



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

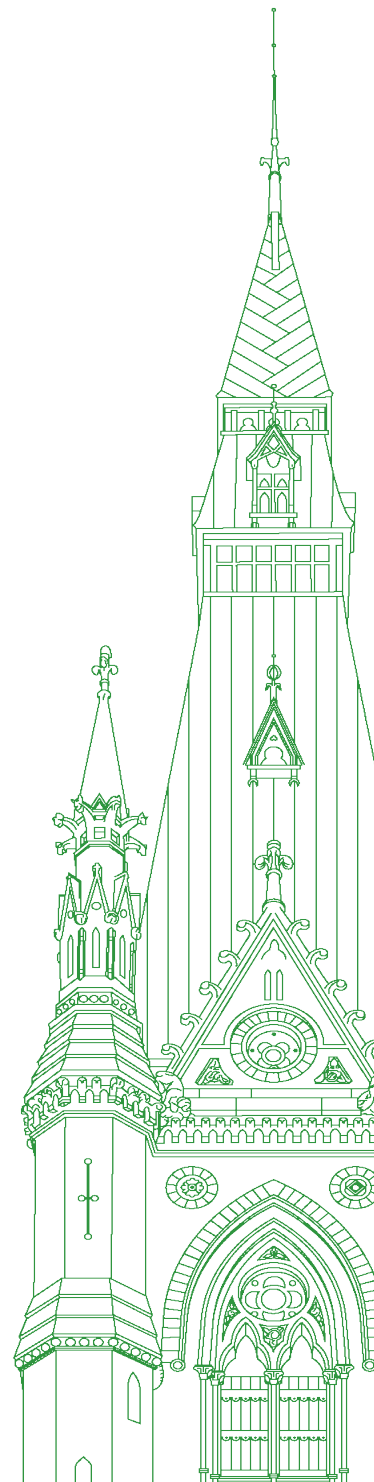
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House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 20, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

• (1005)

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, presenting reports from the interparliamentary delegations, I would like to report from the Canada-Europe interparliamentary delegation. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of Canada-Europe.

The first concerns the parliamentary mission to Portugal, in Lisbon, from April 15 to 17, 2019.

The second concerns the third part of the 2019 session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and parliamentary mission to Strasbourg, France, and Rome, Italy, from June 24 to 28, 2019.

We are busy folks over here, so the third concerns the fourth part of the 2019 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, from September 30 to October 4, 2019.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my third day tabling reports. We have been busy at the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canada-United States IPG.

The first concerns the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region 29th annual summit held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, from July 21 to 25, 2019.

The second concerns the National Governors Association annual summer meeting, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, from July 24 to 26, 2019.

The third concerns the CAN/AM Border Trade Alliance conference, held in Washington, D.C., from October 6 to 8, 2019.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-211, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assaults against health care professionals and first responders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured and humbled to be here today to introduce this bill.

In my mind, heroes do not wear capes. They wear shoulder flashes and badges that say nurse, RN, LPN, RPN, firefighter, paramedic, EMT or ambulance. They put their uniforms on every day knowing full well that they are going to experience human tragedy, and they are going to see sights and experience smells that may live with them for a lifetime.

When we call 911, we know that they will answer our call for help. They put their uniforms on every day to help us all. They fix our broken bones, they bandage our cuts, they restart our hearts and they hold our hands as we catch our last breath.

We should be doing everything we can to ensure that these altruistic individuals have the tools they require to do their jobs and to remain mentally healthy as well as physically healthy. We should be doing everything in our power to ensure that they never have to fear violence in their workplace.

Sadly, the rates of violence against our health care professionals and first responders are growing at a staggering rate. Today is about the nurse who is punched, kicked, spat at or thrown to the floor. Today is about the paramedic who is thrown down a flight of stairs, kicked and attacked while trying to save the life of a patient.

Today is about ensuring that we stand up for them because violence is not part of their job description.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-212, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (special benefits).

Privilege

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a bill to make our employment insurance system work better for Canadians suffering from serious illness.

Currently, EI sickness benefits only last 15 weeks, which is simply not enough for many Canadians suffering from cancer or other diseases with long treatment periods. This legislation proposes to extend those benefits to 50 weeks, the same amount of coverage people can receive if they are laid off.

Just yesterday, the House passed a motion calling for this change, with only the governing Liberals voting against it. This bill is the way to make it happen, to pass from words to action and get relief for Canadians who are suffering now.

Given the support expressed yesterday, I will be moving later today for unanimous consent to send this bill immediately to committee so we can find a way forward as quickly as possible and help relieve the financial hardship that comes with illness for sick Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

I hope that all members in the House will support making quick progress on this important initiative.

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

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PETITIONS**PACIFIC SALMON**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition to defend wild Pacific salmon. It is a key issue for my constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands. Indeed, they are clamouring for the House of Commons to act using the precautionary principle.

They have waited quite a long time for action based on the report that was originally commissioned by previous prime minister Stephen Harper: the commission of inquiry into the collapse of Fraser River sockeye in 2009.

There were 75 recommendations that stemmed from Mr. Justice Bruce Cohen's inquiry. They remain to be implemented. The petitioners ask for the recommendations of the Cohen commission to protect wild salmon to be implemented urgently.

* * *

● (1010)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVILEGE**RESPONSE BY NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the intervention made by the member for Red Deer—Mountain View concerning the government's response to Question No. 50. This is a rather simple and straightforward matter.

Question No. 50 states, in part, "With regard to contracts granted by any department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since January 1, 2017, to the Pembina Institute".

The government's response to Question No. 50 states:

Natural Resources Canada, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the Canada Energy Regulator and the Northern Pipeline Agency have not granted any contracts to the Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017.

The question concerns contracts, not grants, made to the institute in question. There is a clear difference between a contract and a grant.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guide on grants, contributions and other transfer payments clearly sets out the differences between contracts and transfer payments, which include grants.

The guide states:

A procurement contract is used to obtain goods or services. It is an agreement between a federal government contracting authority and an outside party to purchase goods, provide a service or lease rental property.

A transfer...arrangement [which includes grants] is used to transfer monies or make in-kind contributions from the federal government to individuals, organizations or other levels of government...to further government policy and the department's objectives.

In conclusion, Question No. 50 asked about contracts, not grants. The difference is obvious. The government has responded accurately—

The Speaker: We have a point of order, but we cannot have a point of order on a point of order. I will let the hon. member continue and then we will come back after. It is bordering on debate, and I do have some questions, but I will let the hon. member finish.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to continue, I submit that if my hon. colleague had asked a slightly different question, he would have received a different answer. Therefore, in no way has the government deliberately misled the House in its response to Question No. 50. It should now be clear to the House that this matter does not constitute a question of privilege.

The Speaker: We will take that under advisement. That will help us come back to the House with a ruling on the question of privilege that was made by the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View. There are no other points of order.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COASTAL GASLINK PROJECT

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved:

That the House stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route, the majority of hereditary chiefs, and the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people, who support the Coastal GasLink project, and condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community, holding the Canadian economy hostage, and threatening jobs and opportunities in Indigenous communities.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Today is about the voices of the Wet'suwet'en. Over the last 14 days, we have heard that a lot of people are standing in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en. Today we are bringing the real voices of the Wet'suwet'en to the floor of Parliament to ensure that the other side of the story is being told.

I could stand here and talk about the 900,000 tonnes of product that is shipped every day on our railways or the 88.1 million passengers who are moved annually on our railways. I could talk about the fact that Canada is a trading nation and our economic prosperity is predicated on our ability to produce good products and get them to market.

I could mention that over the last 14 days we have seen a lack of leadership. We have seen zero leadership from the Prime Minister. I could talk about how this has damaged our economic standing in the global market.

However, today I am going to focus on the voices of the Wet'suwet'en, the voices of the 20 first nations, the elected bands and the hereditary chiefs. Over 85% of the Wet'suwet'en voted in favour of the Coastal GasLink project, voted in favour of economic prosperity.

I live in northern British Columbia adjacent to the territories that the Coastal GasLink project is going through. I have many friends who are Wet'suwet'en. I have many friends who are Tsilhqot'in. My family is from the Tsilhqot'in First Nation. We are in northern British Columbia, where our economic opportunities are few and far between. Our forestry industry is in dire straits. We have seen job losses in the tens of thousands and 25 mill closures in the last year. When we see groups sign on to hope and economic prosperity, we want to make sure their voices are heard.

The Wet'suwet'en, whose voices have not been heard so far, are being vandalized and harassed. As a matter of fact, three of the hereditary chiefs were kicked out because they supported the Coastal GasLink project.

Today is about the 875 million dollars' worth of contracts that have been let on this project so far. Many of them are joint ventures between first nations and non-first nations. Today is about the 400 indigenous and first nations people who are employed by the Coastal GasLink project. That is over one-third of the employees. Today is about the over \$1 billion of economic opportunity and

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partnerships the first nations have signed on for with the Coastal GasLink project.

I know that my colleagues across the way will say that we do not stand with hereditary chiefs and that we are failing to recognize the hereditary chiefs who voted against this. I will remind the House that all 20 elected bands signed up for the Coastal GasLink project. Eight of the 13 hereditary chiefs signed up for the Coastal GasLink project. There were five hereditary chiefs and their families who said no to the project.

This is a Wet'suwet'en issue. It has been said before by members on all sides of the House and by the media that this is a Wet'suwet'en issue. I agree with that. The Wet'suwet'en have to sort their house out; they have to figure this out.

• (1015)

What is the result of inaction? The result of no action is exactly what we are seeing today. The Prime Minister jetted all over the world for 14 days, 13 days or nine days, however long it was, and hid overseas. He is refusing to acknowledge that we are in a crisis.

If the blockades were removed today and our goods and services all of a sudden opened up, it would take not days, not weeks, but months upon months for us to recover. We are already seeing job losses with CN and VIA Rail. Yesterday VIA Rail announced 1,000 job losses, layoffs. In making that announcement, the CEO said that in its 42 years of existence she had never seen a service disruption of this magnitude.

Those lost jobs are not just non-first nations jobs. They are first nations jobs too. These workers are employed as truck drivers. They are the folks laying pipe. They are working to do whatever they can to make a better living for their families and put a roof over their heads.

In the three minutes I have left, I want to bring forward the voices of the Wet'suwet'en.

Robert Skin, who was elected to the council of the Skin Tyee First Nation, said, "With the benefit agreement that [the Skin Tyee] did sign, I see us being in a better place even within the next five years."

He also said:

These protesters are getting one side of the story. They want to stand up with their fists in the air, but I say come and listen to us and get the other side of the story before you go out there and stop traffic and stop the railroad. All you are doing is alienating our people who are trying to put a roof over their heads and food on the table.

This is a voice I want to bring to the floor today.

I have a constituent who works at CN as a locomotive engineer. He was the first to go west from Smithers out to Prince George on a 12,000-foot coal train last Friday when the blockade came down. He asked me a question: If all these other groups are supporting the Wet'suwet'en and the Wet'suwet'en have agreed to remove the blockade to facilitate the dialogue, why did the federal government not do the same thing as the B.C. government and agree to have dialogue but only if the illegal blockades were removed first?

Chief Larry Nooski, of the Nadleh Whut'en, said:

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Coastal GasLink represents a once in a generation economic development opportunity for Nadleh Whut'en First Nation. We negotiated hard...to guarantee that Nadleh people, including youth, have the opportunity to benefit directly and indirectly from the project, while at the same time, ensuring that the land and the water is protected.

First nations chiefs and leaders are on record saying that during the six years of consultation, they would go to Coastal GasLink if they had questions. They walked the lands and decided together what this project meant. Their concerns were met with answers, and the company listened. These are the stories that are not being told, which is what today is all about.

Hereditary Chief Helen Michelle of Skin Tyee First Nation of the Wet'suwet'en has stated, "A lot of the protesters are not even Wet'suwet'en.... Our own people said go ahead" to Coastal GasLink. She also said, "We talked with the elders.... We talked and talked, and we kept bringing them back.... We walked the very territory where CGL is going.... We are going to give it the go-ahead."

Hereditary Chief Theresa Tait-Day of the Wet'suwet'en nation said, "In the case of Coastal GasLink, 85% of our people said yes, we want this project."

Marion Tiljoe Shepherd, the descendant of a hereditary chief, said, "All of these protesters don't have the right to close down railways and ships. It's not right. Go away. I want them to leave."

Shepherd also stated:

People are starting to speak the truth about what they feel. People want to work. The chiefs are supposed to talk to the clans and the clans are supposed to make the decisions. It's not going that way.

Those are the voices of the Wet'suwet'en, and they are the reason we are here today.

• (1020)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always very helpful to have quotes from the people involved in these situations, so I appreciate that.

I want to ask a non-partisan question related to the numbers. During the emergency debate the other night, a member who had been on the ground and talked to the people gave us numbers from two different Wet'suwet'en first nations. From what I remember from the debate, a majority were against the project.

Does the member have exact numbers to give us that are different from the numbers given during the emergency debate?

• (1025)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, these numbers are from the Wet'suwet'en themselves, the Wet'suwet'en who voted in favour of this project. The numbers I quoted today are from the Wet'suwet'en, the Wet'suwet'en voices themselves. Over 85% of the Wet'suwet'en voted in favour of this project. Eight of the 13 hereditary chiefs voted in favour of this project. Twenty first nations voted in favour of this project.

Those are the numbers I want to leave my colleague with today.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech, but I do not really see how what he said will help resolve the crisis. I think dialogue is key to resolving the crisis. In my previous life, I taught philosophy. The word "dialogue" comes from *dialogos*, which means two parties discerning the truth. The underlying assumption is that all participants must be recognized.

In his speech, my colleague said that on the one hand, there are the real voices of the Wet'suwet'en and on the other the impostor voices of the Wet'suwet'en, those who oppose or do not recognize the Coastal GasLink project and, as my colleague stated, perhaps mistakenly, are against economic development and whatever else.

I would like my colleague to tell me what part of everything he told us just now points to a way out of this crisis.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but perhaps I misheard my colleague.

First and foremost, I brought the voices of the Wet'suwet'en to the floor today, the voices of the Wet'suwet'en who support this project. The small group that does not support this is funded by foreign activist groups that have now staked claims in protests all over our country and fund activism. These are the economic disruptors. We have seen buses come from the U.S. with people who take part in these protests.

My colleagues do not have to believe me, but I challenge them to listen to the Wet'suwet'en voices that are on record. They should do a Google search. We all have iPads or other electronic means to source the data. Members should listen to the true voices of the Wet'suwet'en, who say they support this project. Their families support this too, but they are living in fear of vandalism and physical and verbal harassment from these groups that do not even belong to their communities.

That is the reality. That is what is happening on the ground in our communities in northern British Columbia. That is what I want people to understand.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is happening on the ground is that the future leader of the Conservative Party, Peter MacKay, is boasting about vigilante action and having a pickup truck threaten indigenous people. We see the footage of the swearing, insults and degradation. It is the same kinds of comments we hear from the mob, who say the bums need to get a job.

Does my friend support Peter MacKay's call for vigilante action? If that is the case, this member is going to see a lot of trouble across this country from the actions and language his party is promoting.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I do not think anybody on this side of the House is advocating for violence or trying to incite violence. If my hon. colleague, whom I respect greatly, had listened to my comments, he would know that I talked specifically about the dialogue that needs to take place within the Wet'suwet'en and the need to respect the words of all Wet'suwet'en.

We need to make sure we hear the voices of the Wet'suwet'en who support this project and the 20 first nations that support economic prosperity. They support lifting their communities out of economic despair. They support opportunity for their youth, not just for today but in the future. We need to listen to those voices. That is the only way we will be able to move this project forward.

● (1030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members they have to be in their seats if they want to get up and ask questions.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, this might surprise some of my colleagues, but this is my first speech in this Parliament. Therefore, I want to take a moment to thank my family, volunteers, staff and the people of Chilliwack—Hope for returning me here to the House of Commons for the third time. I thank them for that honour.

We are here for an important debate today. We have a motion calling on the House to stand in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en people, the majority of whom have indicated their support for the Coastal GasLink project.

I want to start with a quote from the Prime Minister. When he was in opposition, he went around the country and stated, “Governments might grant permits, but only communities can grant permission.” Of course, he has not lived up to that. One can ask many communities along the way. In this case, the Government of British Columbia has granted the permits. After an independent, robust scientific review, it has agreed that this project can go forward. The government of John Horgan and the NDP in British Columbia have supported this project. The community that will be affected has also granted its permission. The 20 elected band councils, which is every band council along the route, have voted and indicated that, after many years of consultations with the company and the Crown, they are on board with this project because of the economic opportunity it presents, the respect that has been shown to them by the company and the process that has been undertaken over a number of years. The 20 elected band councils support the project. That is not in dispute.

My colleague from Cariboo—Prince George quoted a hereditary chief who said that 85% of the people in the Wet'suwet'en territory support the project. The majority of the hereditary chiefs support the project. The hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en Nation obviously have some matters they need to resolve in their own house. There has been conflict among the families. That is never something we want to see, but it is the reality. We are in a situation now where the hereditary chiefs disagree on how we should move forward. I believe the reporting on this is inaccurate. There are constant references to protests in support of the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en people, but not all of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. The majority of them are in support of this project. There are three hereditary chiefs who are women, and other hereditary chiefs have tried to strip them of their title for supporting the project. Obviously, there is an internal debate and dialogue that needs to continue with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and their families. However, to suggest that somehow all the hereditary

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chiefs are opposed to this and are in conflict with the elected band councils is simply incorrect.

The motion also calls on the House to condemn the radical activists who have tried to exploit those divisions and tried to use the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs to advance their own goals. Sometimes people do not like that kind of verbiage. They do not like terms like “radical activists”. However, when a group of people go to the home of the democratically elected Premier of the Province of British Columbia, blockade his house and threaten to take him hostage, I would say they are radical activists. When there are people who look a court injunction in the face and say they do not care about the court and ignore its decision, where does that stop? That is the real concern here. To me, that is the difference. In Canada, we all agree that when we have disputes on matters of law, the arbiter is the court. There are times when I do not agree with the decisions of the court. Sometimes I do not agree with the decisions of the highest court in this land.

● (1035)

I live in Canada. I am a citizen of this country. As a society, we all have that unspoken agreement that we will abide by the decisions of the courts. We cannot have a situation now where we pick and choose which court decisions we will follow and which ones we will ignore, and nor can the government. That is what has happened here over the last two weeks.

We have had numerous court injunctions granted against protesters who are blockading rail, who are causing harm to our economy, who are quite frankly threatening the health and safety of Canadians. It is -22°C with the wind chill here today. It is not too warm across the country except in my home province of British Columbia. There is a shortage of propane. There is a shortage of home heating oil. There is a shortage of chlorine and chemicals that we use to keep our water systems clean. These are all at risk, yet the government is ignoring it.

I noticed how the Prime Minister's tone changed quite a lot yesterday after he saw the public opinion poll and heard from his own caucus members. He finally admitted that the blockades were illegal, because the courts have declared them illegal. The law is being broken with the illegal activities that are taking place, such as trespassing on the rail lines, etc. Now we have contempt of court injunctions.

When a government refuses to state in the House of Commons, or anywhere, that it believes the court is right, that it believes that court decisions should be followed, that it believes that court injunctions should be upheld and enforced, we see why more and more protesters choose more and more sites.

The Prime Minister, through his inaction and his weak leadership, is emboldening these protesters to do things like show up at the home of the B.C. premier and threaten to take him under citizen's arrest, like blockade propane, home heating oil and chlorine for our water cleaning systems. All of this is apparently not worthy of condemnation by the Prime Minister.

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The Prime Minister has created this situation. He has repeatedly said there is no relationship more important than our relationship with indigenous Canadians, and then for four plus years he has failed to get the job done. In fact, he sent quite different signals to indigenous Canadians, particularly indigenous British Columbians.

People in my area remember well Canada's first indigenous justice minister being turfed out of cabinet and the Liberal Party for daring to stand up to the Prime Minister, and his callous remarks during a Liberal fundraiser where donors paid \$1,600. When a group of protesters arrived from Grassy Narrows, he said to a young indigenous woman, "Thank you for your donation." That is the relationship that he has fostered with indigenous people in this country. He is reaping what he has sowed.

