancelled the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund, which made such a difference in protecting Lake Simcoe and its ecosystem. It is unfortunate that, after the Conservatives pledged to bring back the cleanup fund, the Deputy Prime Minister showed up in Barrie and said the Liberals would do the same, but as we continue to see, the government is all talk and no action on the environment. The cleanup fund still remains cancelled today.

Canadians want to see real meaningful action to address the issue of plastic waste exports and the impact it is having on the environment. When it comes to the environment, there is no “out of sight, out of mind”. The impacts of plastic pollution affect us all. It is time for Canada to stop exporting non-recyclable plastic waste for other countries to deal with. This can finally be accomplished with Bill C-204, so together, let us make this happen.

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his initiative. The NDP and many people in my riding, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, have been concerned about plastic pollution for years.

His bill on exporting plastic waste is quite good. However, I would like his thoughts on reducing our use of plastic and increasing our capacity to recycle it, which we are doing very little of in Canada, and very poorly at that.

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows, controlling plastic pollution is very important to me. That is why Bill C-204 takes a small step to having a toolbox we can use to all work together and highlight the issues that are out there.

Canada has to take a leadership role when it comes to plastic pollution. We know that our world's oceans are drowning in plastic now. I would like to thank my colleagues from the NDP for working with me on this bill to make this happen.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of delivering a speech on this topic. One of the comments we kept hearing was that Canada did not have the necessary infrastructure. However, humans lived without plastic from the dawn of time until the 1950s. Without going back in time, what kind of strategies could we adopt to live with less plastic once again?

• (1405)

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I look forward to Bill C-204 coming into effect.

We have innovative companies in Canada that are making a difference with plastic waste. We do not want plastic waste in our world oceans. We do not want to see it thrown over the fence and exported to the third world.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for York—Simcoe is well known for his work protecting Lake Simcoe, the beautiful lake that connects both of our constituencies.

Could the hon. member tell me more about why he has sponsored Bill C-204, and how prohibition on exporting non-recyclable plastic waste will help the environment both in Canada and around the world?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, my neighbour from Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, for his leadership role in protecting Lake Simcoe.

As the House knows, I even wore hip waders in the House for Lake Simcoe. The bill is so important to me. Microbeads of plastic waste are quite big now. We want to protect the world's oceans. I always believe that small things add up to big things. This bill would make things move in the right direction and would stop this from happening in the developing world.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for this bill and his hard work on this issue.

It is important for us to work together on issues like this to address some of the real challenges we are faced with on the environment. Could the member comment further on the need for all parties to get together to ensure we address practical issues like this that address some of the real concerns facing our environment both in our country and around the world?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, Canadians have put us here to work together, especially in these times and especially on the environment.

At committee, I was pleased to work with the Bloc and the NDP to ensure that Bill C-204 would have a balanced approach, with the environment, industry and Canadian industry. Together, Canada will to once again take a leadership role with plastic pollution.

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Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by recognizing the work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in its study of this bill. The work of the committee along with input from witnesses and others who participated in the study have given us a better understanding of the bill, its merits and, most important, its shortcomings.

This government continues to support work to address issues around plastic waste, including the impact of exports of plastic waste from Canada. However, the government maintains that Bill C-204 is not the appropriate vehicle to do so. As my colleague mentioned during a previous debate, significant progress has been made to address problematic exports of plastic waste from Canada since Bill C-204 was first introduced over a year ago.

To this day, 187 countries, including Canada, have ratified and are implementing controls agreed on at the international level on transboundary movement of hazardous and non-hazardous plastic waste destined for both recycling and final disposal.

Under the rules adopted by the parties to the Basel Convention in 2019, known as the plastic waste amendments, the transboundary movement of plastic waste among the parties to the convention can only take place if certain conditions are met and in accordance with certain procedures. All plastic waste, hazardous and non-hazardous, controlled under the Basel Convention requires prior informed consent of the importing country and any transit countries before the export can occur. This is true for waste destined for recycling or for final disposal.

Through the prior informed consent procedure, and this is important, countries enter into a joint process where the country of import must provide written consent to the import before the country of export can allow the export to occur. In providing its consent, the country of import confirms that the waste will be managed in an environmentally sound manner. In other words, the plastic waste amendments under the Basel Convention are designed to support recycling activities, while reducing exports of harder-to-recycle plastics to countries that may not be in a position to manage them in an environmentally sound manner. They also ensure that the importing party participates in the decision-making process by subjecting imports to its consent.

Given the inaccurate information provided to the committee during its study of the bill, I want to be clear. The Government of Canada has ratified the Basel Convention Plastic waste amendments and as of January 1, 2021, they have been fully implemented through Canada's domestic regulatory regime.

What does this mean? This means that under Canada's export and import of hazardous waste and hazardous recyclable material regulations, all plastic waste controlled under the Basel Convention, both hazardous and non-hazardous, is considered hazardous waste or hazardous recyclable material under these domestic regulations and is subject to export controls. Given this, Canada is in full compliance with its obligations under the convention.

Bill C-204 differs from the internationally agreed approach, which has been adopted by all parties to the Basel Convention, by proposing a blanket stop to trade in plastic waste as defined by the bill and destined for final disposal. The bill actually has a more limited control on exports of plastic waste.

More specifically, the bill would prohibit the export of plastic waste that is listed in the schedule to the bill and destined for final disposal only, while our existing domestic regulatory regime not only controls what is likely a broader scope of plastic waste, but also for broader purposes: plastic waste destined for final disposal and recycling.

Should the bill be enacted, it would establish two coexisting regimes in Canada for the export of plastic waste. For plastic waste listed in the schedule to the bill and exported for final disposal, export would be prohibited. For all other plastic waste covered by the Basel Convention and not covered by the bill, exports for final disposal and recycling requires the prior informed consent procedure under the regulations. This would create confusion and uncertainty, making it very challenging for stakeholders to determine and understand their regulatory obligations.

• (1410)

I want to discuss some of the measures currently in place with respect to trade and plastic waste between Canada and the U.S., as concerns were raised at committee.

The U.S. is not a party to the Basel Convention. I want to clarify that the Basel Convention explicitly prohibits countries that have ratified it from trading in Basel-controlled waste with non-parties unless an agreement or arrangement is in place between a party and non-party, which requires that provisions are not less environmentally sound than those provided for by this convention.