We have a Prime Minister who spent the first 10 days of this crisis out of the country, spending taxpayers' money, going around Africa and meeting with people who do not share the values that he trumpets here at home, trying to get their votes for a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. He promoted the oil and gas industries in Africa while at the same time he talked about phasing out ours. Then he bowed and scraped to the Iranian foreign minister, bowing a couple of times, smiling and shaking hands with someone whose regime is responsible for shooting 57 Canadians out of the sky.

The Prime Minister cancelled his trip to Barbados, so I guess we should give him kudos for that. He finally realized the crisis we have here, but he has not done anything about it. He will not even call these blockades illegal. He will not even stand up for the court injunctions.

We have to decide here today whether we are going to stand with the forces that ignore court injunctions or whether we are going to stand up for the rule of law and demand that the Prime Minister stand up and say that the court injunctions should be enforced and the rule of law should be enforced and upheld.

• (1040)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, literally as the member was speaking, there was breaking news that the RCMP is signalling that it is interested in withdrawing in an attempt to have an open dialogue and discussion.

I have a simple question for the member, if I could just get over top of the heckling.

Does the member agree, as the Minister of Public Safety has signalled he does, that this is a good strategy of the RCMP, or does he think that the RCMP should continue to stay there and show its force?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I think that the RCMP should enforce the court injunction. It can decide how it does that, but it should get a signal from the government that we expect court injunctions to be enforced and upheld. However those in the RCMP decide, in their wisdom, that they want to proceed, I have no problem with that, but I do have a problem when we have a government that is signalling that it does not believe that court injunctions should be enforced. The RCMP will make its own decisions, as it has, but it should be given the direction that the government expects that court injunctions will be enforced and upheld.

While I am on my feet responding to the member's question, I would like to say that, clearly, we understand that the member, through some of the things that he has done over the last number days and weeks, such as sponsoring advertising calling for the shut-down of various energy projects, does not mind this kind of activity because it shuts down the energy sector, which is something he is in favour of. We are obviously opposed to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague, and I share his concern about the economic impact of this crisis.

I would like to know if my colleague is in favour of the Bloc Québécois's proposal to set up a war room. Given the significant economic impact, we should also consider temporarily suspending the Coastal GasLink project—just temporarily—until the crisis is resolved.

Would my colleague agree with that proposal?

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, no I would not agree with that approach. In fact, I would be more in favour of the approach of Premier Legault, who has gone to court for an injunction and said that as soon as the injunction is granted, he will be calling on the police to enforce it.

We cannot allow it when people are simply opposing the projects, and not because of the Wet'suwet'en people. Let us be clear about that. They oppose oil and gas development, and they are using the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en people to advance their own agenda. We do not agree with cancelling, delaying or suspending projects to reward those who are simply looking to shut down the Canadian energy sector. Instead, we believe in the rule of law. We believe that court injunctions should be enforced.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it seems to me a little rich that the Conservatives are demanding that police go in with injunctions when we are in such a tense situation.

I was on railway blockades. I negotiated with the OPP and the RCMP. I can tell the member that the OPP in Ontario knew very well what happened at Ipperwash, and they remember Mike Harris saying to get those damned "Indians out of the park".

Dudley George died and a police officer's career was ruined. I spoke to members of the OPP after that, and they said that they will never be dictated to by politicians who tell them to go in and enforce an injunction with native people, but that they will sit down and negotiate.

We need to de-escalate this, my friend. The member's call to send in the police to enforce this will create chaos across the country. I am asking him to think of Dudley George.

• (1045)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, if the member had actually been listening, I never said to send in the police. I am not telling the police how to do their jobs; I am telling them that their job is to respect the rulings of the courts.

If the court injunction is clear, then, to me, the government should be giving that direction that we expect it to be enforced. We leave it to individual police forces to determine how they will do that. However, it should be clear that on court decisions in this country, we cannot simply decide, from the heckling from the member for Kingston and the Islands, which court decisions we feel should be ignored and which should be enforced.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There has been some heckling on both sides. I would remind members, if they have questions and comments, that this will be debated all day. There will be plenty of opportunities to ask those questions and make those comments. As well, members who do have the floor are very capable of answering their own questions without having feedback from their colleagues.

On that note, resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging we are having this debate on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I would also like to express my extreme disappointment that the official opposition of this country has tabled such a divisive motion. It is indeed its leader and its party that are, as it says in their motion, “exploiting divisions within the Wet’suwet’en community.” At a time in which the country is in the midst of such a challenging situation, how does the opposition think that today’s motion could get us in any way closer to a resolution?

[Translation]

It is important for us to discuss the issues and possible solutions here in the House no matter what our party lines are.

[English]

Today’s motion is not about solutions. It is demonstrating a complete lack of understanding of the complexity, the sensitivity and the danger of the kind of inflammatory rhetoric that we heard this week from the Leader of the Opposition and the leadership candidate, Peter MacKay. Canadians are frustrated and, as the Prime Minister said so eloquently yesterday morning, they expect us to work together to get through this time.

Today we have learned that Deputy Commissioner Jenny Strachan has sent a letter to the hereditary chiefs, with a reassessment of the Community Industry Safety Office, in hope that it will promote continuing dialogue. I do wish the members opposite would sit down and meet with some of the passionate young people who are acting in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs. The young indigenous people whom I met with in the office—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Cariboo—Prince George that he has had his

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opportunity to debate in the House. If he has questions and comments, I would ask that he wait until it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, the young indigenous people whom I met with in the office of the Minister of Northern Affairs were not radical activists. They were sensitive, young indigenous people expressing the importance of the land, water and air.

One young woman, who had slept in the Minister of Northern Affairs’ office for over 10 days, tearfully expressed to me how upsetting it was to see the images and hear from the people being arrested for what they believed in, friendships that began a year ago and then having to witness their new friend being arrested earlier this month.

I believe we have learned from the crises at Oka and Ipperwash, in Caledonia and Gustafsen Lake. I believe the police also understand its role in that. Last year, we said that we never wanted to see again the images of police having to use force in an indigenous community in order to keep the peace.

Canada is counting on us to work together to create the space for respectful dialogue with the Wet’suwet’en peoples. We all want this dispute resolved in a peaceful and durable manner.

The rhetoric and divisive tactics from the other side are irresponsible. We want the Wet’suwet’en peoples to come together and resolve their differences of opinion. We want to work with both the elected chiefs in council and the hereditary chiefs toward a future outside the Indian Act, where, as a nation, they can choose the governance of their choosing, write their own laws and finally be able to have their rights affirmed as they take decisions with respect to their land, water and air in the best interests of their children and seven generations out.

We are inspired by the courageous Wet’suwet’en people who took the recognition of their rise to the Supreme Court of Canada in the Delgamuukw case in 1997. However, we need to be clear that the court did not at that time grant title to their lands. It affirmed the rights of the Wet’suwet’en but said the question of title was to be determined at a later time.

It has been more than 20 years, through many federal and provincial governments, and the Wet’suwet’en people are understandably impatient for the question of title to be resolved. I look forward to working together on an out-of-court process to determine title.

The Wet’suwet’en have worked hard on those next steps within the B.C. treaty process and more recently, since 2018, on specific claims, negotiation preparedness, nation rebuilding, with funding from the government for research.

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Two years ago I signed an agreement with the hereditary chiefs of the Office of the Wet'suwet'en on asserting their rights on child and family services. At the signing, there was some overlap. Some of the hereditary chiefs also hold or have held office within their communities as chiefs and/or councillors.

Across Canada, over half of the Indian Act bands are sitting down at tables to work on their priorities as they assert their jurisdiction. From education to fisheries to child and family services to policing to court systems, we have made important strides forward in the hard work of what Lee Crowchild describes as “deconstructing the effects of colonization.”

In British Columbia, we have been inspired by the work of the B.C. summit as they have been able to articulate and sign, with us and the B.C. government, a new policy that will, once and for all, eliminate the concepts of extinguishment, cede and surrender for future treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

This new B.C. policy is transformative. It represents years of hard work that has eliminated so many of the obstacles that impeded the treaty process. It will be an essential tool as we are able to accelerate the progress to self-determination. I believe the B.C. policy can provide a template for nations from coast to coast to coast.

We have together agreed that no longer will loans be necessary for first nations to fund their negotiations in Canada. We are forgiving outstanding past loans and, in some cases, paying back nations for loans that had already been repaid.

For over two years, we have worked with the already self-governing nations on a collaborative fiscal agreement that will provide stable, predictable funding, which will finally properly fund the running of their governments.

• (1050)

[Translation]

This new funding arrangement will provide them with much more money than they would have received under the Indian Act.

[English]

The conditions are right to move the relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada to one based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. It has been exciting to watch the creativity and innovation presented by the Ktunaxa and Stó:lo nations in their negotiations of modern treaties.

We were inspired to see the hereditary chiefs and elected chief and council of the Heiltsuk Nation work together to sign an agreement with Canada on their path to self-government.

We are also grateful to the B.C. government for its important work on reconciliation, including the passage of Bill 41, implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I would like to thank Murray Rankin for his important work for B.C. on lands and title with the Wet'suwet'en nation and Nathan Cullen for his work with all those involved in the current impasse.

We have seen that real progress can be made when hereditary and elected leadership come together with a shared vision of nation rebuilding and work together on a clear route to self-determination.

I look forward to having these conversations with the Wet'suwet'en nation.

We have an obligation to move beyond the good work we are doing on child and family services to a meaningful discussion on reconstituting the Wet'suwet'en nation.

It is time to build on the Delgamuukw decision, time to show that issues of rights and title can be solved through meaningful dialogue

• (1055)

[Translation]

My job is to ensure that Canada finds out-of-court solutions and to fast-track negotiations and agreements that make real change possible.

[English]

I hope that shortly we will be able to sit down with the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en and work together on their short and long-term goals.

There are many parts of Canada where title is very difficult to determine. Many nations occupied the land for different generations. There are other areas like Tsilhqot'in's title land and Haida Gwaii where there is clear evidence that the land has been occupied by one nation for millennia.

We are at a critical time in Canada. We need to deal effectively with the uncertainty. Canadians want to see indigenous rights honoured. They are impatient for meaningful progress. Canadians are counting on us to implement a set of rules and processes in which section 35 of our Constitution can be honourably implemented.

[Translation]

Passing legislation and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, is one way to move forward.

[English]

Canadians acknowledge that there has been a difference of opinion among the Wet'suwet'en peoples. As was said, 20 elected chiefs and councils have agreed to the project in consultation with their people. Women leaders have expressed an opinion that the project can help eliminate poverty or provide meaningful work for their young men and reduce domestic violence and incarceration

Crystal Smith, chief councillor for Haisla nation, is in favour of the pipeline. She eloquently said this morning on Ottawa Morning that the solutions would be found within the Wet'suwet'en nation and that the outside voices were not helpful.

There needs to be unity and consensus within the community, and today's debate is not helping.

Some have expressed that in an indigenous world view providing an energy source that will reduce China's reliance on coal is good for mother earth. We are hoping the Wet'suwet'en people will be able to come together to take these decisions together, decisions that are in the best interests of their children and their children for generations to come.

[Translation]

We applaud the thousands of young Canadians fighting for climate justice.

[English]

We know that they need hope. They want to see a real plan to deal with the climate emergency. We believe we have an effective plan in place, from clean tech, renewable energy, public transit and protection of the land and water.

We want the young people of Canada and all those who have been warning about climate change for decades to feel heard.

[Translation]

They need hope, and they need to feel involved in coming up with real solutions.

[English]

As I mentioned Tuesday night, we have invested in and are inspired by the work of Val Napoleon and John Burrows at the Indigenous Law Lodge at UVIC. They will be able to do the research on the laws of many nations, so they are able to create governance structures and constitutions in keeping with their laws.

It is so important to understand the damage done by colonization and residential schools that has led to sometimes different interpretations of traditional legal practices and customs.

[Translation]

We think that, one day, Canada will be able to integrate indigenous law into Canada's legislative process, just as it did with common law and civil law.

[English]

We are also striving to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and to increase awareness of our shared history.

We need all the indigenous leadership to know that we are serious about rebuilding trust and working with respect, as the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Prime Minister have expressed in such a heartfelt way.

Following up on the repeated and public personal commitments by the Prime Minister and the B.C. premier and our letters of February 16 and yesterday, I and the B.C. Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation continue to offer our commitment to a process based upon trust and mutual respect to address the urgent issues of concern to the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en nation.

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We wrote to them on February 16, offering an urgent meeting with us, and we were willing to meet in Smithers if that was agreeable to them. In an effort to exemplify our commitment and recognizing the urgency of the situation, both of us travelled to Victoria on Monday to allow for short-notice travel to Smithers if that was their reply.

While we have not yet been able to meet in person, we have continued the dialogue through multiple conversations with some of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs in order to clarify a path forward. That was an important step, and we thank them for coming to the discussion with the same commitment for a peaceful resolution. We understand that they have urgent issues to resolve and require dedicated attention from both levels of government in working with them to chart a peaceful path forward.

We are committed to finding a mutually acceptable process with them and the Wet'suwet'en nation to sit down and address the urgent and long-term issues at hand. We wrote again yesterday to arrange an in-person meeting. We hope that the Wet'suwet'en will be able to express to those in solidarity with them that it is now time for them to stand down and let us get back to work with Wet'suwet'en nation with its own laws and governance and work nation to nation with the Crown. I am hoping to be able to return to British Columbia as soon as possible to continue that work.

In closing, I have to say that as a physician, I was trained to first do no harm. I believe today's debate is harmful to the progress we need to make in order to get to a durable solution.

● (1100)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is nothing inflammatory about this motion that we have put forward. We did so with respect. We did so with a thoughtful process. For the hon. colleague's reference, the motion is:

That the House stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route, the majority of hereditary chiefs, and the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people, who support the Coastal GasLink project, and condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community, holding the Canadian economy hostage, and threatening jobs and opportunities in Indigenous communities.

If our hon. colleague had listened to one word that I said, she would know that I said that today is about the Wet'suwet'en, and that this is a Wet'suwet'en issue, first and foremost, and that they have to get their house in order and they have to decide how we move forward.

Today I brought the voices of the Wet'suwet'en, the 85% who supported this. Our colleague across the way continues to say that she is trying to meet with the hereditary chiefs. I would challenge her that she should be meeting with all of the Wet'suwet'en. That is where the dialogue has to be. Bring everybody together. Our hon. colleague from Vancouver—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the member to ask a question so that other people can ask questions. Having 10 minutes does not mean that we lengthen the questions and comments per individual.

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Mr. Todd Doherty: I appreciate your comments, Madam Speaker, and I will get right to my question. Madam Speaker, should dialogue not be with all of the Wet'suwet'en, not just a small group?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, the hon. member just answered his own question.

The motion today is about standing in solidarity with one side in the disputes within that community. Our approach is that we must be able to unlock a peaceful space to have a conversation that will lead to consensus and unity and a process of harmony within that community. Today's debate and motion does exactly the opposite.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

With respect to the economic impacts, I have already received many calls from people working in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean's lumber and aluminum industries who are already struggling because of CUSMA. All the regions, including Ontario and Quebec, are feeling the effects and economic impacts that are a direct result of the Coastal GasLink project.

Why not put this project on hold, since it is the only one making such a huge impact on the economy? Why will the government not agree to put it on hold temporarily while it engages in negotiations with the Wet'suwet'en people?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the very interesting question.

The withdrawal of the RCMP today is a first step. We are hoping that this independent decision by the RCMP will lead to the barricades coming down. It is very important to understand that a company's decisions are made by the company itself. Today, we have hope that the barricades will come down.

• (1105)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest and I want to say that I am very pleased that the Minister of Indigenous Services went to meet with the Mohawks. That is a very good step.

What I am not hearing, though, is the sense of urgency. That is one thing I agree on with the Conservatives. We really need to address this situation before it starts to spiral. This is crucial. I am very pleased that the minister is ready to meet with them, but we need the Prime Minister at the table. We need to put a clear offer on the table in order to show negotiations in good faith and de-escalate things so they do not spiral.

Will the Prime Minister be ready to meet with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and then set up a process within those communities, perhaps with a mediator like Senator Murray Sinclair, so that we can offer a good-faith solution to the indigenous protesters across the country to show that the government is serious about addressing their concerns?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's thoughtfulness and understanding of the urgency and the real risk of making a difficult situation even worse.

We are pursuing dialogue, making an attempt at dialogue. As the hereditary chiefs have come east to meet with the Mohawk, there is no question that the Minister of Indigenous Services, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and I are all prepared to meet with them while they are in the east if that is their wish. Otherwise, we are prepared to go to their territory to meet with them.

The Prime Minister has indicated by letter that these meetings are very important. It is important for us to make a preliminary attempt so that we can assure some success in demonstrating progress to everybody. We will take this one step at a time, but today is a good step with the change in posture of the RCMP in the Wet'suwet'en territory.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard from and spoke with Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs in Prince George two weeks ago. They were very emphatic about their support for that particular project.

The minister has a higher responsibility of not bringing rhetoric to this place over this issue, and you are the very one bringing the rhetoric to this place on the issue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address his questions to the Chair.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

The minister has the responsibility to not bring rhetoric to this place. I ask if she has spoken with or heard from the hereditary chiefs, as we have.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker, I spoke with Chief Woos on Sunday. We had a conference call with a number of the hereditary chiefs on Tuesday. They have some issues that they need to deal with before they can meet with me, but they know that this will continue.

My officials met in Smithers on Friday with a number of the hereditary chiefs, and we also have tables with them around child and family services and moving forward. As well, I have discussed with Murray Rankin, as well as Nathan Cullen, the good work they are doing on behalf of the Province of British Columbia.

This is a work in progress. We want to see consensus, unity and harmony within that community, and that is why I have been disappointed in the rhetoric coming from the other side.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I recognize that the hon. minister has had extensive dealings with the Wet'suwet'en peoples and with the nation-to-nation relationship that applies to band councils and hereditary chiefs. I wonder if she could comment on claims made in the opposition motion, which I find to be factually incorrect, making claims about a majority of this and a majority of that. Personally, I do not think anyone in this place can make those claims. I wonder if the hon. minister knows differently.

• (1110)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, I too was questioning the number. I understand there are 13 hereditary chiefs. There are four vacancies now. I do not see that a majority of the hereditary chiefs right now are in support of this project. The question is about coming together in harmony, consensus and unity, and not dividing that community any more with these outside voices.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my 20 minutes with my very honourable and esteemed colleague and friend, the hon. member for Montarville.

I want to take this opportunity to try to sum up the situation because it is not really clear. The news reports are all over the place and contradictory. Nevertheless, it is important for everyone to be on the same page to find solutions.

I would also mention that the idea of leadership has been getting a lot of attention lately. Leadership is mostly a question of attitude. Again, I saw a few ministers attend the meeting with the Prime Minister. One minister said that the government wanted to have a dialogue, because it did not want to not have a dialogue. I was deeply moved by that profound statement. Another minister said that the government was going to move quickly, and I saw the Prime Minister come in basically saying that he was coming in.

I want to remind members that there have been other major crises in the past that have affected Quebecers and Canadians. I will speak about three of them. In 1998 we had an ice storm. Quebec's premier, Lucien Bouchard, delivered an update about the situation every day in the late afternoon. I can still picture it. It was an act of leadership intended to maintain public confidence in light of the magnitude of the problems.

Then there was the terrible Lac-Mégantic disaster, when the then Quebec premier, Ms. Marois, did essentially the same thing. I was the environment minister at the time, and that is what we did. We provided people with the most up-to-date information on what was happening. My esteemed colleague was also involved on the public safety side.

Just last year, flooding affected many Quebecers. The Quebec government and the premier provided a detailed daily update about what was happening. This morning, the Prime Minister blew in, took off his toque and then disappeared. I believe that we are all in need of clearer and stronger leadership.

Another aspect of the motion is problematic. The motion claims that the majority of the Wet'suwet'en people, and in some cases all or at least most people in the nation, support the gas pipeline. I do not know where that number is coming from. I do not know where that claim is coming from. I do not know how that was calculated. That nation controls its own institutions. What is more, some sources say that there are five hereditary chiefs, others say there are nine and still others say there are 13. It is a bit vague, but that is their prerogative. Would the Conservatives say that the Prime Minister of Canada cannot govern because he got fewer votes than they did? No. They may not like it, but they recognize that Canada has its institutions, as we should recognize that the Wet'suwet'en nation

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has its own institutions. Who are we to interpret that to make it fit our political agenda?

Our job must be to first recognize this nation and its institutions. We need to ask the nation to choose one or more representatives who are prepared to meet with us, and we must do the same in order to open a discussion. That is how we must manage this supposedly nation-to-nation relationship, without ever losing sight of the fundamental objective, which is the immediate lifting of all blockades throughout the country. That is what we must do.

We can accomplish that through a series of actions that will show Quebec and Canadian businesses and workers that the government is doing something.

• (1115)

The Premier of Quebec said this morning that he was looking into alternatives to rail and transport trucks. Something is getting done in Quebec. Quebec says its options are limited and that its only recourse for putting an end to the crisis would be to request police intervention, although that would not be its first choice. I think that sounds reasonable and proactive, unlike what I am seeing here in Ottawa, at least in some cases. I am starting to see some movement.

I also want to point out that an indigenous blockade on indigenous territory is one thing. A blockade organized by indigenous people on non-indigenous territory is something else. A blockade set up for fun by college students on Montreal's south shore is a third thing. The third thing is unacceptable. The third thing is obstructing rail traffic on Montreal's south shore.

I have something to say to my constituents. There are two train stations, one in McMasterville and one in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, where traffic has been blocked because people who are not indigenous thought it would be fun to get in on the action. I thought of the people who blocked the Jacques Cartier Bridge not so long ago. I felt the situation was serious and needed to be resolved in a serious way, with the right people at the table, to avoid another college strike.

One possible solution would be daily reports. Everyone seems a little confused about the RCMP. Does the RCMP take orders from the government or not? When it suits the government, the government says that the RCMP is independent and it cannot be told what to do or not to do. The RCMP said that it would move its command centre. The government cannot boast about that move, because the RCMP is independent. It was faster and smarter than the government. If this helps meet the demands of the Wet'suwet'en, that is a positive first step. I remind members that not too long ago the RCMP had snipers pointed at Wet'suwet'en protesters. That is certainly not how to defuse tension. This is positive.

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There have been other demands, but I think that we need to take initiative and do something so that we are not simply responding to demands. It could be never-ending. The second step would be to create a forum for important, fundamental, serious, sustainable and credible discussions to convince them that something will happen if they sit down at the table. This second gesture would be significant.

The third step is a sensitive subject in a Parliament that, with few exceptions, is decidedly pro-oil. I suggest suspending work on the project temporarily as a way of extending an olive branch, because I personally believe that work on infrastructure designed to increase the amount of fossil fuel we transport and consume is bad in general. My suggestion to temporarily suspend construction is a compromise, one that the Wet'suwet'en nation itself may not be making. Let's temporarily suspend the work.

That is not within federal jurisdiction, but I would imagine the Prime Minister of Canada, who thinks he is the boss of the provinces, could pick up the phone, call the Premier of British Columbia, and tell him to ask the company to put the work on hold for a bit.

Taken together, these three steps—creating a forum for discussion, withdrawing the RCMP and temporarily suspending work on the project—will probably, but not definitely, be enough to remove the blockades and get the right people to the table. Once that happens, we can resume relatively normal economic activity throughout Canada and Quebec and engage in serious discussions. Without serious discussions, the same thing will just keep happening again and again.

I think solutions are within reach. They have to be implemented in good faith with clear leadership that can build consensus in Parliament. We need to show first nations that we are serious, committed and credible, and that although we will not give in, we are acting in good faith. The government needs to keep its election promises and prove those things are true.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is related to the RCMP and the actions called for by the leader of the official opposition, who gave a fairly clear indication that if the Conservatives were in office, they would have instructed the RCMP. We have taken the position that is not what we should be doing. We should be respecting the rule of law. We should be respecting the importance of the RCMP and allow our law enforcement agencies to do what they do best.

Could the member provide his thoughts on why politicians should not be instructing law enforcement agencies, whether provincial or national, regarding who they should be arresting?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, the rule of law gives power to institutions. In this case, we are talking about the RCMP. The RCMP's power to intervene by force does not mean it is obliged to do so. Obviously, it was rather wise not to take such an approach.

Recognizing that the blockades are illegal, as the Prime Minister did yesterday, does not automatically mean that we should make a crisis worse by making an already extremely tense situation aggressive and maybe even violent. That is not what we want. I therefore think it was wise not to use this type of inappropriate intervention.

I understand that this is the RCMP's decision and that we are still waiting for this government to make its first decision and its first move. So far, the government has not done anything or has not told us about any practical measures it has taken, despite the suggestions that have been made.

[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday in my riding of Sturgeon River—Parkland, we had an incident in which a blockade was put up. I believe it was the first blockade in Alberta. There was a confrontation with counter-protesters, which I also believe is one of the new events happening.

I wonder if the member can comment on what needs to be done to prevent violence from breaking out. Canadians are getting frustrated. Quebeckers are getting frustrated. If the RCMP is not there to ensure the rule of law, an incident could take place that we would not want to see.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, you cannot imagine how happy I am to hear that my colleague does not want to see that.

In fact, yesterday evening, I felt somewhat obliged to respond to a comment from a candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party, who congratulated two men in a truck. He said that by dismantling a barricade and loading it into two pickup trucks, these two men went and did what the Prime Minister of Canada failed to do.

I was astounded to see that someone who aspires to be the Prime Minister of Canada is encouraging people to take the law into their own hands by sending in some muscle to take down the barricades in a place where tensions are running high.

I urge my colleague to speak to this party leadership candidate, even if it is just to say that this is an example of what not to do. Civilians must not be told to go confront other civilians on the mistaken assumption that their actions will help resolve a potentially serious crisis.

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I concur with many of the statements my colleague made.

I listened to the minister's comments as well as the questions that were asked. My colleague asked the minister if the Prime Minister would be attending the meeting, and it was deflected. We asked this question yesterday and we are asking it again today. Do you believe the Prime Minister should be at the meeting the hereditary chiefs have requested?

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address the question to the Chair and not the individual member.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, as I said at the top of my speech, leadership is very much a question of attitude. I think legitimacy comes from the way a leader handles issues.

Waffling and the appearance of weakness, assuming it is only the appearance, will certainly not inspire confidence or get the people and representatives of the Wet'suwet'en nation to believe that he is starting to be serious and that they can sit down with him.

That is not what we are seeing. I think the Prime Minister needs to take the bull by the horns, put his toque back on and go to British Columbia to meet with them. Better yet, the leaders, or some leaders, of the Wet'suwet'en nation are coming to Belleville and Quebec. He should meet with them then.

I know how much he likes a photo opportunity. This would be a great one, and he would be starting a conversation.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is a proverb that says the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I am starting from the assumption that our Conservative friends had good intentions in moving today's motion. Nevertheless, we need to realize that the last thing we need today is a tone that leads to confrontation. I think what we need instead is a tone that leads to collaboration, discussion and negotiation.

We absolutely cannot subscribe to the Manichean view on display in the Conservatives' motion, implying that there are good guys on one side and bad guys on the other. Who are we to determine or judge that sort of thing? I think we do not have all the information to make that kind of call.

I sense some sordid partisan motives behind today's motion, and I do not like it. We really do not need that kind of motive in a situation like this one. On the contrary, we need to work in a spirit of collaboration, as I was saying earlier. That is the only way to arrive at a peaceful solution to the conflict that is happening right now.

On the other hand, we cannot condone the current lack of leadership on the part of the Prime Minister and his government. The government is needlessly letting the situation drag on, and as the saying goes, "the longer we wait, the worse things will get".

On Tuesday, we were treated to the Prime Minister's mollifying words when he delivered a statement filled with platitudes. There again, I would say that the perfect is the enemy of the good. This speech was filled with platitudes, and we saw how effective it was. In fact, it was so persuasive that instead of convincing the protesters to end the blockades, it resulted in new ones being erected yesterday, whether it was out west or, as pointed out by the leader of the Bloc, on the line linking Mont-Saint-Hilaire to Montreal. Stations in his riding and mine were closed.

In Saint-Basile-le-Grand and Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, users of public transit were surprised to find out that they were also being

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taken hostage by this conflict even though on Tuesday the Prime Minister had called for it to end. Suddenly, they could no longer use public transit. What is happening is of great concern.

I have to say that the Prime Minister's many tearful displays of contrition over the past few years, while entirely justified, do not bring us any closer to reconciliation. To achieve true reconciliation, the government needs to make good on the lip service it has been paying for many years now.

In 1982, in the aftermath of the iniquitous repatriation of the Constitution at Quebec's expense, the current Prime Minister's father entered into constitutional negotiations with first nations. Those constitutional negotiations were never concluded, and now here we are today. What we are experiencing today is the result not only of the government dragging its feet since the 1980s, but also the totally unacceptable treatment our first nations have endured for centuries.

It is time to stop paying lip service and actually walk the talk. In that regard, it is important to note, as the leader of the Bloc Québécois pointed out a few minutes ago, that our party is the only one that has put forward any concrete proposals for dealing with the crisis.

• (1130)

These are solutions that go beyond lip service and do not require forceful interventions that could potentially make the situation much worse. I urge the government to stop seeing the members opposite as a monolithic group who are all of the same mind, since that is not the case, and to be receptive to the proposals that have been made so far. I think there are still some people on the Liberal government side who have not yet realized that they are a minority government and that we have to work together and take the best ideas from all sides. The Bloc Québécois has proposed some concrete ideas. The Bloc leader referred to those a few minutes ago. I urge the government to take action.

It is important to recognize that the government's procrastination is forcing the provinces and Quebec to act in the federal government's place, and they will end up getting the blame for the actions they take. We have even heard ministers, including the Minister of Transport, suggest as much. This shows a lack of leadership and a lack of courage from the Liberal government.

The Quebec National Assembly adopted a motion on February 18. I want to read it out.

THAT the National Assembly reaffirm its adherence to the principles of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;

THAT, accordingly, it invite the governments of Québec [and] Canada to maintain egalitarian nation-to-nation relations with the indigenous peoples of Québec and Canada....

The next part is important to our Conservative friends.

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THAT it acknowledge that the current conflict, which stems from the Coastal GasLink pipeline project, is having an undesirable impact on railway network users and on the economy [of Quebec];

THAT the National Assembly call for a negotiated, peaceful political solution to the current crisis, in order to prevent violence.

The consequences are so dire for the Quebec economy, the Canadian economy and mass transit users that Quebec's premier was forced to seek an injunction and consider the possibility of intervening. What is the federal government waiting for?

The federal government claims to want to avoid the kinds of crises we have seen in the past, but its procrastination is leading us straight into a potential crisis. What is it waiting for?

I would appeal to that desire for social peace and urge the protesters at the blockades to consider that their protests and actions have gotten society to pay attention to their demands and hopes for next steps. I hope that this will lead us to sit down and finally negotiate with first nations.

That said, the protesters must realize that if they continue, the us-versus-them mentality will persist. That mentality certainly does nothing to foster understanding, negotiation and co-operation.

If everyone is serious about negotiating a solution, then actions need to be taken by all sides.

That is what we expect from a government, even a minority one.

• (1135)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague's remarks and remind the House, if he did not say so at the beginning of his speech, that he is a former minister of public security. If there is anyone who knows what it means to enforce the law, it is him. I would also like to acknowledge him and his government for their excellent response to the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic that shook Quebec and all of Canada.

Now, in his remarks, the hon. member referred to forceful interventions. He obviously disagrees with that approach. Without naming us, he was targeting us indirectly. I understand that, too. It is good politics.

However, is enforcing the law a forceful intervention? Section 5 of the RCMP Act gives authority to the Minister of Public Safety.

The Premier of Quebec said this morning that the blockades would be removed as soon as the injunction was issued. The Premier of Quebec said that the law exists and that the police could intervene.

Does the hon. member agree with the Premier of Quebec, who said that laws must be obeyed?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, as I had the opportunity to mention a few moments ago, the current Liberal government's procrastination is forcing the Quebec and provincial governments to consider the possibility of intervening to enforce the law.

Of course what is going on right now is illegal. Of course everyone would like a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, the Liberal government's attitude is driving the provinces and Quebec to consider intervening, which will only make the situation worse.

No one thinks that intervening will improve the situation, quite the contrary. Once again, I appeal to this government's courage and initiative and urge it to intervene to prevent the situation from getting worse. I will conclude by saying that, unfortunately, letting this situation drag on encourages others to try the same thing. The leader of the Bloc Québécois mentioned this in connection with the line between Mont-Saint-Hilaire and Montreal.

Mr. René Arseneault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Official Languages), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening with great interest to the comments made by my esteemed colleague from Montarville.

It is odd that the Bloc Québécois, whose main talking point is that the federal government must avoid interfering in Quebec's affairs as much as possible, is now asking why the federal government will not intervene regarding the blockades in the interest of public safety in the province of Quebec.

Like my esteemed colleague, I am old enough to remember what happened at Oka in 1990. The Sûreté du Québec was dispatched to the barricades. Then the federal government was asked to intervene, and the conflict went on for 78 days, or two and a half months.

First of all, I would like to ask my esteemed colleague what he remembers about Oka and how it relates to today's situation, which affects the entire country, not just a small area of Quebec. What does he remember about those notorious 78 days, for that is how long it took to reach a resolution?

Second, what he calls procrastination on the government's part is actually an effort to enter into dialogue with key stakeholders that is happening as we speak.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I am not sure where my colleague was when I gave my speech. I never asked for the government to intervene with respect to the blockades in Quebec. That is not what I asked for.

In fact, I said just the opposite. I asked the government to sit down with the nations involved, beginning with the Wet'suwet'en nation, in order to come up with a solution to end the blockades across Canada, including in Quebec. As far as I know, and correct me if I am wrong, the federal government still has a fiduciary responsibility to first nations. I therefore call on the government to do its job, under the Constitution that it imposed on us, and look after our indigenous nations.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, I am extremely honoured to stand in this House, the people's House, to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay on unceded Algonquin territory. Let us just reflect on that a moment. This is not just some nice thing we Canadians now say, when we do the land recognition. It is a statement of understanding that there are outstanding historical rights and land issues running across our country, and we need to acknowledge that. That is one of the reasons we are here today.

We are at an unprecedented moment in Canada's history, a moment when we can all come together and rise up to meet the challenge, or we can give in to our lazier base motives of political machismo and spite. I believe we are now dealing with a crisis that has moved from Wet'suwet'en territory out across Canada, and it requires leadership. It requires us, as parliamentarians, to recognize it and be honest with each other. This is bigger than all of us, but if we do not rise to the task, the risks to our nation right now are very serious.

We can come together and try to untangle this extremely complex Gordian knot, or we can play to the usual base in this House of division. I find this opposition motion from the Conservatives to be very telling of their political tactics. This motion has us standing in this House today to “condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community”.

It is our job to recognize that there needs to be a conversation not only with the Wet'suwet'en people, but also with indigenous people across this country. It is not for us to say that if they support a gas line, we will support them, and have Parliament come down in the middle of a very tense motion.

I point to the other motion the Conservatives brought forward. They were willing to use this national crisis to try to bring down the government and save the opposition leader's political career, who has been rejected by his own party. That is not leadership. That is more of the same kind of joker chaos politics that we do not need at this time.

This past weekend, I joined thousands of young people in the streets of Ottawa. People were also marching in Montreal, Halifax and Vancouver. It was extremely inspiring to see these young people, young indigenous leadership, stepping forward at the front of the march. I spoke to many of them and asked where they were from. They were from places such as Kanesatake, Kitigan Zibi, Fort Albany and Barrière Lake.

I think of the Leader of the Opposition who told these young indigenous people to check their privilege. I know he was not serious. I know he was just doing it as a dig, a slur, a spite, but that is not leadership. The message it is sending to this young generation is that this Parliament is in opposition to their hopes and dreams, and that is not Canada.

I think of the young woman I met from Fort Albany, and the Conservatives would tell her to check her privilege. Her grandparents were at Federal Court this week for the St. Anne's residential school crisis, where some of the worst crimes in history committed

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against children happened. Her grandparents in Fort Albany are still fighting, and Conservatives would tell this young woman to check her privilege.

I think of Kanesatake and the Mohawk people who have been there since long before us and who will be there long after us, and the Leader of the Opposition is telling the woman I met to check her privilege. Of course he has a \$900,000 slush fund for treats and perks. That is quite privileged.

I also think of the amazing young woman I met who spoke up from Barrière Lake, Quebec. Barrière Lake's territory has been stripped of forestry and has been flooded out time and time again by massive hydro dams, and the people have received nothing. Her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have fought just to stay on that land. To tell her to check her privilege is not on.

• (1145)

Then there is Kitigan Zibi. There are so many young people from Kitigan Zibi. Kitigan Zibi is not very far from Ottawa. It is an incredible Algonquin community right beside Maniwaki. Maniwaki has clean drinking water, but Kitigan Zibi does not. The Conservatives tell the world that they can drive a bitumen pipeline through the Rocky Mountains, but we cannot get clean water to a community that close to Ottawa. This is why people are marching.

What we need to do here today is to not play games with these kinds of motions that the Conservatives are using to divide the Wet'suwet'en people.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: We need to say we have a much bigger crisis. We need to start to untangle this and find a way to de-escalate, because—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Would members respect the time the hon. member has for his speech? Members can listen to what he is saying and then ask questions.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I do not lose any sleep over angry Conservatives heckling and shouting. They are the same kind of people who are on Twitter, and they probably have their own troll farm giving them messages.

We need to deal with a way to end the railway blockades. I want to talk about how we move forward on that, because I am very concerned that this issue could spiral out of control very quickly. To see the language from the Conservatives about the mob and the radicals and the professional protesters and the eco-terrorists is putting us on more and more dangerous ice.

I was absolutely shocked that Peter MacKay would post a tweet of an ugly confrontation of some guy in a truck shouting at young indigenous people and telling them to drop dead, and that Peter MacKay would promote that vigilantism. That is not what we do in Canada, and we cannot allow that to happen.

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I would urge my Conservative colleagues to remember what happened at Oka and Elsipogtog. I remember with Ipperwash Mike Harris standing up and saying, "I want the g.d. Indians out of the park." Dudley George died and an OPP officer's career was ruined.

Never again would the OPP take those kinds of orders from a government, and I am very pleased today to see that the RCMP is offering to step down in Wet'suwet'en. That is a good first step.

I would like to take a minute here to recognize two important people whom I have come to know. One is the late Wayne Russett of the RCMP, whom I negotiated with many times. He was an incredible diplomat in defusing situations on blockades.

I got my political start on a railway blockade. The Conservatives make it seem like it is just people who are lazy and do not want to go to work, but when people are on a blockade it is because they have no other choice. They have been betrayed by a process and betrayed by a system. It took the people of northern Ontario standing up on a railway blockade to get the issues of environmental protection on our land recognized, and it brought Canada to a better place.

One of the key negotiators besides Wayne Russett was officer Jim MacDonald of the OPP, who came in with the subpoena and the injunction. Officer Jim MacDonald is a big man with a big voice. We became very good friends because he knew what we were doing was right, and he knew that the OPP was being put in a very difficult position.

We need to start looking at how to defuse the situation. The Prime Minister's plan to replace the RCMP with indigenous police is showing a continued lack of leadership. The Prime Minister needs to move beyond saying we are here to talk and here to listen. I appreciate the minister's talk about how we are going to move things forward over the next number of years, but we have a crisis now.

When I see young indigenous people walking in the streets with signs saying that reconciliation is dead, it is heartbreaking, but it is something I have heard again and again in the communities as their frustrations grow. That frustration is real and it is up to us to say that reconciliation is not dead because it is the obligation of the government and settler state.

Indigenous people have nothing to reconcile. It is their lands that were taken, their children who were taken, and it is their rights and their rules of law that have been undermined time and time again. When they are walking in the streets saying that reconciliation is dead, it is up to us to raise the bar.