As a result, Canada and the U.S. entered into an arrangement that affirms that plastic waste circulating between Canada and the U.S. is managed in an environmentally sound manner in both countries. As per the arrangement, both countries have in place and intend to maintain the measures that ensure the environmentally sound management of waste.

Therefore, while Basel-controlled plastic waste can be exported from Canada to the U.S., that waste can only be exported from the U.S. to another Basel party if the two have entered into arrangement or agreement that is compatible with the environmentally sound management of waste as required by this convention. There is more.

Basel-controlled waste exported from Canada, which transits through the U.S. but is destined to a party to the Basel Convention requires an export permit prior to export. Such a permit is only granted if the destination party explicitly grants consent to receive the waste.

It is also important that all parliamentarians understand that enacting the bill could potentially impact waste management in Canada. The implications raised at second reading and during the ENVI study of this bill merit consideration as we prepare to vote on whether this bill should pass and then be sent to the Senate.

A concrete impact of this bill is that exports of Canadian municipal solid waste for final disposal would be banned, given that it generally contains plastics covered by the bill. The export prohibition proposed by the bill is expected to impact waste management in Canada by increasing pressure on domestic waste management systems. The Ontario Waste Management Association, in its written correspondence to ENVI, raised concerns that the bill's prohibition would put severe pressure on already limited landfill capacity in Ontario. The correspondence also indicated that Ontario's landfill capacity was projected to be exhausted by 2034.

Before we enact a prohibition of this nature at the federal level, we will need to consult with our territorial, provincial and municipal partners to ensure we fully understand and assess the impact that a prohibition of this kind would have on domestic waste management. For this reason and all the others I have explained, we remain opposed to the enactment of this bill.

I encourage fellow parliamentarians to carefully consider the current regime on transboundary movement of plastic waste along with the domestic implications of the bill if it were to become law.

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, when I listen to the speeches, I realize that not everyone sees the bill in the same way.

The bill introduced by my colleague from York—Simcoe was referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. member to ensure that she has her headset on properly.

Now that the problem has been fixed, the hon. member from Repentigny has the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, based on what I am hearing from members, it seems as though no one is interpreting Bill C-204 the same way.

The bill introduced by my colleague from York—Simcoe has made its way to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I thank the member for the speech he just gave, because he gave a good description of how plastic can harm the environment and human health if it is not strictly controlled.

The content of the bill seems to be a hot-button issue, especially among companies in the recycling industry and the plastics trade. This is where the Basel Convention, which is not mentioned in Bill C-204, comes in, and more specifically the amendments to annexes II, VII and IX of this convention. These amendments came into force on January 1, 2021, and were accepted by the Government of Canada on December 20, 2020. The House indicated its intention to

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comply with these amendments on October 28, 2020, in an explanatory memorandum.

The preamble of the Basel Convention states that the production of wastes should be minimized and, where possible, “be disposed of in the State where they were generated”. The main body of the convention states that the exporting country must receive prior informed consent from the recipient country before hazardous wastes are sent.

The amendments set out a list of plastics that it is prohibited to export, unless the importing country has made an informed decision and can dispose of those plastics in an environmentally friendly way. Companies involved in the trade of plastic waste with the United States who communicated with members of the committee say that Bill C-204 will have a major negative economic impact on their activities. They are concerned about the constraints imposed by Bill C-204.

Clearly, there are irritants for companies in the sector, which are now facing additional constraints. They must consult the annex of the Basel Convention to determine which substances are now identified as hazardous under the convention and they must also comply with national law in that regard. What is more, if the trade in plastics continues, clear labelling will be required so that the countries that are importing these materials are not receiving non-compliant packages, for example.

The note that I mentioned earlier that was submitted to the House on October 28 explained the following: Canada and the United States came to an arrangement to confirm that plastic waste that is subject to annex II of the convention is managed in an ecologically sound manner. Canada therefore complies with its obligations under the convention and is now in a position to accept the amendments.

In the wake of the trade concerns that were raised, I really would have liked to have some clarification on the Canada-U.S. trade relationship, given that the United States is not a signatory of the Basel Convention. Unfortunately, the officials chosen by the government to answer MPs' questions on Bill C-204 were very clear when they said they could not talk about the specifics of the bill.

It is important to understand that collection and recycling centres operate best when they are located near major consumer centres. Our neighbours to the south have more sites because their population justifies it. I am not suggesting that the United States is a champion of the circular economy, I would never say that, but the fact remains that Americans are buying our plastic waste because they know how to reclaim it. The officials explained the waste package tracing system saying that possible dumping to a third party would be unlikely.

The truth is that we do not have the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs in this area. We must absolutely take action on this issue to limit as much as possible the export of any and all plastics until we are able to reduce our waste, which would be ideal.

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There is still a lot of work to be done. Why not adopt an approach where this resource would be developed here? Let us keep this economy and its jobs. It is good for the environment in Quebec and in Canada.

All the discussions in committee, along with the readings and debates on this critical issue directly related to our capacity to deal with our waste here, lead me to reiterate the following facts.

● (1420)

The Bloc Québécois believes that, before we even consider exporting plastic waste, Canada has a duty to rethink how materials circulate in the economy. We fully subscribe to the Basel Convention's preamble.

As it happens, the committee study on single-use plastics ties in with Bill C-204. Though separate, the study addresses another aspect of the plastics issue: what we produce and consume, what we can eliminate, what virgin resin producers want to maintain, what we need to do to establish a true circular economy sooner, and more.

I will not go into detail about the data, the stats, per capita plastic production and consumption, the difference between “toxic” and “dangerous”, or the environmental consequences of the massive plastic burden we are saddled with.

The government may not have been ready for the reaction of industries affected by Bill C-204, which, to be clear, requires Canadian legislation to align with the Basel Convention, but it had plenty of time to get ready. The government has known since at least 2019 that the Basel Convention amendments had to be adopted. It ratified them at the eleventh hour without bothering to help industry prepare. Anyway, that is how it looks to me, and it has to be said.