The Prime Minister has said he is willing to listen. That is a good sign, but he needs to be willing to listen and to meet. He needs to show leadership. What is happening in the Wet'suwet'en territory now has touched off something much bigger, much more tense and much more complex. The possibility of something going wrong at one of those railway blockades is very real. There is the possibility of someone getting hurt. The possibility of some idiot driving a truck through a crowd is very real.

That is why the words we say in this House matter. We have to be able to de-escalate this. These blockades are putting enormous

economic pressure on our country right now. That is why we need to be able to put an offer on the table. In order for people to step back from a blockade, they need to know that something is going to change.

● (1150)

This morning, the RCMP said that they were willing to step out of the Wet'suwet'en territory. I think that is a very good step.

To do that then we cannot just, as the Prime Minister suggested, replace it with indigenous police and have life carry on. We need a time for discussion. We need to ask Coastal GasLink to suspend work and suspend moving into the territory while this negotiation takes place. It is not that radical a thing to say, because nothing is going to happen in that territory until this gets decided anyway.

Third, it needs to be the Prime Minister himself who goes to Wet'suwet'en territory to sit down and meet. I am very pleased that the Minister of Indigenous Services met with the Mohawks in Belleville. I think that is a very positive step, but it is the Prime Minister who needs to show leadership. He needs to put on the table that we will deal with these issues between the hereditary chiefs and the elected band councils.

I have nothing negative to say about the people who signed the agreements. I have nothing negative to say about the political leaders and business people who moved forward believing they had an agreement. However, clearly, within the indigenous community, there is a deep divide that needs to be addressed, and we need the Prime Minister there.

Fourth, I would say that the Prime Minister needs to meet and appoint a special emissary to start building trust. I cannot speak for Senator Murray Sinclair, and I have spoken with him on this issue, but it should be someone like Murray Sinclair or someone of a stature that is respected. Then we would agree that nothing happens until we go through this. Are we then going to say that the pipeline just moves ahead? No, we are going to sit down and talk with the Wet'suwet'en people and find out where we go next.

Then I would ask the Prime Minister, following an agreement, to set up those meetings to reach out to the Mohawk people who are on the blockades, because we need to get the trains moving, and urge the Mohawks to recognize that there will be huge impacts on all of us. However, they are going to want to see good faith, because they are not just going to walk away at this moment.

There is a fifth issue, which is probably the most difficult for the government to agree to. We need a coherent plan to deal with the catastrophic climate change that is coming. The days when it was just business as usual, and we could keep pumping up greenhouse gas emissions without any credible plan, have hit a brick wall.

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I was out on the street seeing young people marching everywhere. They get it. They get that the promise of getting another pipeline, planting some trees and then getting another pipeline and planting more trees is not cutting it. They want to know why our carbon footprint is getting bigger and bigger every year.

We need to have a credible plan, and certainly that is going to be a discussion about Teck Frontier right now, because Jason Kenney has put that front and centre. This has become the Conservative proxy war, which I believe is destabilizing the issues that we need to address in order to get this blockade issue dealt with.

On the October Thanksgiving weekend in 2000, when I had never dreamed of becoming a politician, I was standing at the blockade when the OPP came at night and set up cars to come and arrest my neighbours, who were farmers and miners, Algonquin and Ojibwa people standing to defend the watershed of the region.

I got a call from the Crown prosecutor's office. I will not say who it was in the office, but someone called to say that they had just gotten a call from Mike Harris and he wanted 100 people arrested.

I asked the person from the Crown prosecutor's office what they were going to do. He said that there was not a judge within 300 kilometres who would sign a mass warrant for arrests, because they knew this was a tense situation. All they were asking the demonstrators to do was to not escalate.

We actually had this dance of negotiations between police and the protesters, who both understood that we needed to find a way out of this without it spiralling, because it could have spiralled very fast.

Having that experience of negotiating with police, I understand the tensions they are put under in this situation, so it is very unhelpful to have the Conservatives speak again and again about enforcing injunctions. There are so many rail crossings across this country. There are so many ways that people can rise up, and they are rising up.

• (1155)

This is a moment when Canada could recognize that this crisis could have been the LNG project, it could have been Teck or it could have been any number of things. This crisis has been 150 years in the making. This young generation of indigenous people is going to be heard.

It is up to this Parliament to say that we have to find a way to rise to this challenge, to recognize that it is bigger than all of us, to recognize the dangers of allowing this thing to spiral, because if it spirals and someone gets hurt, then there will be no trains running. The impacts and the divisions between Canadians would be enormous.

I have been talking with some of the young indigenous people. I have to say that when they were marching in Ottawa, a number of people waved and showed support. That is what Canada is.

Canada is a country that is coming to terms with a colonial past that we never understood we had, but we have it. It is there. It is real. It is being lived in the lives of young generations of first nations children.

I saw a sign that one young person posted. It said, "First you tried to take us off our land, and now you are trying to take our children." The Conservatives might think that is apples and oranges, but we have a \$10-billion class action lawsuit being brought forward by the AFN. We have a government that has spent millions of dollars fighting the principle that there has been systemic and reckless discrimination, not historical but ongoing, against first nation children.

What is the most important relationship to first nations people? It is not with a pipeline, I can tell members that. It is with their children. They have never seen a commitment to address the fact that the destruction of their children, families and identities is ongoing.

When members on the Conservative side talk about the rule of law, that does not really pass the nod test in indigenous communities that know that when they sign agreements with the federal government, those agreements last just as long as the government wants them to last and then they walk away.

I saw that in Barrière Lake. There was a beautiful agreement to rebuild that community. The government walked away. I saw that in Kashechewan, where they had a plan to move them off. There was a signed agreement, and the government walked away from that. We had commitments to end the fights on child welfare, and the government walked away from that.

For the government to be nice, saying that it is going to listen and saying, "Take down the barricades and blockades," is not going to cut it with indigenous people who have been lied to time and time again.

There is an urgency right now to try to de-escalate the situation. I am not saying anything less about the Wet'suwet'en and what is happening in the Wet'suwet'en territories and the discussion that needs to happen. We need to get this thing addressed.

However, we need to get the trains moving and to give Canadians certainty that we are apprised of the seriousness. That is going to come from leadership from the Prime Minister.

We also need to send a message to the indigenous youth and their allies who are marching across Canada that the issue of reconciliation is not dead. We just have not done a very good job on it. The issue of environmental crisis is real. The planet is burning, and Canada has failed.

When we address that, then I think we will be moving to a better place because there is nothing better, there is nothing more hopeful in this country than this young generation of indigenous people who will transform this nation for the better.

• (1200)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think everybody recognizes and agrees that unanimity is not possible. We have to respect the will of the people.

Does the member recognize, based on the number given by the National Coalition of Chiefs, that all 20 elected bands are for the project and the majority of hereditary chiefs are in favour of the project?

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Where is the line between doing what the majority of people want and waiting for 100% support, even if we know we will never achieve 100% support?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, this is a profound question that Canada is going to have to confront.

I think it is very unfortunate that the Conservatives have decided to use this as a motion to divide people by saying they “condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions”. The Conservatives are exploiting the divisions right now. That is what is happening.

As for the signed agreements, I would refer to Senator Murray Sinclair. I have worked on resource development projects. I have been involved in resource development projects. I have helped sign agreements. This can be done in very good faith.

However, as Murray Sinclair said the other day, when dealing with impoverished communities that are being given promises, as the Paul Simon quote goes:

...pocketful of mumbles
Such are promises

I would then go to the next line:

All lies and jests
Still, a man hears what he wants to hear
And disregards the rest

I find the Conservatives' use of numbers on the Wet'suwet'en that they will support and the Wet'suwet'en they will not to be pretty much—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There are many things about the member's initial remarks that would be defamatory if made outside the House, especially those about the Leader of the Opposition, and we showed forbearance during some of those comments. However in his most recent intervention he used the word “lying” in reference to other—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is getting into debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The member used the word “lying”, Madam Speaker, in reference to other members of the House. That is very clearly a matter of order. That member, notwithstanding his strong opinions, should be expected to follow the rules of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did not hear the word “liar”. We will take a look at Hansard and will come back to the House if necessary.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I know the Conservatives are against so many things, and now they are against Simon & Garfunkel. I quoted a lyric. I said, “All lies and jests, still a man hears what he wants to hear and he disregards the rest.” That perfectly sums up my opponent. I never called him a liar. The member is just disregarding the facts.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am a big fan of Simon & Garfunkel, but the context in which one uses a word, or misuses it, matters. The record will show that as part of a quotation or anything else, we cannot use unparliamentary language and we cannot use a quotation or lyric as an excuse to use unparliamentary language.

I would invite you, Madam Speaker, to review the tape, and if necessary, at a future point to correct the member on his unparliamentary behaviour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will come back to the House on that if necessary.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I think you would recognize that it would set a very dangerous precedent for us not to be allowed to quote Simon & Garfunkel. I know my hon. colleague is upset that I did not quote Nickelback, but I just have not heard them enough. It would be a very dangerous precedent to say Simon & Garfunkel is somehow insulting to Conservatives. I think they can rise above that. I trust that you would understand, Madam Speaker.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's words. One part of his speech that I find particularly interesting is that he probably defines one of the main causes of the crisis. That root cause is the Canadian economy's dependence on fossil fuels.

We have seen no indication that, in the future, we will not have more of these blockades being set up by people who are concerned about the climate crisis.

Does my colleague not think that one solution would be to stop overspending on economic projects tied to fossil fuels right now?

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the number one location in the world for a renewable economy is south central Alberta. Those facts are not from me but from meeting with energy workers, who ask where the plan is for the present Alberta government to start to move ahead on renewables.

What we see with Jason Kenney is a man who does not believe in making any effort and has alienated the rest of the country on this. This is what is causing the crisis. This is the proxy war the Conservatives are fighting.

My hon. colleague from Quebec understands full well that, when Quebec moved ahead with the hydroelectric dam, officials sat down and made a modern treaty with the Cree. They understood that there was going to be a negotiation about how to move forward.

The problem that we are seeing with the Conservative vision is that they are pushing further and further for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions without any credible plan to lower them. Without that, they are not going to have the social licence or the buy-in from the rest of Canadians.

There will be more conflict if people like Jason Kenney continue to push their 20th-century vision as opposed to recognizing a 21st-century reality.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member made an excellent speech, and it covered a lot of really good points.

The Conservative motion states that every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route supports this. Only five of the six Wet'suwet'en first nations actually signed on to the benefits agreement. The media give the idea that the majority of the hereditary chiefs are behind this, but that is not the case. They say that the vast majority of Wet'suwet'en people support this project as well. I am looking at media links. I am looking at information. There are a lot of unknowns in this situation.

What does the hon. member think of this motion as it stands? Where are the facts? Where did the Conservatives get these numbers? Even in the media reporting, nobody is completely sure how many people in Wet'suwet'en territory support this project or oppose it.

There is a lot of information about the elected chiefs being torn about this and that they signed on to this agreement because of the cash, even though they do not really support it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague because he is from Vancouver Island, the area where so many of these issues have been faced, and issues such as Delgamuukw and other major legal decisions that have come down in British Columbia about rights and titles.

Every time we brought these things forward, such as the Treaty of the Nisga'a, the Conservatives fought unbelievably to stop it. They fought against UNDRIP unbelievably. They had it killed in the House, and now they are coming forward as the voice of the Wet'suwet'en people.

I do not think there is an indigenous community in the country that would say the Conservatives have some numbers on the Wet'suwet'en people, so they must be accurate. I have been trying to find these sources of their numbers as well. I know one of them came from a tweet from Jason Kenney, so I think that pretty much sums up the credibility there.

The fundamental issue is that this is a motion that attempts to say there are good native people and there are bad, reckless, agitated ones who are fooling them and dividing them. We are saying we need to sit down and address in a 21st century manner the underlying dissent and obvious problems we are seeing in that region and then say to the rest of the country that out of this we will start to move forward. To just throw numbers around as the Conservatives are doing is not credible; it is just another tactic.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments from my friend in regard to the debate thus far today. My question is on the importance of de-escalating the situation. Many of us are really concerned

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about escalations and the long-term ramifications if something were to go wrong by escalating.

I would be interested in the member's thoughts in terms of how delicate an issue this is. It is not as simple as many would try to portray. They are taking a huge chance, as the Conservatives are doing day in and day out, when they continue to escalate the tensions that are there today.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, this is why at this moment our Parliament needs to say there is a bigger issue, which is the danger of what happens if some guy in a truck does what he did in Edmonton and tries to do that on a Mohawk blockade, or someone with a bigger vehicle drives through a blockade, or if someone feels they are going to take this into their own hands and a train gets derailed, or if someone gets hurt. Once someone gets hurt, all our talk is going to become moot, and that is the real danger.

This is like Idle No More 2.0. We remember how powerful Idle No More was. This is much bigger, and I am hearing from many young people who are watching this. They will see how we play this out in Parliament, so de-escalation has to be the first step that we take.

We do not have a solution for what is happening in the Wet'suwet'en territory right now. No one does right now, but we have to de-escalate so we can get those trains moving and take the tension off.

I would urge my hon. colleague to tell the Prime Minister he needs to sit down and meet. We need to start these meetings. We should have started these meetings two weeks ago, but right now this is where we are at. The longer we wait, the more chance this will go off the rails very badly and very quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from West Nova. I am very happy to see him with us in the House to discuss this important matter.

We are hearing all sorts of things here this morning. However, we are not hearing enough about the real issues or the motion we have put forward today.

The motion of my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George reads as follows:

That the House stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route, the majority of hereditary chiefs, and the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people, who support the Coastal GasLink project, and condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community, holding the Canadian economy hostage, and threatening jobs and opportunities in Indigenous communities.

That is exactly what we want. We want the conflict to be settled in a reasonable manner with respect for the different rules of law, the injunctions and, above all, the way things are done. The rule of law is important in Canada.

Unfortunately, there are a handful of radicals who are currently doing harm. They are hurting the cause of national reconciliation, they are hurting the cause of the Wet'suwet'en community, and they are hurting the economy of the entire country. That is what I am going to speak to today.

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I heard my colleague from the NDP ask us where we get our numbers and whether they are made up. We have heard all kinds of things about the numbers. I will tell you where we get our numbers. They come from the National Coalition of Chiefs, which has said that the majority of hereditary chiefs support the Coastal GasLink project. That is not coming from us, the Bloc Québécois or the Liberals.

In reality, this conflict is being led by a very small number of hereditary chiefs. Two of them are chiefs who ran in legitimate elections in the Wet'suwet'en communities and lost, so they do not have the legitimacy to represent the people of the Wet'suwet'en band council. The vast majority of Wet'suwet'en and all elected band councils on the proposed route of the Coastal GasLink pipeline support the project.

Theresa Tait-Day, one of the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en people, said that 85% of her people had supported the Coastal GasLink project.

I am not the one who said that, and my colleagues are not either. People from the community itself are telling us that 85% of them support the project. That is the problem. Members on the other side of the House seem unable to hear anything that contradicts what they want to hear.

The fact is that 85% of the Wet'suwet'en people are telling us to support the project. However, the Prime Minister does not want to listen to them. He does not want to talk with them. All they can do is be there and wait for someone to do something.

Unfortunately, nothing will ever happen, because the Prime Minister has done absolutely nothing for the past two weeks. He is nowhere to be found and is showing a flagrant lack of leadership and unbelievable weakness while Canada goes through a crisis unlike anything we have seen in a very long time.

The crisis is not connected to the Coastal GasLink project. It goes back a long way. I would say all the way back to the date of the 2015 election.

We all remember the false promises made by this government, the false promises made by this Prime Minister, who fails to realize that false promises give false hope. These false hopes have led to major disappointment today, and not just for the indigenous communities who were fooled by the Prime Minister's fine words when he talked about reconciliation and said it was his top priority. Today, five years later, little to nothing has been done.

That is also the case for Canadian taxpayers, who were promised small deficits. Today we have huge deficits that are out of control, with no end in sight. The same goes for the promises of electoral reform. Hon. members will remember how hopeful everyone was when the Prime Minister promised that the 2015 election would be the last one under the current system.

The 2019 election proceeded under exactly the same system as the 2015 election. Everyone who believed there would be electoral reform was very disappointed.

• (1215)

Obviously, that does not seem to bother the Prime Minister. In fact, he is not bothered by much right now because he is absent from this conflict. He talks a good game but does next to nothing to resolve the situation.

Some of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois were part of Pauline Marois' government. I am certainly not a big fan of Ms. Marois and I have never been a fan of the Parti Québécois. However, I must say that as a resident and mayor of Thetford Mines, I had a great deal of respect for Premier Marois when she handled the Lac-Mégantic crisis the way a premier should. She was present and did not leave anyone in the dark. We knew exactly what was happening. It goes to show that sometimes we discover what a person is truly made of in times of crisis.

In this case, we are not learning a thing about the Prime Minister, because he is not showing up. He had a chance to rise above the fray and find a solution to the crisis while keeping Canadians informed. Instead he chose to stay away and do nothing. That is why we are now in a very difficult situation. A community is tearing itself apart, Canadian citizens are afraid they will lose their jobs, and businesses do not know if they can make it to next week, all because nobody knows anything about the government's plan to resolve this crisis.

The municipality of Lac-Mégantic passed a resolution this week because one of its businesses, Tafisa, is in danger of closing. Tafisa employs 330 people and is doing everything it can to stay open, but it does not know what to do with its products or how to run its operations, so 330 families could end up jobless next week or in the near future if the situation is not resolved.

My colleague, the member for Beauce, provided me with some information that is truly troubling. Serge Lacasse of Agri-Marché, which is part of Groupe Brochu, and Laurence Couture of Alfred Couture limitée, have said that there are serious supply problems. The silos are almost empty, and next week they will be cleaned out. Even if the trains started moving today, it would take at least five days to get the goods that feed Canadians and cattle. That is serious.

To solve the blockade problem, the government wants to be patient, engage in dialogue and wait for the radical protesters to dismantle their barricades. They say that discussions are taking place, but we do not know with whom, because the Prime Minister has not told us anything. In the meantime, real businesses are suffering. Next week, supermarkets might not have food on their shelves. Animals may die because there is no propane. Chickens may die next week because there will be no propane to heat the henhouses. These are actual problems, and the situation is real.

Today, I believe that we must rise in support of elected representatives and the majority of the Wet'suwet'en and tell them that we support their decision to choose a project that will give them and their children a better future. We must stand with the elected band leaders who have chosen to support a project that will truly improve the lives of these people.

We must condemn those who, at this time, are holding the rest of Canadians hostage for reasons other than to support the Wet'suwet'en community. In fact, a photograph published in a newspaper article about these blockades showed their real motive: #ShutDownCanada. We will never allow a group, as radical as it may be, to shut Canada down. We will not let anyone take all Canadians hostage.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question I have for the member opposite is with respect to one of his leadership candidates, Peter MacKay. He made a very strong statement supporting the actions of a couple of individuals who pulled up to a blockade in a truck and dismantled it, which is unsafe for many different reasons. He was putting them on a platform, saying they were good people for what they were doing. That was the essence of what he was trying to portray. Is that something the member or the Conservative caucus supports? Is that something they expect a former minister of justice to say, tweet and applaud with respect to that sort of vigilante action?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like to know whether the Liberals support the actions of the radicals who are setting up major blockades and preventing goods from being delivered to our businesses. That may result in the death of some of our farmers' animals. It may prevent people from having food to eat and it may result in major job losses. All of these things might happen because protesters are occupying the rail lines illegally, which the Prime Minister recognized yesterday.

Does my colleague opposite support the illegal acts of the radicals who are occupying the rail lines and holding all Canadians hostage?

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion: That, given the unanimous declaration of the House on February 22, 2007, to condemn all forms of human trafficking and slavery, this House: (a) encourage Canadians to raise awareness of the magnitude of modern-day slavery in Canada and abroad, and take steps to combat human trafficking; and (b) recognize the 22nd day of February as national human trafficking awareness day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is no consent.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

• (1225)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

Colleagues across the way in the government have brought up questions about leadership candidates on our side of the House.

Maybe what my colleague does not understand, being in the Ottawa bubble, is that I am from western Canada, and there is growing frustration with the government in shutting down industries and natural resource developments and now allowing blockades to go on in perpetuity. There is frustration with the leadership and the Prime Minister not showing leadership.

What does the member think leadership looks like? Does it look like what the Prime Minister has said recently or what the opposition leader has said in the House in the last few days? What does leadership look like?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister certainly did not demonstrate leadership in the speech he gave to all Canadians and the House this week, when he finally addressed the situation after two weeks. He certainly did not demonstrate very strong leadership.

A leader works to find a solution. He is proactive. He puts this sort of situation at the top of the agenda. He tries to get people to work together to find a solution. This week, the Prime Minister showed weakness. He showed his lack of leadership when he was unable to provide an action plan to put an end to this crisis.

I cannot describe what leadership is, but I can say what it is not. The Prime Minister is really not a leader.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been listening attentively to my Conservative colleagues all morning. There is one big thing missing from their speeches, and I think it is accountability. Accountability sometimes requires us to be aware that our actions have consequences. Based on what we are hearing from the Conservatives, it seems they are ignoring the very real possibility that tensions could rise.

My colleague mentioned earlier that he is not a big fan of the Parti Québécois. He said he was not a big fan of Pauline Marois. I would like him to know that I am not a big fan of shows of force. The best thing might be to open a dialogue. However, I do not see how our Conservative colleagues' position fosters dialogue.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague asked this question.

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I am sure the aluminum industry stakeholders in his region are very eager to see dialogue succeed so their survival is not at risk. If these smelters stop getting supplies, it will take weeks and millions of dollars for aluminum sector companies to get them up and running again.

I hope my colleague realizes that we cannot stop the economy. We need to engage in dialogue and find a solution, but we also need to let the economy work across Canada.

[English]

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for bringing this motion forward. Being that I am from the other coast, the east coast, I appreciate his personal insight on this issue.

[Translation]

I also want to thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his interventions. We are suffering the consequences of these blockades in eastern Canada.

[English]

I would like to start at a place where it seems we are all in agreement. These rail blockades are affecting the economy of Canada and need to be shut down. The blockades are illegal. The Prime Minister acknowledged that yesterday in some of his answers during question period. The blockades are affecting the lives of Canadians.

I have no problem with peaceful protests, but they should be done with respect and without hurting anyone. Many times, as provincial MLAs, we saw people protesting in front of our legislature, asking for representation, asking for changes to laws and fighting for their families, so I understand the representation that it does give to us. So far, on that we can agree.

I have no ill will for the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs in B.C. or the Mohawk in Ontario. They have their convictions. They believe in something and are standing up for it. However, I do have a problem with activists who have no connection to these nations and are using this situation to benefit their cause.

If this had been one protest in one area, I think it might have been resolved in the two weeks that it has been going on. It would have been de-escalated, to use a word that I have heard many times this morning. However, because this has never been truly taken on, other protests have sprung up in support of others. In our area the Confederation Bridge to Prince Edward Island has been shut down. Recently there was the blockage of train tracks in Alberta and the blockage of train tracks in parts of Quebec. All this is occurring because the main problem was not dealt with in a quick fashion, by having a discussion up front and stopping us from getting to this situation. Letting things go before any dialogue began has emboldened others to civil disobedience.

What I find troubling about the situation is that the Liberals have branded themselves as friends of our indigenous peoples. However, where they thought they were doing well, they have obviously failed dramatically and quite honestly have no idea what to do next. This is undermining the process as people are getting frustrated.

Since the government has created the “us against them” narrative dividing our country, let me talk about the effects on Nova Scotia, and more specifically the effects on the beautiful riding of West Nova that I have the honour of representing.

● (1230)

[Translation]

Yesterday, I got to talk about how the blockades are affecting Acadian Seaplants. This company was founded in 1981 by Louis Deveau, a leader in Nova Scotia's Acadian community. The company processes raw seaweed into food products for human and animal consumption. The company has grown since it was first founded. It now has 400 employees and exports to 80 countries.

[English]

Louis' son and now CEO, J.P. Deveau, has expressed his concerns on the blockade, due to the fact that Acadian Seaplants is one of the province's largest consumers of propane. They have orders to fill, and in order to do that, they need to convert their 115,000-square-foot operation in the small community of Cornwallis to be able to use light oil, or furnace oil, which is a more environmentally sensitive product, adding an extra 63% to their fuel bill compared to propane.

Beyond this challenge, Mr. Deveau has concerns about being able to ship his product, as it is normally containerized and shipped around the world. Cargo ships are being diverted from the port of Halifax, causing an interruption in Nova Scotia's connection to the world and its export strength.

[Translation]

When I talked to Mr. Deveau, he was very worried about how long it will take for the industry to get back to normal once the blockades come down.

[English]

Also in my riding of West Nova, Royal Propane is a wonderful small business. As a matter of fact, it installed the propane fireplace in my mother-in-law's house. It redistributes propane from the same supplier that Acadian Seaplants uses, Wilson Fuels, which is trying its best to get product trucked from somewhere else. Normally, that would come from Montreal, but as we heard from my colleagues, it probably does not exist there either.

I was talking to the manager of Royal Propane earlier this week. She is concerned for the employees she would have to lay off the next day if nothing changed. Forty employees will have to be laid off because there is no propane to provide. She is also concerned about her clients who use propane as a method of heating their homes.

This causes further problems for small businesses in my region, as we do not have natural gas running under our streets. Local restaurants and other businesses will start to run out soon, cascading the problem even worse.

The Eden Valley Poultry plant in Berwick employs 430 people. It processes birds from all over the Atlantic provinces. It is currently still in production, but will run out of propane and oxygen sooner than later. Not only does this directly affect jobs at the plant, but it also affects hundreds of jobs on the farms raising chickens and turkeys for market.

The secondary concern that Eden Valley has is that protests, like the one on the Confederation Bridge, stop and delay the trucks that have live birds inside from crossing over, causing an animal welfare issue.

Speaking of the animal welfare issue, a large amount of feed comes from western Canada for our agricultural sector. Companies like Clarence Farm Services in Truro are trying to get product trucked from Quebec and Ontario, but this will increase the cost, causing financial hardship for our producers and a complete lack of product causing other animal welfare issues.

I would like to read part of the letter that was provided to me from Clarence Farm Services. It states:

We have had some ingredients arrive before CN shut down the national rail service, and others that were shipped from east of Belleville that have made it to Truro. However, CN's space in their Truro yard is now filling and they will not pull empties from our siding to place other full cars that are in Truro—so basically our rail service is ended. As a result of the situation we have been scrambling to bring ingredients in via truck (both sourced locally and from Ont./PQ).

Finally, my friend Dan Mullen is a farmer who was hit by market forces in the past few years when the mink industry was decimated. Being a great farmer, he adapted his infrastructure into greenhouses, producing greens and other products for local markets. He heats with propane and either has wrapped up or will be wrapping up his production soon because he can no longer heat those greenhouses.

I know my time is coming to an end, but I thought I would quote a couple of people.

First is the Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia, Stephen McNeil. He was quoted in allNovaScotia this morning as saying that government needs to do what is necessary to protect Canada's economy as protesters bring rail traffic to a standstill. He said, "The laws of this country need to be enforced. All of us need to abide by the laws of Canada, and we believe it is up to the national government to do what is necessary to ensure the economic future of our country and our province continue to move forward."

Finally, this discussion is extremely important for Canadians. It is probably one of the toughest discussions we will have in the House of Commons, but as John F. Kennedy stated, "We do not do these things because they are easy, we do these things because they are hard."

● (1235)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, many in this debate have acknowledged that this is fundamentally a problem for the Wet'suwet'en nation to resolve. However, in this motion, the Conservatives have taken a strong position on one side of the question while characterizing the other side as radical extremists exploiting divisions in the community.

How can they expect to foster a Wet'suwet'en solution or unity by exacerbating the divide in this way?

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Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, what the Conservatives have said is that the Wet'suwet'en and the Mohawks in Belleville are all concerned about their environment. It is the other activists who are attaching themselves to these groups, saying they are supportive. Quite honestly, they are there to shut down the energy sector, to shut down progress in the country and hurt the rest of Canada. We are mad at those people.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's presentation. I fully agree with him about the economic impact of the crisis we are experiencing. We must, however, find a way out of this crisis. How are we going to do that?

We have been talking about leadership all day. What we ask of a leader is to make concrete proposals. In that regard, we have already put forward the idea of asking the RCMP to withdraw and eventually be replaced by an indigenous police force.

I wonder if my colleague would agree with that proposal.

● (1240)

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, we have been talking about leadership all day. There is no leadership from this government. They have just had discussions with the indigenous people in the area. They are offering no solution. The Prime Minister is here every day, as is the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. They are here every day.

Why are they not in Vancouver or the British Columbia region to have discussions and make sure the blockades end? We need those discussions. We need leadership, and that starts with the government.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his comments, the member said that it was unacceptable or he could not stand it when people from outside of the Wet'suwet'en territory used this issue in a political or partisan way. Is that not precisely what this motion is doing?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Not at all, Madam Speaker. In fact, it is probably doing the opposite, ensuring we are doing our job, which is to talk about the interests of all Canadians. We want to ensure this issue comes to the floor of the House for dialogue. If the dialogue can truly start here, then hopefully the people sitting on the front benches of the government will understand the importance and the effects to the rest of Canada. My folks are getting angry and frustrated because of the inaction of the government.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from West Nova has offended deeply a sense of democracy and allyship that exists across the country. I respect the member enormously, but I have to make it clear that young people, people my age, seniors who stand in solidarity with indigenous peoples are no different, having no big connection. All the Canadians who stood up against apartheid, what was their connection? Whites walked with Martin Luther King. Did they have no connection? Did they have no right to be moved? Did they have no right to speak up against injustice when the groups that faced injustice were almost entirely, and usually vulnerable, and the minority?

Those who stand in allyship should not be condemned, as they have been by the motion today by the Conservatives. I ask my friend from West Nova to think again.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, we have heard a number of times from my colleagues that the majority of the Wet'suwet'en support this project. This project is good for B.C., and it is good for the Wet'suwet'en. It is good for the environment to get that gas from the back side of B.C. to tidewater. Why do we continue to sit in the House and oppose energy projects when we know we need to do these things?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I would first like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people. We face a crisis in our country. People are hurting. Indigenous peoples feel their voices have not been part of Canada. Canadians worry about layoffs and their livelihood and are forced to confront a history of our country that they were never taught.

We are becoming impatient and are looking for simple solutions, but this is a complex problem. Despite what the opposition says, there is not a simple solution. The rhetoric coming from the Conservatives is both troubling and dangerous. When a front-runner to lead their party supports vigilante action on social media, it troubles me deeply.

The opposition leader's speech on Tuesday was shameful, and it left me speechless by how tone-deaf it was. The Conservatives' comments only inflame an already precarious situation.

When did we stop perceiving dialogue as action? When did we start to think that listening and understanding were beneath us?

This summer, all members who were elected to this place knocked on thousands of doors and spoke to thousands of their constituents. They listened because they understood that in order to get someone's support, they had to ensure those people were heard. When did some of us forget that lesson?

I applaud the Minister of Indigenous Services for his genuine, heartfelt actions, and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations for using her experience to seek a way forward. I greatly appreciate the Prime Minister's work in leading a team to seek open and honest dialogue with all interested parties to seek solutions.

Last night I could not sleep. This crisis has divided Canadians, and I fear that too many see it as black and white. It is not. For hun-

dreds of years, indigenous peoples have been seeking mutual respect and open and honest dialogue that informs a meaningful relationship with non-indigenous peoples in Canada. For hundreds of years, indigenous peoples have been calling on the Canadian government to recognize and affirm their jurisdiction over their affairs, to have control over their land, housing, education, governance systems and services.

I would like to use this opportunity to highlight some of the steps our government is taking to address these calls.

Our government continues to work on shifting its policies to recognize the inherent right of self-government and self-determination of first nations, Inuit, and Métis, and our commitment is dedicated to recognizing and implementing indigenous rights.

As an example, we are working to support first nations to opt-out of sections of the Indian Act in areas such as land, environment, resource management and elections. This means moving to models of indigenous governance and supporting indigenous communities to assert their rights.

To lead this work, in 2019, our government repealed the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act and adopted the Department of Indigenous Services Act. This new department, Indigenous Services Canada, is mandated to work toward the transfer of departmental responsibilities to indigenous communities and bodies.

Over time, one fundamental measure of success will be that programs and services will be increasingly controlled, designed and delivered by indigenous peoples for indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the end goal is for the department to disappear. I am pleased to say this work is well under way.

In 2019, the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families was passed. This act is an important step toward comprehensive reform in ensuring indigenous people hold control over their children and toward children being able to stay within their families and communities. We remain committed to pursuing nation to nation, government to government and Inuit to Crown relations based on the recognition of rights, co-operation and partnership with indigenous peoples in Canada.

To continue in the spirit of co-development, we have committed to continuing to co-develop transition and implementation of the act with partners in ways that reflect their needs and aspirations. We are also continuing to work on establishing a new fiscal relationship with first nations, one that moves toward sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for first nations communities.

This includes the use of long-term and more flexible funding mechanisms such as the 10-year grant, which provides increased flexibility to design and deliver services, reduces reporting for communities and enables strengthened accountability of first nations leadership to its members.

Eighty-five first nations communities entered into the 10-year grant in 2019-2020. In addition, 18 first nations have joined the 264 other nations asserting jurisdiction in the area of fiscal governance by opting into the First Nations Fiscal Management Act. This act provides first nations with a legislative and institutional framework to exercise jurisdiction over core fiscal and governance matters, including the financing of infrastructure and economic development projects through the issuance of bonds on capital markets.

• (1245)

Our government continues to work in partnership to build a new fiscal relationship with first nations, which will provide long-term, sustainable and predictable funding.

To support the new fiscal relationship, we are committed to continued co-development of fiscal relationship reforms with first nations. The Assembly of First Nations-Indigenous Services Canada Joint Advisory Committee on Fiscal Relations has provided interim recommendations, and it will engage with first nations on those recommendations in the coming months.

Together, these changes support self-determination for first nations communities and provide better access to lands and financial resources. They also support greater economic prosperity in first nations communities by improving processes, timelines and access to services, and also contribute to assisting first nations institutions in their direct work with communities.

With the support of indigenous institutional partners, we are removing barriers for first nations that decide to opt out of parts of the Indian Act and participate in alternate legislative regimes to exercise their own jurisdiction and law-making authority. Our government and indigenous institutions are working together with first nations to develop the tools they need to drive local economic development and promote prosperity.

Last week, I met with Tabatha Bull, COO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. We talked about the fact that indigenous business contributes \$31 billion to the Canadian economy. We talked about the fact that indigenous peoples are the youngest and fastest-growing demographic in Canada. Indigenous peoples are creating businesses at nine times the rate of non-indigenous Canadians. We must support these businesses but work in partnership to ensure their success.

First Nation Land Management is a government-to-government relationship through which first nations opt out of 44 sections of the Indian Act related to land, environment and resource development. Under this land management regime, first nations will have full jurisdiction, legal authority and law-making powers to operate as a government over their own lands.

Since 1996, 165 first nations have become signatories to the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management. As of

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February 1, 90 first nations have full jurisdiction, legal authority and law-making powers over their lands.

The key to supporting first nations communities must also be based on closing socio-economic gaps. To that end, we are working with indigenous partners on including a national outcome-based framework to measure the closing of the socio-economic gaps that exist to this day.

We will continue to work in partnership with first nations to improve processes and supports that provide access to lands and economic development opportunities. We are taking concrete steps toward a comprehensive transformation, which includes new structures and processes, changes to legislation and, most important, new approaches to advancing self-determination and the inherent right to self-government with first nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.

As members can see, our approach has changed from imposing to co-development, and this is what will bring success. We know there is much more to do, and we are committed to moving forward in full partnership in advancing self-determination for all indigenous nations.

The Minister of Indigenous Services has said “Too often in this country we have taken the approach that we would pick whatever indigenous view suits our thoughts and processes.” I fear that this motion before us today is doing just that. Therefore I will not be supporting it.

• (1250)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, those of us on this side of the House very much agree with the importance of dialogue. We believe there is a time and a place for dialogue. That dialogue should not take place on the train tracks, in dangerous spaces or in the midst of specific places in a context when enforcement is appropriate. However, dialogue and engagement are very much a part of the process of reconciliation.

I would ask the member if she would agree with the principle that when we are having dialogue about the future of a community, about the development happening in a community, the dialogue has to be with the elected representatives of that community. If the member wants to find out what development should happen in Sherwood Park, she should not be engaging in dialogue with somebody on the other side of the country about the future of my community. The same principle applies to the Wet'suwet'en people.

The dialogue that needs to happen is between the elected leadership and other stakeholders, such as the company and the government, about what should happen with respect to development. The ultimate decisions about that should go through the elected Wet'suwet'en representatives. It muddies the waters to have dialogue with everyone without identifying who the people with the say are.

Does the member agree with the principle that the dialogue that needs to happen is with the elected leadership of the Wet'suwet'en, who speak on behalf of those who chose them to be their representatives?

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Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments about recognizing the importance of dialogue, because that seems to have been missing from this debate.

The member's question completely misunderstands the structure of an elected band council and its imposition on indigenous peoples through the Indian Act. The hereditary chiefs are speaking out. No, they are not elected, but we cannot impose our structure, and comparing it to Sherwood Park or to Oakville and Burlington in my community fails to recognize that this structure is one that we, as white settlers, imposed on indigenous peoples in this country.

The dialogue part of the member's question I am happy with. The other part is just an inherent misunderstanding of the structure and of how it was imposed on indigenous people.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by calling on the members of the House to respect the autonomy of the nations. The Wet'suwet'en nation is a nation just like those of Quebecers and Canadians. It is not up to us, the MPs, to say who is right in the various groups that may form in that nation. I very much appreciate my colleague's speech on openness and the long-term plan, but we will have to take action and stop the rhetoric at some point.

My question is this. We are currently experiencing a real crisis. How does my colleague explain that it took 10 days for the minister to meet with people? That is unbelievable. The Prime Minister should have met with them at the very start.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I truly appreciate the way the Bloc Québécois has approached this crisis and the very thoughtful words that have been spoken in this place by the leader of the party as well as by other members.

The government has been engaged in this. As I said in my speech, there is not a simple solution. We are not tone-deaf to the challenges that this situation is causing for workers and businesses. However, talking about removing one blockade is not seeking a lasting, peaceful solution, which is what we are working toward.

I do want to thank the hon. member for his question and his thoughtfulness in this debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her remarks. We have essentially the same point of view.

The Conservatives are talking a lot about legality when we know that, historically, with colonialism, legislation has often been used to steal land and violate the rights of indigenous peoples.

I would like to know what she thinks of the 1997 Supreme Court ruling that makes hereditary chiefs stewards of the land.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I am not a lawyer and I am not going to pretend to be an expert on decisions, but I do know

that Supreme Court decisions must be respected and I do not think any of us in this place should be so presumptuous as to speak for the Wet'suwet'en people. It really does a disservice to walking on this path of reconciliation for anyone in this place to think that he or she can speak for the Wet'suwet'en people.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me start by indicating that this is a very difficult situation. No matter where we are in Canada, we understand the principle at stake here, and trying to simplify it does it a disservice. At the end of the day, we recognize how difficult it is for both indigenous and non-indigenous people, whether it is a specific community or the broader community.

The other day, the Prime Minister asked Canadians to continue to be patient as we try to work through this very difficult situation. We need to appreciate that there is a lot at stake. If we were to follow the advice of the Conservatives, we would be rolling the dice. I can say the odds would not be in our favour if we were to take their approach. There is a consequence to an action, and the actions that the Conservative Party has been presenting for a while now are, I believe, irresponsible.

The Conservatives often reflect on what is taking place with the leadership on this side. I like to think that it is not just the leader of the Liberal Party, but that we are also hearing calls for de-escalation from all political parties except the Conservatives. We are hearing from the different stakeholders that we need to de-escalate the situation as much as possible. Are the Conservatives helping, or are they becoming a hindrance?

The current leader has said we should send in the RCMP to get rid of the blockades. Peter MacKay, the wannabe leader of the Conservative Party, has tried to glorify individuals who were tearing apart a blockade as if being a vigilante is a good thing. Yes, he has retracted that particular tweet, but I would suggest that the words we are hearing from the current and potential future leadership of the Conservative Party are not helping the situation, nor is this motion.