For its part, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has been discussing plastics for several years. How is it that an international agreement like the Basel Convention and its important amendments has never been examined? We need concrete action and state-of-the-art recycling and reclamation facilities. Quebec has a pool of expertise, especially with respect to the circular economy, that is more than willing to participate in this work.

As elected members of a legislative assembly, I believe it is our duty to legislate. Laws determine conduct and guide society towards transformation, especially in the case of markets. However, we also have a duty to guide the economic and social environments that must adapt.

Yes, we must implement measures. They need not be draconian, but they must be planned. Our decisions must result in predictability. When industries and economic sectors are kept abreast of the acts and regulations put in place by the legislator in their regard, the market adapts and workers can be trained. In order for this adaptation to occur properly, there must be reasonable deadlines. I am not talking about unlimited deadlines dictated by the stakeholders, but deadlines that are established by listening to their concerns.

I am pleased that my colleagues from the committee were receptive to my amendments to change the timeline for implementing Bill C-204 in order to provide this predictability and respect the ju-

risdictions of Quebec and the provinces. Speaking objectively, it would have been preferable if this had been done from the outset.

In what should be called the great plastics file, the governments of Quebec and the provinces should be at the heart of the discussion. In fact, the key element of Bill C-204 is the management of waste materials, which is a responsibility exclusive to Quebec and the provinces.

I will close by simply reminding members that the federal government holds 50% of tax revenues, but only a meagre 6.8% of the responsibility for municipal infrastructure. Municipalities must get what they need to participate in the economy of tomorrow. Quebec and the provinces are relying on the federal government to give them their fair share, especially since the government is focusing heavily on eliminating plastic waste.

● (1425)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House today to take part in this very important debate, one that affects us all. The NDP has been raising concerns about plastic waste for several years now.

We are talking about the export of plastic waste, and there is a lot to say on the subject. I am also going to talk about reducing the use of plastics in general and especially single-use plastics, such as water bottles, which unfortunately are still used too often. I will also address the topic of reducing waste in general, plastic or otherwise, since this is the source of many problems.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight local initiatives in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. People really want to see action taken by businesses that have a vision for reducing plastic waste and waste in general.

I would like to applaud the initiatives of some of our local shops: Épisode, Vrac & Bocaux, La Cale zero-waste pub, Méga Vrac Rosemont, Rose Ross, La Brume dans mes Lunettes, Le Frigo de Bacchus, La réserve naturelle, La fabrik éco, Dispatch café, Manitoaba, Véganation and Le Cornélien, not to mention Vrac sur Roues. That last one is not located in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, but it delivers bulk products by bike and therefore does not produce any greenhouse gases. Delivery is available in my riding and in other neighbourhoods.

My first point is about exports of plastic waste, which is what Bill C-204 is about. If I have time, I will also talk about the use of plastic in general and waste reduction.

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The situation right now is alarming. As my colleague said, there are plastic islands in our seas and oceans. In fact, a plastic continent is floating around the Atlantic Ocean, not to mention the plastic pollution littering the shores of our rivers and lakes and the St. Lawrence River. For years, people have been participating in clean-up campaigns and picking up as much litter as possible to stop fish and turtles from dying due to the plastic bags that are washing up on shore and to have a cleaner environment that is not so damaged by the presence of humans and industry.

Canada is truly a lame duck when it comes to plastics exports. Our country is not assuming its responsibilities and is literally shovelling its waste into the neighbour's yard when we are no longer willing or able to manage it here.

I would like to point out that this problem has probably been exacerbated by the pandemic. More plastic is being used today, often for medical reasons that are quite understandable. As for greenhouse gas emissions, the economic downturn has probably helped bring them down a bit or at least kept them stagnant rather than increasing them. With respect to plastic pollution, the pandemic has probably made it worse, because of all the masks we still have to wear. It is obviously understandable why we need to wear them, but that does not make it any less of a problem. Instead, the problem has only worsened, and it is even more important to find solutions quickly.

In 2018, Canada shipped 44,000 tonnes of plastic waste to other countries. Many will recall the quarrel between Canada and the Philippines. We had to spend over \$1 million to bring back 69 illegally shipped containers. For six years we tried to convince the Philippines to dispose of the waste we had shovelled into their yard. We wanted them to deal with our waste and our problems.

This is not the only time that this has happened. This year the Malaysian government sent 11 shipping containers of plastic waste back to Canada. We are incapable of taking responsibility and complying with the international agreements that the member for Repentigny spoke about a little earlier.

Canada is incapable of dealing with its own plastic waste or reducing its plastic consumption. We send it to third world countries and ask them to dispose of our waste, which sometimes includes medical waste.

• (1430)

We do this because our capacity for recycling the plastic waste we produce is far too limited. Generally, this waste used to be shipped to China, but it has decided, quite rightly, to refuse because we are unable to handle it ourselves. However, not only is it the right thing to do, it is the responsible thing to do. It can also be a niche market that could create jobs. Having the capacity to recycle waste is good for the environment and could be good for the economy.

A few years ago, I toured a business in the heart of Quebec that was shredding laundry soap containers made of type 2 plastic, a fairly hard plastic. They made small pellets that were then used to manufacture irrigation pipes for our farmers. Instead of burning this plastic or throwing it into fields or rivers, the company reused this plastic and turned it into a product that agricultural producers need.

What was even more extraordinary with this company was that it fostered labour market integration as most of the people hired had a hearing impairment. This created jobs for people who generally face barriers to employment.

I think we need to be aware of the need to reduce our use of plastics, especially single-use plastics. Plastic needs to be recycled, and that takes infrastructure. The fact that we do not have that infrastructure in this day and age is outrageous. The various levels of government, including the federal government, should invest to help us recycle plastic. However, we must reduce our use of plastics.

For example, it is not that hard to pick up prepared foods from the store using a recyclable container brought from home instead of the store's styrofoam container. It is not that hard to carry around a small reusable water bottle for when we get thirsty. More and more people are doing it, but, unfortunately, even more people are buying their drinking water in plastic bottles, when there is tap water at home, free, filtered municipal water that is perfectly good to drink.

If we are to reduce the use of plastic, we also need to talk about over-packaging. This is important. I am very pleased to represent the riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, which hosted the first ever plastic attack in all of North America. It has happened a few more times since.