If the Conservative Party wanted to contribute to the debate, we could have talked about the issue of reconciliation today. Different parties have different perspectives on it. I rather enjoyed the parliamentary secretary's most recent speech a few minutes ago when she talked about the types of things the government has done to advance us toward reconciliation. Over the last couple of days I listened to members from the Bloc, the NDP and the Green Party talking as well about the ways in which we can not only de-escalate the situation but also broaden the debate to talk about the issue of reconciliation. I truly believe the Conservative Party would do more of a service for Canadians if its members adopted the same attitude.

We understand the impact that the situation is having on the Canadian economy. We have representations in all regions of this country, including western Canada, an area I represent personally. I understand the economics just as well as the Conservatives, who proclaim they are concerned about the economy. Need I remind the members opposite of the so-called LNG project? By working with the Wet'suwet'en, the NDP provincial government in British Columbia, the national government, business and the private sector, we were able to accomplish the greatest, most significant capital infrastructure commitment, which was billions of dollars to create the LNG project.

• (1300)

Today we heard often from the Conservatives that the majority of the members of the Wet'suwet'en community support this economic adventure. That took a great deal of effort, not only in the community itself but also in gaining support from the government in British Columbia, the national government, the private sector and more.

We even have the Bloc recognizing that the federal government has a role to play in issues of this nature. Whether it is economic development for the betterment of all Canadians, when we have issues of this nature from time to time, it is the way we deal with those issues.

To try to give the impression that nothing has been happening for the last couple of weeks is just false. Casting aspersions on a lot of fine work that has been done, whether by the government of B.C., the Wet'suwet'en community leaders or the national government and the role that we have played is wrong. To try to imply that nothing is happening is false.

We could all give some encouragement and a vote of confidence to our RCMP. We tend to differ from the Conservative opposition in that we believe and have full confidence in our RCMP, in our law enforcement agencies, and we believe that political parties do not have the right to direct them to arrest that person or that group of people. It is not our place to do that.

People should be concerned when the official opposition members who hope to be in government someday say that they would give specific direction to the RCMP. I refer to Peter MacKay's quote from his twitter account. We should be concerned about those types of knee-jerk reactions coming from Conservative leadership.

In the broader picture, I would have liked to see a discussion or debate on those types of issues. There is a great deal of interest in the issue of reconciliation. When I listen to the New Democrats and the Green Party, I often hear we are not doing enough. I would suggest that we have accomplished a great deal, and there is still more to do. I think of some of the actions that we have taken in a relatively short period of time, such as dealing with heritage language, dealing with the tens of thousands of children in foster care or in the welfare system with the shifting over and empowerment that is taking place in indigenous communities as a result, or statutory holidays, or the issue of citizenship, or the 94 calls for action, many of which required action by the federal government, and which we have responded to. There has been debate as well on the former private member's bill, Bill C-242, on the UN declaration, so we have

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seen many measures in the last number of years that reached out and took active steps toward positive reconciliation.

That was completely foreign to the previous government. When the Conservatives were in power, we did not see anything of that nature.

I believe if we want to continue to see the economy moving forward as it has, with over one million jobs over the last four years, we need to recognize that working with different stakeholders and working with indigenous communities in the economy and the environment is absolutely essential. It is not an option. As the Prime Minister has indicated, we need to have patience as we try to work through this very difficult situation, realizing that it does cause a lot of frustration for all of us here in Canada.

• (1305)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned perspective and his understanding of the issue. As we have heard on the floor of the House, there is a debate over numbers, the 80% and 85%, so I will mention the words of the Wet'suwet'en people themselves.

Chief Dan George of the Wet'suwet'en Burns Lake band said, "As an elected official my job is to represent the people and do what they want me to do, and so they wanted me to sign on...80% of our people voted for LNG." Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Theresa Tait-Day said, "In the case of Coastal GasLink, 85% of our people said yes we want this project." Those are the words from the mouths of the Wet'suwet'en themselves.

When will the government and the Prime Minister show leadership on this issue?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member and other Conservative members need to reflect on what they are saying. Do they believe that this issue will ultimately be resolved and go away?

At the end of the day, there is division being caused by the Conservative members. I trust and have faith in the Wet'suwet'en community's ability to overcome this issue into the future. I do not want to add additional issues going forward for that community.

We need to support the community in the best way we can. As of right now, we should still try to be patient and understanding. If this can be resolved in a positive fashion, we should strive to do that and not give up hope, at least not yet.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Liberal member.

Since the work began, I have been hearing that we need to be patient. To that, I would say that I think that Canadians have been patient enough. It is two weeks today since this national crisis began. This is a major crisis. Still today, we are wondering what the government is going to do. We need an action plan.

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I want to briefly share an experience. I know that I only have a minute. As a union leader, I represented 200,000 members across the province. When one of our unions was in crisis and it was causing problems for everyone, as a leader, I was on the front lines. If the mountain did not want to come to me, then I went to the mountain.

Yesterday, we were told that the chiefs did not want to meet with the government. I am sorry, but the Prime Minister had a job to do. He should have come back to Canada two weeks ago to deal with this crisis.

I will vote against the Conservative motion, which does not solve the problem because it asks us to condemn the radical activists. I am not even sure that we have the same definition of radical activists.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think Canadians have been exceptionally patient. As we try to move through this very difficult situation, there is a great deal of hardship. That hardship has been realized in many senses, whether with food, jobs or being able to commute. However, Canadians understand, in most part, why we are in this situation.

The Prime Minister, all premiers and, as I like to think, all leaders participating in this discussion understand how critically important it is that this matter be resolved quickly.

With regard to patience, we are trying our very best to make sure we do all we can. Part of that includes having individuals at the table or part of the dialogue, such as representatives of the Government of British Columbia and the leadership of the Wet'suwet'en community.

We have to go the extra mile and continue to be patient. When the time comes, the time comes, and hopefully this gets resolved in a positive fashion and everyone benefits.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with my friend and colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[English]

Canadians do not ask for much. They really do not. We are honest, hard-working, polite people. At a minimum what Canadians expect is peace, order and good government.

Over the last 14 days, we have seen anything but that. We have seen a situation turn into a national crisis, with railway blockades right across the country affecting the movement of goods and people. VIA Rail, as we know, has cancelled its train service to the better part of eastern Canada for the last seven days. Since it made that announcement, there has been a significant impact on the movement of people.

As CN has cancelled its entire rail system and the movement of goods, it is having a devastating effect on our economy. We are hearing that millions and millions of dollars are being lost every day within the supply chain. The agriculture community has not

been able to get its products to market. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the manufacturing association and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture have all said that this situation needs to be resolved.

However, it is very difficult to resolve, when we look at the history of this situation. Over the last four and a half years, the government has become weak and the Prime Minister has become weak and complicit. We have an activist government that has fed into the very situation that is going on across this country today. It should come as no surprise that we are seeing activists act out because of the weakness and complicity of the Prime Minister over the last four and a half years. He is doublespeaking almost everywhere he goes, saying one thing to one group and another thing to another group, saying one thing in one part of the province and something else in a different part of this country.

We have heard a lot of discussion today, and we have been debating this for the better part of two and a half hours, so I want to remind the House what the motion is all about. It is not about a certain individual; it is about a group that is using this situation as a lightning rod, a template, not just for the insurrection that is going on today but for the potential of future insurrection in this country. This group is using it as a template, and we are simply asking the House to denounce what is going on and stand up for the Wet'suwet'en people.

The motion says, "That the House stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route—"

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The language that was just used was unparliamentary and incendiary. I just double-checked the meaning of "insurrection". It means "a violent uprising." Everything taking place is non-violent. It may be illegal, depending on perspective, but I ask the hon. member to withdraw that word.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind all members to be judicious in their use of language. I cannot judge right now whether unparliamentary language was used, but members should try to be more judicious in the use of vocabulary.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I will remind the House what the motion says:

That the House stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route, the majority of hereditary chiefs, and the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people, who support the Coastal GasLink project, and condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community, holding the Canadian economy hostage, and threatening jobs and opportunities in Indigenous communities.

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On the issue of jobs for the Wet'suwet'en community, there is a long history of negotiation, of talks between CGL, the Wet'suwet'en community, the 20 first nations communities of elected band leaders and the hereditary chiefs. They have gone on for a long time. Every single one of those 20 communities is in favour of the CGL gas line. They are in favour of it because of the opportunity and prosperity it is going to provide them now and into the future. Many of them will be receiving jobs, and many of them have received jobs, as a result of the CGL pipeline. Revenue will be coming into their communities.

If we talk to members of the House who are part of northern B.C. communities where opportunity is thin for many first nations communities, this is exactly the type of project they have been looking for. It is the type of project they have negotiated and agreed to, because they know it is going to provide opportunity, not just for them today but for young people for generations to come. We, as a Parliament, must be supportive of the independence and autonomy of these first nations to negotiate the type of arrangement they want with CGL.

The challenge exists because there is an anti-pipeline, anti-government movement going on in this country. These people are piggybacking off this issue to raise their issues and their anti-natural-resource agenda. They are doing it right across the country. They are using this situation, this lightning-rod issue, as a template to create illegal blockades. The motion is speaking to them: that the House condemn this anti-government, anti-reason, anti-resource movement that is using this as a lightning rod.

When we speak to members in the Wet'suwet'en community, they talk about their support of this pipeline and the reasons they support it. They have certainly publicly put this out there.

Chief Larry Nooski, of the Nadleah Whut'en First Nation, said:

Coastal GasLink represents a once in a generation economic development opportunity for Nadleah Whut'en First Nation. We negotiated hard...to guarantee that Nadleah people, including youth, have the opportunity to benefit directly and indirectly from the project, while at the same time, ensuring that the land and the water is protected.

Hereditary Chief Helen Michelle, of the Skin Tyee First Nation of the Wet'suwet'en, said, "A lot of the protesters are not even Wet'suwet'en people." That is the point. "Our own people said go ahead [to Coastal GasLink]." She also said, "We talked with the elders.... We talked and talked, and we kept bringing them back.... We walked the very territory where CGL is going.... We are going to give it the go-ahead."

If a majority of the Wet'suwet'en people agree with this, why are we pandering to and accepting the type of protests and illegal blockades that are going on across this country? Many of the people doing this are not even affiliated with the Wet'suwet'en people. The activists see this as their template, their opportunity to speak out against the natural resource sector, to speak out against government, to speak out against peace, to speak out against order in this country. That is precisely what they are doing. For the House not to condemn that makes us complicit, as complicit and weak as the government has been throughout this crisis.

• (1320)

I want to talk about the police. There have been a lot of inflammatory comments with respect to the authority of the police. Governments legislate; we pass laws. The courts interpret those laws and it is up to the police to enforce those laws. None of us believes that we live in a police state where the government has the authority or the direction to direct the police on what to do, but when the police receive a court order or a court injunction, the expectation is that they are going to act. There is also an expectation on the part of government and those who are elected in this country at all levels of government that when the police act, we support their action because they are fulfilling their legal obligation to make sure that the rule of law is maintained in this country, as directed by the courts and legislated by Parliament across this country, as well as provincial and municipal bodies.

The police are in an extremely untenable position on this and they have shown extreme patience. However, the bottom line is that we need to maintain peace, order and good government in this country and the rule of law must always be followed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I noted that the member, in his comments, said that a group was using this issue as a lightning rod. I would not disagree with that for a moment. I am afraid that group is one of the political parties in this chamber.

I am very concerned. I do not think there is much difference of opinion in terms of the concerns we have about what is going on in the country. It is a matter of suggesting what those solutions might be. My riding is just down the rail line from the main blockade, and a business in my community is affected by this. I want this to be resolved as soon as possible, just as much as anybody else in the House. I am afraid that if the RCMP were to take the direction suggested by the member and others in the Conservative Party today, we could quite possibly end up in a scenario where there are three or four blockades as a result of trying to eliminate one.

Does the member have some reassurance that something like that would not happen? Does he have some reassurance that his strategy is the best and only way forward?

• (1325)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, the expectation of all parliamentarians and Canadians should be that the police enforce the rule of law. When the court imposes an injunction or a court order for these blockades to end, it should be the expectation of the member and every single person in this country that it will be enforced. It does not matter whether it happens in Kingston, Belleville, Quebec, as it is happening today, or in B.C.

Let us not conflate the issue like the other side is doing. The solution to this problem lies with the Wet'suwet'en people. They have done that. What we are talking about today are those activists who are anti-government, anti-natural resources, anti-everything. They are fuelling these blockades, and it needs to stop for the sake of our country and the economy.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my Conservative colleague put a lot of emphasis on the rule of law. I agree with him.

However, we learned this morning that a leadership candidate for his party believes that people who are taking the law into their own hands may be in the right. I am therefore wondering whether the Conservative Party believes that the rule of law operates on a sliding scale.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, nobody is being flexible on the rule of law. I go back to the point I made during my speech, which is critical to this whole debate. There is a weak, complicit and activist government that is emboldening these protesters. If the hon. member wants to, he can go to my Facebook page and see the interaction that went on in Edmonton yesterday since that is what he is speaking of. At one minute and three seconds into that video, one of the protesters said the reason they are doing this is because the Prime Minister is doing nothing and the RCMP is doing nothing. They are being emboldened—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: And you condone that.

Mr. John Brassard: No, I am talking about the protesters, Madam Speaker, who are saying this, not the people who were there to clear those tracks. The protesters were saying this. If that is not emboldening the activists in this country to continue doing what they are doing, I do not know what is. The Prime Minister is solely responsible for that. It lies directly at his feet, and this activist government is complicit in all of these illegal blockades and actions in this country.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I look at the motion. I read it 50 times today, and I have to say that I am very disappointed. I would like to say in a steelworker way what I think of it, but I cannot; I want to be respectful. I do not think it was very well written. We are opposed to it.

However, there are some good points that are being made. The government has made spaghetti out of this whole issue. It has done a terrible job on the file. The hereditary chiefs have requested that the Prime Minister be present, and he has refused.

Does my friend believe that the Prime Minister should be at the table? I do not care if the other ministers go, but he should be at the table and nip this in the bud as quickly as possible.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's not wanting to speak in his steelworker language, because I certainly would not want to speak in my firefighter language on this issue, as well.

On the issue of dialogue, absolutely, but the blockades and illegal activity happening across this country have to stop. Dialogue can continue. Stop the blockade. Stop the illegal activity.

● (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate in support of the Wet'suwet'en community and in support of everyone who be-

lieves in economic development created in harmony and with the support of all first nations that are directly affected. Unfortunately, the reason we have to stand here today and affirm that support is that Canada is being run by a government of neglect.

This government bears sole responsibility for the crisis that has plagued the country for the past two weeks. For 12 days, the government did absolutely nothing to slow the momentum of those who oppose this project and want to spread discord across Canada.

What is this about? This is about the Coastal GasLink pipeline project. This project did not come out of left field, and it was not decided on overnight. It has taken six years for the project to go through all the steps and be agreed on and approved by all the relevant authorities. For six years, the proponents worked closely with the first nations that would be directly affected by the project. As a result, the 20 first nations directly affected by this project agree with it.

To my NDP colleagues, who keep saying that we are pulling numbers out of thin air, I can say that we are getting these numbers from the Assembly of First Nations. If they want to attack the Assembly of First Nations, I wish them good luck. We believe the assembly. They speak on behalf of all first nations.

The Wet'suwet'en community is in favour of the project. It is not the Conservatives saying so; it is the Assembly of First Nations. Hereditary Chief Theresa Tait-Day said that in the case of the Coastal GasLink project, 85% of her people said yes. The members of that community are not the only ones who agree with this project.

I also want to cite Chief Larry Nooski. He said the project represents a once-in-a-generation economic development opportunity for our first nation. He also said that they negotiated hard to guarantee that their people, including youth, have the opportunity to benefit directly and indirectly from the project, while at the same time ensuring that the land and the water are protected.

That is what we are talking about. This is a project that is good for Canada, good for the economy and good for first nations. This project has gone through all the steps and has even received the support of the current NDP-led provincial government, in addition to being supported by the Green Party. It is important to remember that.

As with all projects, there will not be 100% support. Yes, there are people who disagree with this project. If we wait until we have 100% support for a project, we can be 100% sure that the project will not go ahead. It is normal. This is called democracy. Some people are in favour, and others are against.

When 20 first nations and 85% of a community agree, action must be taken. When all the necessary political and economic support, as well as first nations support, is obtained, there is a duty to act. If some people are against it, it is not a problem. This is called democracy.

There are a thousand good ways to express opposition. Unfortunately, two weeks ago, disgruntled radical activists decided to flout the law and demonstrate their opposition in an illegal way by setting up a blockade on a railway line.

What has happened since then? Unfortunately, nothing. The government of neglect is led by a man who did not even bother to leave his tour of Africa and return to Canada. During that tour, he unfortunately shook hands with the foreign affairs minister of a country that is implicated in the deaths of over 50 Canadians. He shook his hand enthusiastically, which embarrassed all Canadians.

The government did nothing for 12 days. All across this vast, magnificent country, people inspired by the illegal actions of these fringe activists suddenly developed a passionate interest in a project that they had never heard of before. These activists did not consider the fact that the vast majority of people who are directly affected and the first nations supported it. We saw this in Belleville. There was another blockade in Candiac, Quebec.

• (1335)

In Gaspé, some 5,000 km from the centre of the action, people are suddenly feeling compelled to stand up for this cause. They are forgetting that 85% of the people directly involved and all the first nations agree with the project.

We asked the government to enforce the law. This is a country governed by the rule of law, and the law is clear. Section 5 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act is clear: The Minister of Public Safety has the power to intervene and direct the RCMP to take action in a given situation, and this is exactly the kind of situation contemplated. For two weeks, the Minister of Transport, a man for whom I have tremendous respect and hold in high esteem, has really disappointed me. He said that this is not a federal matter and that it is up to the provinces to get injunctions. That is a dishonourable Pontius Pilate type of attitude, coming from a man as honourable as the Minister of Transport. It is not the right attitude.

I can still see the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons going to meet with Quebec's transport minister, the Hon. François Bonnardel. The House leader said that this is not a federal matter and that the provinces need to take action. Must I remind the House that first nations are under federal jurisdiction? Railways are under federal jurisdiction. Like Pontius Pilate, those people have completely abdicated their responsibilities.

After 12 days, the Prime Minister returned to Canada. He realized that something was going on and that he had to do something. He said that the government would encourage dialogue. Absolutely nothing else has happened since then. No, I forgot. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations proudly announced that the government had been in contact with opponents and the hereditary chiefs and that they wanted to meet in 10 days. Canada had been experiencing a national crisis for two weeks, and the government was happy about setting up a meeting 10 days later. The government should have taken action 10 days earlier, but it did not.

Finally, yesterday, after 14 days, the Prime Minister acknowledged the blindingly obvious, namely that a blockade is illegal. For the first time in two weeks, he made some sense. Since our country is governed by the rule of law and the Prime Minister is responsible for making sure that these laws are enforced, we want to know how he will respond to an illegal action, if not by enforcing the law. Section 5 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act empowers him to order the police to take action.

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If in Canada we are currently governed by people who are giving up, elsewhere there are people who are taking action and people who are taking responsibility. This morning, the Premier of Quebec said that he was going to seek an injunction because of a barricade in Saint-Lambert. The Premier of Quebec said that, as soon as the injunction was obtained, the barricade would be dismantled. That is extraordinary. Finally, someone is taking responsibility for the rule of law in this country. The example does not come from here; it is coming from the National Assembly. The operations will take place in a while, I presume, but we know that the head of Quebec's government has clearly said that the law is the law and that he will enforce it.

Earlier, I asked my Bloc colleague from Montarville a question, and he said that this situation would make things worse. That is the Bloc's choice; that is its decision. We are on the side of law and order. We are on the side of the rule of law.

We have also seen some very unfortunate and unacceptable situations in a country governed by the rule of law. Yesterday, radical activists surrounded the home of the Premier of British Columbia. That cannot be tolerated. We cannot say it is not serious. As I said earlier, there are countless ways to express opposition to a project. I do not have a problem with that. That is democracy. Why choose the wrong way? Why break the law? Why go after people who do not think like you? It is not the right thing to do.