Two or three years ago, three young women asked people leaving a grocery store to remove all of the plastic packaging from their fruits and vegetables. Their goal was to teach these people that they did not need to purchase over-packaged products and that they could use reusable or mesh bags to do their groceries. They were also sending a message to the grocery store owners that people would rather purchase products that are not over-packaged.

One of the examples I talk about a lot and that drives me crazy is when bananas are sold on a styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic and wrapped in another layer of plastic. Bananas come with a peel. They are already protected and need no extra packaging.

There are so many changes to be made to our production and consumption patterns. This plastic attack was done in collaboration with the grocery store, and people quite liked being asked to think about these issues.

We also need to reduce how much waste we produce in general. We are told that Quebecers and Canadians are among the largest waste producers in the world, with an average of two kilograms per person per day. To change these habits, we will need to make a tremendous effort collectively, but also locally and individually.

These new habits will cause different businesses to change how they offer their products. I have to come back to the great initiatives of all the businesses, grocery stores, pubs and restaurants aiming for zero waste. We should be encouraging them, because these are all excellent initiatives. They can be found across Quebec. We must identify which businesses are doing it and encourage them.

Private Members' Business

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to speak to this timely bill brought by my colleague, the member for York—Simcoe. Before I get to the details of Bill C-204 and the impact that this proposed legislation has already had on a government that was dragging its feet in joining the global movement to ban the export of hazardous plastic waste, I would like to thank the member for his wider, passionate and loud commitment to the magnificent body of water that lends its name to his constituency. It is about an hour's drive north of my riding of Thornhill. I am speaking of Lake Simcoe, of course.

Since his arrival in the House of Commons after his election two years ago, the member has regularly raised his voice urging the government to re-establish the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund, killed by the Liberals in 2017. The virtual challenges imposed on the workings of the House over the past year have forced us to limit attendance on the Hill and to work from constituency offices and homes. While all of this has frustrated many members, the MP for York—Simcoe has taken advantage of his remote technology a number of times to bring the lake, and the government's dereliction of duty to a cleaner Lake Simcoe, to the attention of the House and Canadians. He positioned himself in front of the lake one time, and as he has referred to today, he made a statement while actually standing in Lake Simcoe in hip waders to call for re-establishment of the highly effective cleanup fund our Conservative government funded for 10 years.

His proposed legislation, Bill C-204, is on one hand simple in the changes that it proposes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, but also profound in what it could achieve. As the member for York—Simcoe reminded us when he spoke, for far too long Canada has been sending too much of the plastic waste that we all generate to other countries for disposal.

There was a time when there was a significant market for clean and sorted plastic waste, both in Canada and abroad, particularly in China. A corporate constituent in my riding of Thornhill was producing a broad range of products 10 years ago that included furniture, planks for decks and docking, buckets, barrels, sports gear and so forth made from a variety of plastic waste material. It was bumped from the market when China began outbidding it and other Canadian recyclers for Canada's plastic waste.

In 2017, after dominating international trade in waste plastic, China abandoned the practice and the market because its customers around the world raised their quality standards on imported recyclables. These included Canada, to its credit.

That recycling market was for clean, select and sorted plastic waste. More of Canada's plastic waste, much of it contaminated, has been exported to the United States and a number of Asian countries for disposal by incineration, landfilling or abandonment. As the member for York—Simcoe points out, between 2015 and 2018 almost 400,000 tonnes of Canadian plastic waste was shipped to Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Hong Kong, China and the United States.

In many of these countries where environmental standards actually exist, they are often very poorly enforced. These tonnes of

waste are not only irresponsibly burned or improperly added to landfills. In many cases they are simply dumped and defile the environment, groundwater, surface water and air. Unlike China, which banned waste plastic because of market rejection, some of those countries are now prohibiting plastic waste trade for environmental reasons, in some cases because of the sudden surge in plastic waste dumped on their countries resulting from the huge tonnage rejected by China.

Canada's environmental image abroad was bruised terribly last year when the governments of the Philippines and Malaysia demanded that Canada, at great cost to Canadian taxpayers, repatriate thousands of tonnes of contaminated plastic waste that had been dumped on their rural communities and countryside. All of this happened at the same time as countries around the world came together to more responsibly regulate the way countries controlled the import and export of plastic waste in its many forms.

• (1440)

Party countries to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, a convention that was created in 1989 in the wake of scandals involving the dumping of toxic waste in Africa and other developing countries, agreed, in 2019, to update the Basel Convention to ban the transboundary movement of plastic waste from industrialized countries to developing countries, specifically the types of plastic waste that are considered hazardous and contaminated.

Members will remember that I mentioned earlier that Canada has been dragging its feet in joining the global movement to ban the export of plastic waste. The government failed to demonstrate leadership by not immediately joining other countries in the ratification of the Basel Convention amendments, and that is where Bill C-204 made a big difference even before this debate. The Liberals, who had been derelict in their duty again to ratify the Basel amendments, suddenly, two days before the member for York—Simcoe was to speak to this bill, announced that they would ratify it, and they did, although they were more than a year late, 18 months late, and after 186 other countries had signed.

Now, does that mean that the export of all plastic waste from Canada will suddenly stop? Unfortunately not. The Basel Convention amendments apply to a specific list of types of plastic considered hazardous, but not to another list of plastic waste that is presumed not to be hazardous, provided these safe, uncontaminated waste plastics are destined for recycling in an environmentally sound manner. The Liberals think that makes it okay for some Canadian waste plastic to be exported. They claim that it helps businesses abroad, as if Canada's plastic trash is some kind of development assistance.

This makes Canada an outlier in the OECD, because there is another amendment to the Basel Convention, known as the ban amendment, which bans absolutely the export of plastic waste from OECD countries to non-OECD countries. There are 98 countries that have signed that amendment, democracies such as Australia and the United Kingdom, but to date, Canada refuses to sign.

Canadians watching from home or reading a transcript of my speech today in Hansard should know that much of the media reporting on these issues confuses the two amendments, which the Liberals use to their advantage when they claim that Bill C-204 is unnecessary because Canada signed, belatedly, the first amendment.

The sponsor of Bill C-204, the member for York—Simcoe, believes that Canada should not be exporting any plastic waste. The member believes that because there are any number of Canadian companies prepared and capable of recycling plastic waste, it is time for Canada to stop treating the rest of the world as a dumping ground for Canadian plastic waste.