To those who oppose this project, I say do it with dignity, honour and respect for the law. That is democracy. They must not do it illegally. Unfortunately, these people are taking advantage of the fact that this government is a government of neglect. That is why, now more than ever, the entire House of Commons must show its support for the Wet'suwet'en people, who are in favour of this project, as are the 20 first nations directly affected by it. The Conservatives support the first nations on this project.

• (1340)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have great respect for that member. I am delighted he talked about the rule of law.

The Supreme Court said that police independence underpins the rule of law. That was also outlined in several other cases in speeches during the emergency debate, where the Supreme Court maintained police independence from governments. I am assuming the member supports that, in his support of the rule of law.

I assume also when he talks about supporting the rule of law he is talking about enforcement of aboriginal title. That was outlined in the Delgamuukw case. It was reinstated again in the Tsilhqot'in case. It is one of the tenets of Canadian law. I assume the member is saying that enforcement of the rule of law is enforcement of the aboriginal title of the Wet'suwet'en people.

Business of Supply

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting for a member of the Liberal Party to talk about respecting the rule of law, because for the last two weeks the Liberals have done everything but that.

[Translation]

It is a government of neglect that does not even abide by this country's own laws. Section 5 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act clearly gives the Minister of Public Safety the power to act, but the minister refuses to act. By doing so, he is condoning the actions of radical activists who are going against the will of most of the hereditary chiefs in the community, as confirmed by the National Coalition of Chiefs, which tells us that the majority of hereditary chiefs in the community are in favour of this project.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect. He stressed at great length the need to enforce the law. The law, as we know, is procedural. When you apply a procedure indiscriminately, it can sometimes backfire. I am sure my colleague remembers what happened during the Oka crisis. In this case, considering the economic impacts, would it not be wiser to put the Coastal GasLink project on hold and engage in a dialogue with the Wet'suwet'en nation?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am amazed that a Bloc Québécois member, someone from Quebec, has the gall to make a connection between the current situation and the Oka crisis. They are two completely different situations.

This is about a project that has been accepted by 20 out of 20 communities after six years of negotiations. Oka, meanwhile, was a project initiated by non-indigenous people who wanted to build a golf course on traditional lands where an ancient first nations cemetery was located.

Anyone who would draw a comparison between the two clearly does not understand the situation. I would love to see the member for Jonquière tell his constituents—tonight, tomorrow or on the weekend—that he is against intervention by the Government of Quebec, which will be enforcing injunctions.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which had a strong focus on respect for the law. I have two comments about that.

First, it should be noted that in the history of Canadian colonialism, the law often gave authority to steal land from indigenous peoples, put indigenous peoples on reserves and take indigenous children away from their families and send them to residential schools. The law also used to prohibit indigenous peoples from having lawyers. We therefore have to be careful when invoking the law, because its past has not always been positive.

Second, with regard to the current situation and respecting the law, does my colleague recognize the Supreme Court's 1997 ruling in *Delgamuukw*, which gives hereditary chiefs legal responsibility for protecting their lands?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member invoke the law when he just said that we need to be careful about doing that.

Is the member aware that the majority of hereditary chiefs from the Wet'suwet'en community support this project? When the member talks about the Supreme Court ruling saying that the hereditary chiefs are responsible for maintaining the land, we can only agree because, in this case, the majority of the hereditary chiefs of that community support the project. It is not the Conservatives who are saying so. It is the National Coalition of Chiefs.

● (1345)

[English]

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by recognizing that we stand on the ancestral land of the Algonquin people.

There was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run
When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun
Long before the white man and long before the wheel
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real

These words by Gordon Lightfoot are ringing in my head these days, partly because of what is happening across Canada, but also because I just read a fascinating story in Maclean's, which is a short history by Stephen Maher about the indigenous people of Canada and the CN Railway. It may help put some perspective on the current situation regarding the blockades.

Mr. Maher writes:

If you study Canadian history, you find similar stories of dispossession and subjugation from coast to coast. The Crown pushed Indigenous people aside, forced them to live in poverty on land that nobody else wanted, destroyed their traditional systems of governance, broke treaties at will, a period that ran from Confederation until 1973, when the courts granted an injunction to the James Bay Cree, temporarily blocking a hydro development.

For most Canadians, the railway has been a great boon, as Lightfoot described it: "An iron road running from sea to the sea, bringing the goods to a young growing land, all up through the seaports and into their hands."

As Mr. Maher writes:

We can't expect Indigenous people to see the story that way.

When tempers get raw, and politicians talk forcefully about the importance of the rule of law, we would be wise to remember that the rule of law, and the Canadian Pacific Railway, brought ruin and death to Indigenous people.

I don't know how we are going to get through this winter and get the trains running again, but I believe our politicians and police should err on the side of caution, and we should keep in mind that our country only exists because of the lawful crimes our government committed to get the railway built.

This is very poignant. It is very poignant for all of us to consider this when we are talking about what is lawful and what is not.

I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Over the past few weeks, people have been troubled by what they are witnessing. Many people across Canada are asking what is happening in this country as they see the protests and the blockades, as they witness the goods not getting to them in Nova Scotia or out west, and as businesses are affected. They are questioning, too, whether reconciliation is still possible. Young people are questioning this. Indigenous peoples are wondering if their rights will be respected and, as they see the protests and blockades grow, they are questioning, “Can reconciliation still happen?”

I would like to say, yes, reconciliation is still possible, and that this is a turning point on what I would call that vital path. We need reconciliation. Hundreds of years have gone by without reconciliation, and now is the time to do it and get it right.

Many are impatient about climate action and a society that still relies on fossil fuels. Many in the business community and those who rely on jobs in the resource industry to support their families are afraid for their futures as well. There are workers who have been temporarily laid off. There are seniors who are anxious about the timely delivery of their medication. There are business owners who are worried about getting oil and gas to the people who need to fill their furnaces.

There are also protesters standing in the cold in allyship with the Wet'suwet'en people.

• (1350)

On both sides of this issue, people are upset and frustrated. I understand that, because this is about issues that really matter to Canadians, to indigenous people and to me, such as treaties, rights, livelihoods, the rule of law and democracy.

I fully agree that this situation must be resolved quickly. However, we also must be aware that this situation was not created overnight and it certainly was not created in the past four years.

It was not created because we have embarked down a path of reconciliation recently in our history. It was created because, for too long in our history, successive governments failed to do so. Therefore, finding a solution will not be simple. It will take determination. It will take hard work. It will take co-operation.

I have to say that, standing here as a newcomer to Parliament, I am proud to be part of a government that has a true leader, one who will not simply pick up a sword and rush blindly into battle as others here seem to prefer, but who has deep empathy and compassion, who recognizes the gravity of the situation and, as our Prime Minister, is extending his hand in partnership and trust to the Wet'suwet'en people. What our government is attempting to do is create a space for peaceful, honest dialogue with willing partners.

As we heard from the Mohawk leaders, and from AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde last week, we need to resolve this impasse through dialogue and mutual respect. Therefore, we only ask that the Wet'suwet'en be willing to work with our federal government as a partner to find solutions.

They often remind us that trust has historically been betrayed after indigenous negotiations with Canadian governments. I, for one, remember that very well. I tell provincial, municipal and federal

Business of Supply

leaders that we must keep this in mind and it is why we need to do the right thing.

I was pleased to be able to say to the Prime Minister just this week that I feel he is on the right path. I stand with him. We cannot rush blindly into this. It needs to be done right and with mutual respect. I believe we are facing this situation today because of the history of broken treaties and lies from many governments and many people in powerful positions who betrayed our first nations people. For that I am truly sorry and very sad.

However, our common ground is the desire to arrive at a solution. We cannot resolve this alone. We need all Canadians to show resolve and collaboration.

Over the weekend, the Minister of Indigenous Services met with representatives from Tyendinaga, as well as with other members of the Mohawk nation. Now that the RCMP have agreed to step back, it is our hope the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs will meet with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, as she has requested.

This is our opportunity to bring these perspectives together because the alternative, the use of force, has been tried many times, and those attempts at colonial control are not the path to reconciliation.

Despite having invested more than any other government to right historic wrongs and to close persistent gaps, we know there is still much more to be done. It is unacceptable that there are people who do not have access to clean drinking water, that indigenous women and girls still go missing and are murdered. It is unacceptable that indigenous people are still denied rights and lands.

We need to keep finding solutions. That can only happen by working together and listening to each other. In this country, we are facing many important and very deep debates. Canadians are impatient to see answers. People are frustrated that there is so much uncertainty. However, the debates in the House are very important. The language that is used is also extremely important. Yes, there is always a place for Canadians to protest and express their frustrations, but we need to ensure that we are listening to each other. We must be open to working together—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's contributions to this important issue. However, I am a bit confused. In the motion itself, it says, “and condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions”.

Statements by Members

In British Columbia, we saw an instance where ministers, the press, the public and workers of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia were unable to attend to the throne speech. An injunction was sought by the speaker of that legislative assembly, which is enforced now by a court order.

It seems to me that the government consents that some court orders need to be followed and others do not. Does the member, who says that she supports the RCMP no longer enforcing the injunction put in place by the B.C. Supreme Court on the Coastal GasLink area, also agree that there should be no power for the RCMP to enforce legislative assembly?

Further than that, a citizen's arrest was what the radicals who decided to block the premier from leaving his house to attend the budget meeting wanted to do. In this bill, I am opposing people who are taking it upon themselves to threaten elected members, threaten the rights of the press and threaten the rights of the public to get to their places of work.

Will she condemn that kind of radical protester who seeks the citizen's arrest of a provincial premier?

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I do believe members have the right to get to work unobstructed, and it did bother me when that happened in British Columbia. It also bothered me when our Deputy Prime Minister was prevented from going into a legal office in Halifax recently. These things should not be occurring and, in fact, any kind of violence is not okay.

However, I do believe that many of the protesters are standing with the Wet'suwet'en people, and they are not paid protesters or renegades. As a member of the legislative assembly of Nova Scotia for 10 years, I stood up for the grandmothers who were being taken off their land by the RCMP in the Alton gas situation. I was actually asked to leave the House for that, so am I a crazy activist? I do not think so.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague across the way, who once again spoke about hope and reconciliation. However, as others have said, it is time to put words into action.

We are in the midst of a national crisis. My colleague says that she is pleased that her prime minister is on the right path. However, there is no indication that he is on any path, let alone the right one.

My question is quite simple. What is the plan? When will there be a meeting with people from the Wet'suwet'en nation? Will the Prime Minister travel there?

The Bloc has made some very constructive suggestions that are coming to fruition since we just learned that the RCMP is prepared to withdraw from the territory. We want to know what happens next, but we are not getting any information, and that is unacceptable. I would like to know the plan.

[English]

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I have to say, first of all, that I am not the keeper of the Prime Minister's schedule. That is not in my job description, so I do not know what his plans are in the coming days or weeks. However, I do know that the Minister of

Crown-Indigenous Relations is meant to meet with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. They were prepared to go out west to do it, but now that the hereditary chiefs are coming to Ontario, I am hoping that might happen even more quickly.

I believe the next step is the dialogue and discussion that will take place with them.

● (1400)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not want to interrupt because I believe it is our hon. colleague's first speech, but she did reference Gordon Lightfoot. I was shocked by that because the Conservatives made a motion that stood up against quoting folk singers. They have denounced lyrics, they have attacked young people and they have attacked indigenous people.

I want to ask my hon. colleague whether she believes it is acceptable in the Parliament of Canada to quote Gordon Lightfoot, without offending Conservatives.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I would say to my hon. colleague from the NDP that any kind of quoting of songs and poetry is great, because in Nova Scotia we were not allowed to do so in the legislature. It is very freeing.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PACIFIC SALMON

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the 2019 Pacific salmon season was a disaster.

Pacific salmon are facing an unprecedented crisis. British Columbia is in real danger of losing its most iconic fish. Countless runs are endangered, including the Nanaimo River runs. I have heard from first nations leaders, commercial fishermen, sports fishermen and advocacy groups on this issue.

The government needs to take urgent action and restore an adequate budget for salmon stock assessments, commit more resources to the DFO's salmon enhancement program, increase the salmon conservation stamp fee on fishing licences, legislate the move to closed-containment salmon farms immediately and provide emergency relief packages for commercial fishers and first nations.

There is still time to save the Pacific salmon, but we must act now before it is too late.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, I pledged to stand up for democratic reform in this place if re-elected. Now I am back.

I rise to begin fulfilling this pledge by addressing my many fellow members about the historic opportunity to improve the democratic character of this place that lies before us in this minority Parliament.

By amending our Standing Orders to ensure that all members of the House are fully empowered to advocate for their constituents on Parliament Hill, whether it be by creating a parallel chamber or tackling party discipline, we can ensure that the voices of voters are not drowned out by acrimonious partisan rhetoric and voting patterns in the people's House.

On election day, our names come first and our parties come second on the ballots cast by our constituents. Let us all put our constituents first in this Parliament. Let us seize this historic opportunity to work across party lines to implement the democratic reform this place needs.

* * *

DAWSON CREEK AIR SERVICE

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate some great news for Dawson Creek and South Peace. Dawson Creek has a special place in my heart because that is where I was born.

Last week WestJet announced that it would be adding a new non-stop daily service between Dawson Creek and Calgary. Air travel to and from our northern communities is crucial, so beginning April 26, this year-round service on WestJet Link will begin.

Our local airports are an important part of our growing community in northeastern B.C., and having competitive air service is essential for keeping our economy moving and linking our communities together.

I would like to congratulate WestJet and thank Mayor Dale Bumstead and the many people of Dawson Creek who worked so hard to bring this new service to the area.

I cannot wait to be one of the first passengers on this inaugural flight.

* * *

RON CALHOUN

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are familiar with Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. Fewer are familiar with the person who coined the phrase “Marathon of Hope” and who helped convince the Canadian Cancer Society to take a chance on this young man's dream.

Ron Calhoun from London was that person. Even after Terry's untimely death, Ron worked to ensure Terry's goal was realized.

Ron's love for community and sense of duty motivated him to support big causes that could make a real difference. He developed the Ladies' Great Ride for cancer and nurtured it as the initiative went global.

In the 1990s, Ron volunteered again, this time for Jesse's Journey, supporting John and Jesse Davidson in their wheelchair trek

Statements by Members

across Ontario, and later John's cross-Canada walk to raise funds to fight Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

Ron passed away earlier this month at the age of 86, but his continual commitment to make life better for people should never be forgotten.

I extend my sincere condolences to Ron's family and many friends across Canada.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ON HIGHWAY 15

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a difficult day for the community of La Prairie. Sadly, two people were killed and at least 60 others injured in a pile-up involving nearly 200 vehicles. It is a real tragedy. My thoughts and those of my colleagues are with the families affected by this tragic accident.

At this difficult time, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work done by the various response services, the fire department, police forces, paramedics, authorities in Quebec and the city of La Prairie and its mayor, Donat Serres.

Sometimes the importance of these people who show bravery and composure in situations like the one yesterday goes unacknowledged as sadness and disbelief take hold. We are lucky to be able to rely on people like them at such difficult times.

In closing, the hon. member for Saint-Jean and I extend our condolences to the families and loved ones of the two victims.

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CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investing in our youth is vital in order to ensure Canada's prosperity. Through the Canada summer jobs program, our government is committed to helping our young people acquire the skills, work experience and abilities required to transition successfully into the labour market.

In Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, this program represented an investment of almost \$682 million last year and created 233 jobs. I would therefore like to take advantage of the time allotted to me in the House today to remind employers that they have until February 24, 2020, to apply for funding on the government's website.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my three colleagues from Laval, the hon. member for Laval—Les Îles, the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan and the hon. member for Vimy, for being here.

*Statements by Members**[English]***FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what if I were to tell you about a building material that is affordable, sustainable, renewable and sequesters carbon? What if I were to tell you about a sector of our economy that supports first nations and rural Canada?

That is the forestry sector, and it is being completely ignored by the Liberal government. We have lost opportunities to fight climate change because the Liberals have failed to get a softwood lumber agreement with the United States. Now thousands of people are out of work, thousands of families are struggling, and forestry companies are protesting with their feet and leaving for the United States.

We hear a lot of verbal appeasement about protecting jobs in this sector from a government that purports to balance the economy and the environment. Therefore, why are the Liberals turning their back on British Columbia? Why does the government turn its back on the thousands of forestry workers, many in my riding?

Enough is enough. When will we see some action? When will we help Canadian workers get ahead?

* * *

FUAD SAHIN

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last November, we lost a Canadian giant. Dr. Fuad Sahin immigrated to Canada in 1958. He settled in the Niagara region and worked as a urologist until his retirement.

Since his arrival to Canada, he championed several charitable causes and interfaith dialogue. In 1984, in response to the famine in Ethiopia, Dr. Sahin helped found the International Development and Relief Foundation. Today, IDRF is one of the most respected charities and is providing assistance to millions in 42 countries and here in Canada.

For his exceptional commitment to the betterment of humanity, Dr. Sahin became the first Turkish Canadian to receive the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada. He was also recognized by the MAX Gala with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

We will miss Dr. Sahin's wisdom, passion and optimism.

I offer my deep condolences to his family and the entire team at IDRF. He left behind a profound legacy that is still making a difference in the world today.

* * *

● (1410)

*[Translation]***LOUIS-EDMOND HAMELIN**

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 11, Louis-Edmond Hamelin passed away in Quebec City at the age of 96. Mr. Hamelin was an illustrious economist, linguist, writer and indigenous advocate. Above all, he was a visionary who had a particular fondness for the north.

It is fair to say that Louis-Edmond Hamelin was the father of nordicity in Quebec. He was tirelessly dedicated to studying the north, its ice and its people. He said that exploring by foot was the best way to learn geography, and that is what he did. He visited the north countless times. He met its people and learned about their culture and traditions.

His passion for the north quickly led him to forge brand new paths. For example, he was the first president of the Institut de la géographie in Quebec City and founded the Centre for Northern Studies in 1961, which is still active today. He was a creative linguist and came up with more than 200 words, including the French word for permafrost, *pergélisol*. His books and reflections on the humanities, including geography, economics and sociology, have inspired many generations of thinkers.

It is impossible to adequately pay tribute to such a rich life and monumental legacy in so little time.

Thank you, Mr. Hamelin, for enlightening us all.

The Speaker: I remind members that statements by members are personal statements that are meant to be heard by everyone, but this is very difficult with all of the noise in the chamber.

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*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks I have noticed, as the shadow minister for families, children and social development, that several ministers have dropped in to Alberta to make announcements about affordable housing for the province, with 200 units here, 96 units there.

However, Albertans won't be fooled. They know that it is the Liberal government killing the economy with its anti-pipeline legislation, delaying of the Trans Mountain pipeline, wavering on the approval of Teck Frontier and now not upholding the rule of law with the Coastal GasLink pipeline project.

Alberta lost 19,000 jobs in January, and the number of Albertans who have foreclosed on their own homes continues to rise.

The Liberal government needs to realize that its province-destroying policies, based on anti-energy ideology, are making life increasingly unaffordable for Albertans, while at the same time killing their opportunity for livelihood. Adding more affordable housing units is not going to fix the real problem, and it is time the Liberals admitted this.

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AUSTRALIAN WILDFIRES

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend three incredible members of my community, who, at the ages of eight, three and four, inspired our community to come together and provide relief aid for the Australian wildfires.

When Meila, Paisley and Maverick learned about the devastating wildfires at school, they wanted to help the animals in any way that they could. After discussing ideas with their parents, they decided to lead a bottle drive across Uxbridge and donate the funds to WIRES, the largest wildlife rescue organization in Australia. Three drop-off locations were set up across town and thousands of bottles were collected.

This fundraiser ended up inspiring further initiatives in town, including the owners of our local IDA Pharmacy, Hank and Vidhi, deciding to donate 50% of all profits on January 12.

After a few weeks of hard work, Meila, Paisley and Maverick raised \$3,400 Australian, proving that no matter what age, people can make meaningful changes here at home and around the world.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot about the blockades that have done so much damage to our economy, but there is one thing that seems to be consistently overlooked.