He referenced in his speech an Alberta company that can convert all types of plastic to diesel fuel. It is ready to build refineries across the country that could convert 3,000 tonnes of plastic waste a day, diverting more than a million tonnes from landfill and foreign destinations. He mentioned another company in Nova Scotia that, like my corporate constituent in Thornhill, could manufacture a broad range of products from plastic waste. However, these companies need access to adequate volumes of clean plastic waste to make their business plans work, and if Canada kept its vast tonnage here, they would work.

The member for York—Simcoe told the House that Canadians from coast to coast want action on this environmental issue. He said that the Liberal government could no longer justify a practice that many other industrialized countries have ended, and that developing countries should no longer be expected to fulfill disposal services that we should take care of in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

I agree with my colleague from York—Simcoe, and I hope all members will join me in supporting his bill, Bill C-204.

• (1445)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for introducing Bill C-204. There has been some discussion today, and he seems disappointed that some people on this side of the House have indicated that they are not going to vote in favour of it. However, it seems as though the NDP and the Bloc are onside with it, so I would suggest to the member that indeed a majority is a victory, even though it might not be unanimous.

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

Private Members' Business

KINDNESS WEEK ACT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC), seconded by the member for Saint-Laurent, moved that Bill S-223, An Act respecting Kindness Week, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to the order adopted on Thursday, May 13, a member from each recognized party and a member from the Green Party may speak for not more than 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today as the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to speak to Bill S-223, an act respecting Kindness Week.

Bill S-223 was originally introduced in the other place by Senator Munson. As the saying goes, “if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.” Try the senator did and he was successful.

This bill was introduced each of those times in honour of Rabbi Reuven Bulka, who is the founder of Kind Canada and the inspiration for this bill. In the same spirit that motivated the rabbi to start the first Kindness Week in Ottawa 14 years ago, this bill would see Canadians from coast to coast to coast celebrate kindness week in their communities during the third week of February every year.

As for the rabbi's inspiration for the first Kindness Week, he said:

My motivation in establishing Kindness Week in Ottawa was to counter the bullying epidemic that had invaded our schools. The logic was simple. Telling children not to do something does not help that much and at times can be counterproductive. But helping children do nice things and say nice things to others creates the type of positive energy that suffocates bullying.

I can think of no better time for this bill than in the midst of a pandemic, where the lives of people have been turned upside down and the need to be kind to one another is greatly amplified. Many people have fallen on hard times and have lost their job, seen their business close and have seen loved ones fall ill.

It would be so easy for Canadians in this high-stress environment to become callous or indifferent to their neighbours, friends and family, but thankfully we have seen the opposite. Communities have come together to help the vulnerable in need among them. We have seen people getting groceries for their neighbours and the elderly. We have seen an increase in giving to food banks, an outpouring of support for charities, even children writing letters and sending videos to folks in long-term care homes. Acts of kindness like these are happening all across our country and have truly helped us get through the stress and uncertainty of this pandemic situation.

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This bill, with the creation of a national kindness week, will help to encourage values such as empathy, respect, gratitude and compassion, and lead to the improved health and well-being of Canadians. Designating and celebrating a kindness week throughout Canada will encourage acts of kindness, voluntarism and charitable giving that will benefit all Canadians as well as connecting individuals and organizations to share resources, information and tools to foster more acts of kindness.

We hope that celebrating kindness week might encourage a culture of kindness in Canada. Showing kindness to people, regardless of their station in life, affirms the human dignity that is inherent in all of us. This is especially compounded in the current situation of the pandemic.

In that spirit of kindness, I want to sincerely thank the member for Saint-Laurent for her help in getting this bill to the finish line, working with all members in this place so we can realize Rabbi Bulka's vision for a kindness week in Canada, with the help of our friend in the other place, Senator Munson, and all members of the House, in doing the right thing, in doing the kind thing and getting this bill passed expeditiously.

• (1450)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time I get to speak on this bill today, Bill S-223, an act respecting kindness week in Canada.

I will begin by thanking the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, for tabling this bill in the House; Senator Jim Munson, for introducing the bill in the other place; Rabbi Reuvan Bulka, the founder of Kind Canada and the individual who approached Senator Munson with the idea, and therefore was the inspiration behind this bill; and all of the House leaders and members in this place for allowing this to pass at such a quick pace today, so that Canadians across the country may recognize the third week of February as kindness week every year in Canada.

I have seconded this bill, because I think a little bit of kindness can go a very long way. Kindness is a sincere and voluntary use of one's time, talent and resources to better the lives of others, one's own life and the world through genuine acts of love, compassion, generosity and service. We must remember that, while it is important to be kind to others, we must also be kind to ourselves. Only when we are kind to ourselves and think about ourselves in a positive and healthy way are we able to have the abundance needed to give to others.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

When we return the love and joy that another is feeling, it has a huge impact on their sense of well-being.

[*English*]

Prior to fully entering politics, I was a high school teacher. I taught history, geography, French, and ethics and religious culture. I have to say that, of these, my favourite course to teach was the ethics class. That was because, as a teacher, I believed I played an important role in helping my students become happy, resilient, ful-

filled human beings. I know there is a limited amount a teacher can do in this regard. However, I always knew that I wanted my classroom to be a safe place where students could feel comfortable being themselves and opening up about anything they were going through. In my classroom, students knew there was zero tolerance for bullying, and they knew kindness was expected of them above all else.

One of the units I covered when teaching this course was on random acts of kindness, where students learned the importance of being kind to one another; the difference a simple act of kindness can make in someone's day or, in some cases, in someone's life; and about what could be considered an act of kindness. At the end of the unit, their assignment was to do 10 random acts of kindness within a two-week period and to write about them, what their impact was on the people they were doing this act for, and how they felt in doing the act.

Members can probably imagine what those two weeks looked like in our school: groups of friends sitting with a student eating his lunch alone and being genuinely interested in getting to know him; leaving kind words on post-it notes on each other's lockers; or helping someone pay for something at the cafeteria. From what I read in their assignments, the kindness was spread beyond the school and into their homes, when they helped their parents with chores around the house or visited grandma for a little longer that week. The reflection on how this made others feel was important, because when we are kind to others, knowing we made a difference can feel so great.

I did this with my students, because I had a vision for a kinder world, a world where people choose kindness over being mean and insulting and a world where people are thoughtful and considerate and try to bring light and positivity into the lives of those they come into contact with. I believe that kindness is contagious.

[*Translation*]

Every child, parent and adult reaps the benefits of kindness, whether they are the giver or the receiver. Kindness makes everyone feel really good, which encourages them not to give up.

[*English*]

When we go out of our way to be kind or do something nice for someone, chances are they will want to pay it forward and do something nice in return. We have all been on the receiving end of a kind act. When it is not expected, it can surprise us and leave us feeling so appreciative. Sometimes that is not the case, because the person we are doing a kind act for may not be ready to receive the kindness, and that is okay. We cannot let those experiences get in the way of making an effort to be kind, because it is only by continuing and spreading kindness that we will change the world, one act at a time and one person at a time.

In the words of Rabbi Bulka, "Being kind is nothing more than being truly human. The kinder we are, the better all humanity will be."

Private Members' Business

Some may wonder if designating a week to kindness really does anything and what the point of it is, especially since we already live in one of the kindest countries in the world. While that may be true, designating a week to kindness would bring attention to the act of being kind. It would allow us to reflect on our actions and motivate Canadians across the country to be kinder to one another. It would serve as a reminder for those of us who sometimes get caught up in the busyness of life and who may not be prioritizing kindness. It would give teachers the opportunity to teach their students about the importance of being kind to everyone.

[*Translation*]

As a former teacher, I can assure the House that designating a week to kindness motivates teachers, administrative staff and students immensely because it encourages enthusiasm for a culture of kindness in their school. This enthusiasm can lead to the creation of kindness clubs and the emergence of leaders among the students. It can also create an opportunity to discuss bullying with students in class.

[*English*]

This pandemic that we have been living with for more than a year now has left people feeling isolated and has taken away so many opportunities for us to connect with others. Now, more than ever, it is important to be kind to one another, and that can come in many forms. We can bring groceries to a senior who may still be afraid of leaving their home while public health measures are still in place; we can reach out to someone we have not spoken to in a while, let them know we are thinking of them and that we are willing to listen if they need to talk; we can send someone a nice card of appreciation for the work they are doing to keep people safe; or we can educate our children. A little kindness goes a very long way.

On this note, I would like to once again thank Rabbi Bulka for all of the important work that he has spent his life doing, Senator Munson for bringing this forward in the other place and the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for bringing it forward here.

• (1500)

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, I hope my colleagues will spare me the opportunity for a brief intervention here. I know that it is not normally done during Private Members' Business, but Rabbi Reuven Bulka is a phenomenal Canadian. I do not think he would mind my saying that he has been a very good friend of mine for the past 25 years. He has passed on some very great secrets of psychotherapy from Dr. Viktor Frankl's work, who himself survived a death camp during the Holocaust. Rabbi Bulka, of course, has been a phenomenal Canadian in building bridges here in Ottawa and across the nation, and was my co-chair in the all-party interfaith friendship group here on Parliament Hill.

Rabbi Bulka was recently diagnosed with late-stage cancer and began cancer treatments this past January. It would be my hope, because this initiative was inspired by him and it commemorates his efforts, that the Speaker of the House would send a special note to Rabbi Reuven Bulka just to say that all parties agree that kindness week would be a great idea, it is something that is truly Canadian, and we would like to thank him for inspiring it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for the recommendation.

[*Translation*]

Do I have the consent of the House to do this?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will convey this message to the Speaker.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak about kindness. I, too, would like to recognize Rabbi Reuven Bulka for his initiative and tell him that our thoughts are with him. I sincerely hope that this exemplary show of solidarity by members of the House will bring him some comfort and perhaps give him some hope for the world.

What does it mean to be kind?

First of all, I have to say that I took it as a compliment that my party asked me to speak today. It is true that I generally try to be kind. Being kind involves doing little things, being attentive to and looking out for others. It is offering to carry a bag for someone when we have nothing in our hands and their hands are full. It is holding the door open for someone. It is smiling at people.

It has been a bit hard to smile over the past year. However, we have all noticed that people can also smile with their eyes. As a joke, whenever we take photos now, I tell people to crinkle their eyes. It means the same thing because when we smile, it shows in our eyes. Most of us do not like wearing masks because they are hot and we feel like we cannot breathe, but masks also make us focus more on people's eyes. Even if we cannot show that we are smiling with our mouths, let us show it with our eyes, but let us smile.

World Kindness Day already exists. We celebrate it on November 13. As I have learned, it has been recognized since 2014 in Quebec and since 2017 in Canada. It does not get much attention.

Psychologist Pascale Brillon of the Université du Québec à Montréal theorizes that November 13 was chosen because that is when dreary days set in and the temperature drops. It is a time when kindness can soothe people's souls.

Today's proposal would designate the third week of February as kindness week. Once passed, which I am sure it will be, we will have a World Kindness Day as winter sets in and a kindness week around the time everyone is sick of winter. It will go a long way toward warming our hearts.

Private Members' Business

Kindness can sometimes be interpreted as a weakness or flaw, especially in the political realm. It is actually anything but. Kindness is a sign of great emotional intelligence.

Psychologist Pascale Brillon said, “people with high emotional intelligence experience greater professional success. Emotional intelligence is also the ability to care for others, to tune in to them, and to be kind.”

Kindness is not a weakness, far from it. It is a sign of strength, courage, empathy, altruism and compassion for others. It is possible to take a stand and be true to oneself while being kind and civilized. I say that because it is something that I am trying to put into practice, even though, if I am being honest, I do not always succeed. I think that our job here is a strong incentive to do that every day. I therefore invite all members of the House and all Canadians and Quebecers to implement these good practices.

Earlier, I gave some examples of acts of kindness. It is human nature to be kind. For anyone who has ever spent any time with young children, have we not all marvelled at how a one-year-old infant will try to help someone carry a bag or open a door when they can hardly even walk yet?

The naysayers who claim that people are fundamentally bad are mistaken. What makes people a bit more cruel and combative is likely the competitive, capitalist world in which we live.

Let us come back to the world of politics. We are working in an environment that encourages us to say, on a daily basis, that we are not the problem, someone else is. Members are always saying that it is others who are not being nice or talking about how, when their party was in office, they did this or that. Personally, I listen to what is being said and I learn from it. I have not been here very long, but I often hear that kind of thing.

● (1505)

I also have a message for my colleagues. I have been sharing some funny examples, but I have also seen some not-so-funny things in the House. I will not name names. It is water under the bridge. However, kindness is also the ability to convey one's message without attacking others in a mean-spirited way. That is key. I think that is what the rabbi wanted to accomplish. He wanted people to do better and be better.

We lost a great Quebecer recently. In all honesty, I think Serge Bouchard was probably the wisest man I have ever heard speak. Every time he opened his mouth, he exuded the humility of a human being on a lifelong quest to become the best possible version of himself.

I invite everyone here to embark on that quest, much like the rabbi who prompted this very debate. Kindness can be part of politics too. I am inspired by Quebec society, which has created a social safety net that, though far from perfect and with room for improvement, is nevertheless exemplary. Quebec has done more to reduce social inequality than any other place in North America. We still have inequality, but less than elsewhere. Let us also continue working toward that.

We must be vigilant about what we accept in our society, on social media, for example. Lately, a lot of people seem to think that

they can say or do whatever they want because they are hiding behind a keyboard. The member who spoke before me was talking about teaching. I was a teacher for 25 years and had to intervene in serious cases of cyberbullying. The only way to move forward and make progress is for the person who committed the act to understand what they did.

I think that is the idea behind this proposal. Today I am thinking about all of the municipal elected officials who recently announced they were leaving politics because they were tired and emotionally spent from dealing with insults on social media. We must be vigilant.

I think that this kindness week will allow us to take another step forward. People who are unkind to us often behave that way because they are hurt or in distress. If meanness did not exist, there would be no merit in being kind. If we have the strength to be kind, receive criticism, listen to the message and understand it, the other person will feel seen.

Even if it feels like we are not getting back what we give, it is not so bad. It is called paying it forward. We probably did a good thing for the other person, who will do a good thing for someone else, before that good deed comes back to us. Everything balances out.

I think that when we are attentive to others, we can never go wrong. I invite the government to be kind in the policies it is voting on, namely to take care of seniors by increasing old age security and to take care of sick people who contributed to employment insurance their entire lives but are now entitled to only 26 weeks of benefits instead of 50.

It would be kind to adopt these types of proposals in general, and I am pleased that we are passing this bill today. Let us think about it.

I will close with a saying by Jacques Weber: kindness is the nobility of intelligence.

● (1510)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the NDP caucus, I would also like to thank the member for Saint-Laurent and the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for their initiative in bringing this important legislation before the House today and for the discussions that will follow.

This also shows how important it is for all members to come together to have these conversations and get this bill passed.

I would also like to thank Rabbi Reuven Bulka and everyone at the Kind Canada Généreux organization.

Our thoughts are with Rabbi Bulka. We hope that his health improves and wish him a full recovery. Our thoughts are with him today.

Private Members' Business

[English]

We are talking about kindness. Putting in place a kindness week is an important symbol of where we want our society to go, how we want our society to interact and how we want people to work together. I believe we all want to build a society of kindness. Of that there is no doubt.

We have seen particular examples of the imperative of kindness through the course of this pandemic. I will mention just a few cases of how we have seen Canadians and people around the world come together in an unprecedented way during the pandemic, and one might argue because of the pandemic.

In my community, we have seen people taking care of each other's neighbours, making sure shut-ins seniors are getting what they need, whether it is groceries or medication. People are taking care of each other, showing acts of kindness in a very deliberate, organized and focused way.

We have also seen the countless acts of kindness that come from our health care workers and first responders. They are on the front lines. They are vulnerable to COVID and its variants, yet we have seen countless cases of nurses, health care workers and first responders such as firefighters stepping up despite the danger and showing ongoing acts of kindness and its importance.

The stories of health care workers who share the final moments of people passing away from COVID despite the risk to themselves, knowing nobody else can come in and spend those final hours with those COVID patients, have been repeated across Canada, but we have also seen them around the world. There have been countless cases of courage and kindness coming together at critical, dangerous times.

I have seen organizations in my community come together to put into effect the importance of kindness. Two community organizations that have come together during COVID are Caring During COVID in Burnaby and Helping Hands in New Westminster. These are groups of local residents: volunteers who have come together to perpetuate, amplify, repeat and multiply acts of kindness throughout the community.

These are all examples of the strength kindness can bring to a community, a region, a country and indeed to the entire world.

• (1515)

[Translation]

We see these very acts of kindness repeated across the country. Look at the nurses, doctors and health care workers who often risk their own lives to perform acts of kindness.

This shows that courage and kindness can work together, even during a pandemic, and even when people's lives are at stake.

[English]

I am not sharing information that we do not know when I also say we have seen a disturbing rise in the opposition to acts of kindness, the toxic opposition which is acts and incidents of hate. It is something that we need to call out. We have seen increased cases of racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and

transphobia. All of those hatreds have also increased during this pandemic.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of Canadians know the importance of ensuring that acts of hate and incidents of hate are eliminated, but it does show that the idea of a kindness week and perpetrating acts of kindness is not a passive work. It is an active work and it also makes it a part of all our responsibilities, the importance of stepping up against any act of hate, any hate speech and any incidents of hate that occur in our community.

[Translation]

Kindness also means fighting hatred. Unfortunately, during the pandemic, there has been an increase in hateful acts and hate speech. If we, as Canadians, want to promote kindness, we must do everything possible to put and end to these hateful acts.

[English]

How can we go beyond the acts of kindness in a kindness week? How can we ensure that we are truly a kind society? It really starts at the top. What that means is that when we talk about kindness and a kindness week, it is not only the relationship of Canadians with each other; it is also the relationship of our institutions with Canadians.

When we see the rising number of homelessness in our country, that is very clearly an abandoning of leadership around perpetrating acts of kindness. When we see people who are crying out for medication and public universal pharmacare and do not have the wherewithal to pay for their medication at this critical time, that is also a call for acts of kindness that come from our institutions and ensure that kindness is at every level of our society. We see people, as I do in my community, who do not have access to basic dental work. I have seen first-hand the critical impact of not having dental care in our country when a person's teeth start to fall out. That also is a call to action for kindness at every level.

When we are talking about acts of kindness and when we are talking about our institutions reflecting acts of kindness, we are also talking about our institutions reflecting and responding to the needs of Canadians. What that means is that we, as parliamentarians and the government, should constantly keep in mind that if we adopt this legislation, our institutions as well must be wedded to the vision of a society of kindness.

• (1520)

[Translation]

We must work on all fronts to ensure that our institutions also reflect the importance of kindness throughout society.

[English]

I will end with two quotes.

The first is from Rabbi Reuven Bulka who said, "Being kind is nothing more than being truly human. The kinder we are, the better all humanity will be."

Private Members' Business

The second quote is from former official opposition leader, Jack Layton, who many believe to be the greatest prime minister Canada never had. Just before he passed he said, “Love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.”

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise today on behalf of the Green Party of Canada to speak to Bill S-223 from the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and to serve the communities of Nanaimo—Ladysmith in the unceded territories of the Snaw'naw'as, Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus and Lyackson first nations.

This bill was inspired by the work of Rabbi Reuven Bulka, who has been advocating to designate the third week of February as kindness week since 2007. Rabbi Bulka is the founder of Kind Canada, an organization that aims to inspire Canadians to cultivate kindness in their day-to-day lives, support charitable causes and enhance the well-being of others.

My colleague, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, is a good friend of Rabbi Bulka. Rabbi Bulka has been an important part of her life for longer than she has been in the Green Party. They met around the year 2000, when the Rabbi invited her to take part in a program on community cable in Ottawa as a guest. The two of them did many shows together and discussed many topics, including the environmental movement and the idea that human dominance over other creatures is a misinterpretation of scripture. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has asked me to pass on her best wishes to the rabbi and to thank him for pushing to have this legislation for kindness week passed in this House as soon as possible.

I really appreciate the preamble to this bill. These are things that all of us can strive for. Kindness encourages values such as empathy, respect, gratitude and compassion. Kind acts lead to the improved health and well-being of Canadians. It is important to encourage acts of kindness, volunteerism and charitable giving to the benefit of all Canadians. We need to encourage a culture of kindness in Canada throughout the year, but we must not limit our acts of kindness to Canadians and encourage a culture of kindness only in Canada. We must extend kindness to all people and all living things on the planet.

On the topic of kindness, researcher and author Brené Brown said, “First and foremost, we need to be the adults we want our children to be. We should watch our own gossiping and anger. We should model the kindness we want to see.”

We live in a time when it has never been so easy to be unkind to others. How many Canadians have received a negative comment on social media in a way they would never receive in person? This is especially true for elected officials and public figures, but it happens all the time to people who are not in the public eye as well. Why has social media become so toxic? Why do so many people act in unkind ways online?

This is not by chance. It is a by-product of the way social media platforms are designed. Social media algorithms are designed to make us spend as much time as possible on their platforms, in order to sell our attention to advertisers. What the algorithms have discovered is that a great way to keep us engaged is by angering us, so

the algorithms feed us posts that fuel our anger, which increases polarization and destroys kindness.

Campaigners have learned this too. Everywhere we look in the public political discourse these days, we see the weaponization of anger for short-term political gain. Feeding the dark and unkind sides of human nature will come at a great cost and will be hard to undo. Some thinkers have dubbed what is going on right now “a war on sense-making”. Once upon a time, opposite political sides could engage in a rational and respectful debate about policy disagreements. We now have political forces that are fanning the flames of total delegitimization of their opponents, not just their opponents’ policies and ideas, but their opponents themselves. Some of the language being used in emails sent to MP offices these days is alarming.

Those who fan the flames of fear, mistrust and anger are at the same time strangling kindness, empathy and mutual respect. We will all pay dearly for this irresponsibility.

The Dalai Lama tells us, “Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

• (1525)

The kindness of discomfort can be one of the most difficult forms of kindness to embody in our lives. Confronting injustice requires difficult conversations about privilege. It requires us to acknowledge how we benefit from systemic oppression. It requires us to examine how we consciously or unconsciously perpetuate it. The kindness of discomfort means not being afraid to take responsibility for our own uncomfortable feelings. It means continuing to show up and do the work of creating a more just society.

The kindness of discomfort is an especially important idea to talk about right now. In my riding, there have been recent high-profile incidents of anti-indigenous racism toward the Snuneymuxw First Nation, when there was an outbreak of COVID-19 in its community, and when a memorial for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was desecrated in the territory of the Stz'uminus First Nation.

Canada is also experiencing a surge of anti-Asian racism. Racism is part of our history and our present. We do not like to see ourselves this way, but it is essential to take the blinders off and sit in the discomfort of that reality. When it comes to breaking down the structural and systemic barriers of racism, bias and discrimination, the kindness of discomfort is the greatest form of kindness we can practise on a personal level. The kindness of discomfort is a conscious choice to become a better ally in the work of building a more equitable and inclusive society. American aviation pioneer and author Amelia Earhart wrote, “A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees.”

I support the kindness week act and I deeply appreciate the work of Rabbi Bulka, who inspired it. Opening up opportunities for Canadians to cultivate kindness through education, action and service also increases our opportunities for connection. Our disconnection from each other is a foundational problem in our society, and we are all living the outcomes of that problem in the mental health crisis, the opioid overdose crisis, the homelessness crisis, the struggle against poverty, the struggle for peace, the crash in biodiversity and the climate crisis. Every act of kindness is an act of defiance toward a social order that goes against our natural impulses toward compassion and empathy.

• (1530)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The conclusion of the time provided for debate has now expired. It being 3:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, May 13, the

Private Members' Business

motion is deemed adopted and Bill S-223, an act respecting kindness week, is deemed read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If I may, I would like to take two seconds, on the theme of kindness.

[*Translation*]

I would really like to thank my colleague in the chair, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, for agreeing to work with me today to ensure the conduct of the sitting.

[*English*]

It was a long one and I appreciate all colleagues' participation. I thank everyone who has made it so easy.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, May 13, the motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 25, at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 24(1) and 28(2).

(The House adjourned at 3:31 p.m.)

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