We have not heard the Prime Minister acknowledge, even once, that this project has support from the Wet'suwet'en elected council and the majority of their hereditary chiefs, and that there are 20 signed benefits agreements with nations along the route. Many of them are already working on the pipeline, and these blockades are affecting their local, as well as the national, economy.

For years we have all listened to first nations leaders talking about the chronically high unemployment rates, addictions and suicides. Now these northern nations have taken control of their own destiny, but the project is still stalled.

The Liberals should consider supporting their efforts to change that and support the national economy.

* * *

● (1415)

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a Liberal leadership crisis enveloping our nation. Protests are happening across Canada with the goal to shut Canada down.

Our world-class energy industry is being shut down because of the Prime Minister's interventions and refusal to look at the national interest. Rural crime is at unprecedented levels and has destroyed the quality of life in rural Alberta. The Liberals are criminalizing law-abiding firearms owners, while ignoring the real criminals. The middle class, something they cannot even define, are hurting, while we see record numbers of insolvencies. The federal fiscal outlook is a mess. Canada has taken a diminished role on the world stage. Agriculture is hurting from increased taxes and inability to access markets. The Liberal attempts at indigenous reconciliation are shown to be a failure. The Prime Minister's environmental plan punishes Canadians while not actually helping the planet.

Statements by Members

Those are just a few examples. Last Saturday's National Post headline was "Leaderless". Canada needs better.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last spring, half a million people protested in the streets of Montreal. It was the biggest protest in our history. These people were calling for real action to address the climate crisis. They know that it is urgent that we slash our carbon footprint to prevent an environmental disaster. When the house is ablaze, you have to stop putting wood on the fire.

The Liberals are breaking their promises and have fallen prey to the oil lobby. The Liberals promised to eliminate subsidies to oil companies. Today, a study released by Équiterre—which must be familiar to the Minister of Canadian Heritage—reveals that oil subsidies are still there and were even increased last year. The Liberals are exacerbating the problem. It is time to stop giving gifts to oil companies. It is time to pull the plug on the wasteful spending on Trans Mountain. It is time to reject the GNL project and Teck's Frontier project, which cause pollution. It is the eleventh hour. We should be panicking. We must take action for future generations.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month, I rise today with a message from Marjorie Villefranche, the executive director of Maison d'Haïti:

We, the women of African descent, want to be heard because we believe that racism and discrimination should no longer exist in 2020.

We want to develop a just and egalitarian society that excludes no one.

A society that reflects our non-racist, non-sexist and non-violent values.

We want to be heard because the colour of our skin should no longer determine our future, let alone that of our children.

We do not want more empty promises, but courageous action that holds the promise of justice and redress.

We want to be recognized as people who have fully contributed to the development of our society and to its human, political, economic, cultural and artistic development.

We, the women of African descent, want to celebrate with our fellow citizens our indomitable will to live with dignity.

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[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we honour the lives and memories of the Heavenly Hundred.

For three months, thousands of Ukrainians occupied Kyiv's Independence Square and peacefully protested the corrupt regime of President Viktor Yanukovich.

Oral Questions

I stood on the Maidan in Ukraine six years ago among the ash and bloodstains left from the brutal crackdown on these innocent Euromaidan protesters. Their bravery and sacrifice as they stood up against Yanukovich's thugs deserve our highest praise.

Ukraine and their friends around the world now carry forward the legacy of the Heavenly Hundred and all those who took part in the Revolution of Dignity as the battle for democracy and the territorial integrity of Ukraine continues even today.

Canada's Conservatives will always support the people of Ukraine in their pursuit of freedom, democracy and human rights.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian]

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[Translation]

MOTREC INTERNATIONAL

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like our government, the people of Sherbrooke care about environmentally responsible economic development. That is why we worked with Economic Development Canada to help a business in my riding, Motrec International.

Motrec International is an innovative and rapidly growing company that manufactures all-steel electric industrial vehicles. My regards to Motrec's CEO, Blair McIntosh, and the company's employees, including Mario and Sylvain, whom I had a chance to chat with during my recent visit to the factory.

By choosing to invest in our SMEs, in green, innovative businesses, we have helped create over one million jobs since 2015.

I am proud to be part of a government that is working for regions like Sherbrooke and providing our communities with the financial tools they need to move forward.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the many ways we can tell that the Prime Minister does not know what he is doing is when his message changes every single day. First, the Prime Minister elevated the protesters, talking about how they were defending their communities in the cold. Then he tried to make a link between radical anti-energy activists and reconciliation. Then he said that the protests were illegal, but it was not up to him to enforce the rule of law.

I have a simple question. Can the Prime Minister tell us on what day these illegal blockades will come down?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that the current situation is having a very significant impact on Canadian jobs, the economy and the well-being of all Canadians, and we feel the urgency of that impact. At the same time, reconciliation remains a crucial priority for our government and for all Canadians.

We have been working tirelessly to resolve the circumstances that have led to these blockades. Today, we are aware of and encouraged by positive developments and we will continue the hard work of solving the situation as peaceably as possible.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these anti-free market, anti-energy activists have nothing to do with reconciliation, and it is completely unjust for up to 1,500 people to have to go without a paycheck because some people are breaking the law.

Helen Michelle of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation said, "A lot of the protestors are not even Wet'suwet'en people. Our people said go ahead" to Coastal GasLink.

Once again, can the Prime Minister tell this House on what day these illegal blockades will come down?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to share what I believe to be a very positive development in this dispute. The B.C. RCMP has advised that it has made a decision to deploy its officers based on its assessment of the conditions that exist in the Wet'suwet'en territory. The B.C. RCMP has made this operational decision, and we trust the RCMP's ability to assess the situation and to keep the public safe.

We believe that the time has come for the barricades to come down and we are working toward addressing the circumstances that gave rise to it and to resolving those as peaceably as possible.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is once again offering concessions to those who have more resolve than he does. Now that the RCMP has been ordered to leave Wet'suwet'en territory, there are major questions about whether this project will actually go ahead.

The Prime Minister has already told these radical anti-energy protesters that he will not do anything to enforce the law. Those people are breaking the law and trying to hold up this important project.

Will he at least give a 100% guarantee that Coastal GasLink will be built, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I need to correct something the member opposite said.

The Supreme Court has said police independence underpins the rule of law, and in these circumstances no direction was given to the RCMP. The decisions made by the RCMP were based on its professional experience, the law and its assessment of the situation on the ground. The RCMP has made important decisions to try to resolve this peacefully. The RCMP has our trust and confidence, and we will continue to work hard to resolve this appropriately.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members that people want to hear what is asked and answered. Shouting while both are going on really does not help the matter. I want to remind everyone in case they have forgotten what the rules of House are.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

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[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the 15th day of the blockade. As we enter the third week, our Prime Minister is still not showing any leadership and has not come up with a plan.

François Legault and several other premiers have asked the Liberal Prime Minister for a deadline to end the impasse.

Does anyone in the government have the leadership sense to understand the urgent need for action? Can the Prime Minister show just a little leadership and give us a plan with a deadline?

• (1425)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the situation very well. We are working very closely with all the provinces because this is a challenge that the provincial and federal governments must tackle together. That is why the Prime Minister will be speaking with Premier Legault and his other provincial counterparts this afternoon.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this Prime Minister and his ministers are taking pictures, legs crossed, to post on Twitter, we have just learned that 5,300 employees in Ontario and Quebec are about to be laid off by Resolute Forest Products. This is in addition to the 1,500 layoffs at VIA Rail and CN, as well as many others across Canada in all our regions. We have 4,500 cars stuck on the rails, which represents \$425 million worth of goods a day.

When will this Prime Minister stop ignoring all these alarm bells, show a modicum of leadership, and table a plan with a deadline?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague and all Canadians that we are well aware of the economic impact of the protests taking place right now, and we are focused on resolving them as quickly as possible.

We know that there is a shortage of certain products. We are aware that there have been layoffs. We want to end this as quickly as possible by opening a dialogue to find a peaceful resolution to this problem. That is what we are doing.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we seem to be mired in confusion, because this government does not know the difference between patience and inaction.

Oral Questions

Yesterday, we learned that the Wet'suwet'en did not want to talk to the Prime Minister. For two days, the Prime Minister did not want to talk to the premiers. Just before question period, we found out that he is going to talk to them after question period but will not report back to Parliament until next Tuesday at the earliest.

Can we at least get some information about what the Prime Minister will be committing to this afternoon?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question.

As everyone knows, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs are now en route to Tyendinaga to pursue a peaceful resolution, which is the solution we are all seeking. That dialogue needs to happen as soon as possible. That is what we are doing.

The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and I are prepared to engage in that dialogue now so we can achieve a peaceful resolution.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has been done so far was done by the RCMP. According to the government, the RCMP is an independent organization. To date, the government has not done anything.

Will the Prime Minister take advantage of the fact that there are Wet'suwet'en representatives in eastern Canada to meet with them? This would be an opportunity to do so. Have there been any clear proposals? Did he propose to suspend the work on the pipeline? Have there been any clear proposals beyond the empty rhetoric we keep hearing?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I speak for everyone when I say that we all feel encouraged by the new development with the RCMP in British Columbia, which offered the hereditary chiefs an opportunity to sit down and work on a long-term plan that could involve a reduced presence in their territory, obviously.

As everyone knows, we are prepared to engage in a respectful dialogue, but we have a very clear plan to defuse the situation, which we are not going to disclose to the public for now, of course. We are again asking Canadians to be a little bit patient. I am confident that this will all get sorted out.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en nation requested a meeting with the Prime Minister over a month ago. According to reports, the hereditary chiefs asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister again today.

[English]

The hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en have made it very clear that they want to meet with the Prime Minister specifically.

My question is very simple. Will the Prime Minister meet the chiefs of the hereditary region of Wet'suwet'en?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we can all be heartened by the development that has happened in B.C. that the RCMP has extended to hereditary chiefs. It is an opportunity to sit down and continue that dialogue. This is a positive development.

The move of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs in Tyendinaga is a positive development. I think everyone in this House is dedicated to a peaceful resolution to this.

There are clear steps to de-escalation. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and I stand ready to engage with the leadership in Tyendinaga. As early as tonight we will go and meet them and discuss this peaceful resolution.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not what I asked, and more importantly, that is not what the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en have asked for. They have asked to speak with the Prime Minister directly; not the ministers, not another delegate, but the Prime Minister directly.

What has the Prime Minister done? Has he responded to the invitation? Has he picked up a phone and called? Here is an opportunity for the government to commit today in this House that the Prime Minister will meet with the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en.

[Translation]

Today, we have an opportunity.

Will the Prime Minister commit to meeting with the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en nation?

[English]

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone pretends to know what the requests are. We cannot know what those requests are unless we actually ask the people. It is not a question of looking at the banners on the street. It is actually talking to the leadership in question, and that is precisely what we have done.

The entire cabinet is seized of this incredibly urgent issue. It is a situation that evolves minute by minute. I and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, as well as other ministers, stand ready to engage on a moment's notice and that is precisely what we will do.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak leadership is holding the Canadian economy hostage. These illegal blockades are just another example of Canada signalling to the world that we are closed for business. We fail to deliver big nation-building projects because of a handful of radical protesters backed by American money.

When will the Prime Minister stop giving these activists permission to shut down our country?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to

provide this House with some clarity. The RCMP Act and federal authorities do not extend to provincial police services. The demonstrations and blockades taking place across the country are actually in provincial jurisdictions. That is the responsibility of the police of local jurisdictions under their provincial police acts.

Our government's role is to try to mediate and reconcile the issues that gave rise to this dispute in the first place. That is the work that we are doing in assistance to a peaceful resolution to these disputes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak response to this national crisis shows his unwillingness to do what is in the best interest of all Canadians. Canadians have the right to freedom of speech and freedom of protest, but they do not have the right to break the law, completely shut down Canada's economy and prevent other Canadians from going to work.

What is the Prime Minister's action plan? When is he going to own this and put an end to these illegal blockades?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for everyone to understand that decisions made by the police, whether by the RCMP in their jurisdiction or by provincial police services across the country, are based on their professional experience, understanding of the law and interpretation of the circumstances on the ground. They will continue to do that work without any political interference from this government.

We are supporting their work. We trust them to do their job, but we are not in any way interfering or impeding their ability to do their work.

• (1435)

The Speaker: Before I go on to the next member who has a question, and I am sure we all want to hear it, we all want to hear the answers to questions too. I just want to remind members that shouting does not really help anything.

I just want to remind hon. members that when talking about someone, refer to them by their title or riding. Shouting their name could be breaking laws, and we do not want anyone to break the rules in here.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Gary Naziel, a Wet'suwet'en—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. That applies to both sides.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it is great that you get it.

Gary Naziel, a Wet'suwet'en community member and hereditary chief, said in a recent interview that he has to provide for his family. He said he worked in the mines for five years in B.C. and Alberta and left that to work at CGL in his own territory. He said his ancestors, including his grandparents, would have been proud of him for working on his own territory.

Instead of emboldening the anti-government, anti-reason, anti-everything activist, why will the weak Prime Minister not stand strong with the Wet'suwet'en community, stand up for our laws, get the illegal blockades removed and get our economy moving again?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand and fully support the urgency of our work to resolve this as peacefully as possible.

As I said earlier, the time has come for the barricades to come down. We have been working diligently to address the circumstances that led to those blockades. As a result of a very responsive and responsible decision made by the RCMP, I believe the conditions have now been met to allow for a more amenable and peaceful resolution.

We will continue to work on a speedy resolution of this dispute and get Canadians back to work.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlebourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand that the minister does not have authority over E Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as it comes under B.C. jurisdiction. However, can the minister tell us what RCMP resources he does have control over?

There are resources available to the minister, and section 5 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act authorizes him to issue orders and directives. Can the minister respond to that?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada has said police independence underpins the rule of law. That independence is absolutely crucial to maintaining public trust.

All directions to the RCMP are prescribed by three conditions: They cannot require the force to disregard its lawful duties; I cannot infringe upon the independence of the RCMP; and I cannot ask it to reach beyond federal jurisdiction. That means we do not direct the RCMP in its operational decisions in the day-to-day policing of the communities that it is responsible for.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the blockades are not about Coastal GasLink. The project is not even controversial. The 20 elected authorities along the path of the pipeline support it. Even an NDP government supports it. It will reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. It is about lawbreakers trying to get concessions, but if we reward law-breaking with concessions, we will get more law-breaking. Imagine the damage they will do when an actual controversial project comes along.

What concessions is the government contemplating for the law-breakers, and how much more law-breaking does the government plan to encourage?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at no time have we ever countenanced law-breaking.

At the same time, we on this side of the House understand that reconciliation remains a priority not just for our government, but for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

We have been working hard to support law enforcement efforts in their respective jurisdictions to resolve the circumstances that have led to these blockades. That is our responsibility. We have been working hard to address the conditions and the concerns that gave rise to these blockades.

The responsibility for upholding the law and maintaining public safety is in fact the responsibility of the police of those respective jurisdictions.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is just a warm-up act. There are other projects ahead of us. The government is spending \$17 billion on a pipeline that it cannot even build. When that construction actually gets under way, imagine the law-breaking that is going to be unleashed by the incentives that the Liberal government is giving to this group of lawbreakers.

Everyone is watching.

Is the government going to reward law-breaking on this project and promote much more of it on projects to come?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite and all members of the House of some of our experiences with previous disruptions of service and blockades. Perhaps we should remember the outcome of Ipperwash, of Caledonia, of previous blockades. We could also reflect that when that has resulted in overwhelming police action, it can result in additional blockades.

The best path forward to protect Canadians' interests is a peaceful resolution of this dispute. We are working hard to achieve that peaceful resolution.

• (1440)

The Speaker: I am not sure what is going on. Thursday afternoons usually are quieter than this. Yesterday was relatively quiet. I want to remind hon. members to keep it down so we can hear the questions and the answers.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Shefford.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, people in our communities have run out of patience. Thousands of workers risk being laid off because of the rail blockade. In my own riding, for instance, Bow Plumbing Group is no longer getting the raw materials it needs to manufacture its products. Fifty people will be out of work by the end of the week if the government does not solve this crisis. Note that the end of the week is tomorrow. This is just one of many examples.

Oral Questions

Does the government realize the magnitude of the crisis and how urgently it needs to be resolved for workers across Quebec?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully aware of the magnitude of this issue. We completely understand the difficulties Canadians are facing because of these blockades.

We know we need to find a solution as quickly as possible. We also know that this solution can only be found through dialogue, which will allow us to reach a long-term, lasting, peaceful solution.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the entire south shore of Montreal is being held hostage by the rail blockades.

In my riding, two stations on the commuter rail line that links Mont-Saint-Hilaire to Montreal, namely the Saint-Basile-le-Grand and Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville stations, are closed until further notice. For many of my constituents, just getting to and from work is a real challenge.

Two weeks into the crisis, the blockades have not been removed, and their number is growing.

Is the government going to wait until all rail lines around Montreal are closed before it takes action?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how disruptive the blockades can be for travellers in Canada. In this case, we are referring to VIA Rail and Exo, as well as CN freight service. We understand that finding a long-term solution requires dialogue, and that is the approach we are taking.

We are working very hard to put an end to these blockades and to get the trains running again as quickly as possible. We are working with our provincial partners. The Prime Minister will be speaking with his counterparts later today.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our farmers have had an extremely difficult year. First, they were left high and dry with free trade. They faced unpredictable weather. They lost crops during this fall's propane crisis. We are now on the verge of a new propane shortage, this time because the government will not take action on the rail blockades. Farmers will not be able to heat their buildings.

What is the government doing to fix this crisis before farmers lose even more?

If they do experience losses, will they receive adequate compensation?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware that the protests have caused shortages of some products that are important to Canadians, in particular the propane that farmers use to dry their grain. We are well aware of the propane shortage.

We are working hard to resolve this problem as quickly as possible to get our railways back in service, so that the products Canadians need can be delivered.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the blockades are now into their second week and the Liberals continue

to sit on their hands. VIA Rail announced it is laying off 1,000 people and has cancelled service again this week. In fact, its chief executive said this is the first time in 42 years of existence that it had to interrupt most of its service across Canada. The tourism industry is being directly impacted and people are cancelling their planned trips. Can the tourism minister tell the House exactly how much this is costing our tourism industry?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a person who uses VIA Rail on a weekly basis, I am certainly very aware of the situation. It is a regrettable situation. However, at the moment, because of blockading, it is not possible to achieve all the services VIA Rail would like to give. However, the good news is that certain VIA trains are operating, among others, between Toronto and Windsor, as well as between Montreal and Ottawa. Some services have resumed, and we hope to get them all resuming as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Cynthia Garneau, the president and CEO of VIA Rail, said that in 42 years of existence, this is the first time that VIA Rail, a public intercity passenger rail service, has had to interrupt most of its services across the country.

More than 1,500 jobs have been cut at VIA Rail and CN. All sectors of Canada's economy, especially the tourism industry, are feeling other effects from the rail blockades.

Can the Minister of Tourism tell us what economic impact the blockades are having on this industry?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I have all day.

The hon. minister may now answer the question.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the impact of having some VIA Rail trains out of service.

The good news is that some trains are currently running between Montreal and Ottawa and between Toronto and Windsor. There are two that have been running non-stop between The Pas and Churchill, Manitoba, as well as between White River and Sudbury, in northern Ontario.

We would like to have them all running full time. That is our goal, and we are working very hard to make this happen as soon as possible.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Tourism a very simple question. I think she just did not hear me.

Can the minister tell us how the blockade is affecting the tourism industry?

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, perhaps my colleague did not quite understand the answer.

We are well aware that VIA Rail's passenger train service is very important, not only for tourism, but also for travellers, like me, who travel every week to work and then back home at the end of the week.

We want to resolve this issue as soon as possible. The good news is that some trains are running right now. We are working very hard to restore all rail service, not just in the corridor, but across the country.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government committed to implementing all 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is referenced 16 times as the framework for reconciliation. There is no reconciliation in the absence of justice.

Now the government is stalling on presenting its UNDRIP bill by using the current events with the Wet'suwet'en people. Is this the Prime Minister's way to punish indigenous people who are standing up for their rights, or was he never going to follow through in the first place?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has always been a priority for our government. Our commitment was included in both our platform and our Speech from the Throne. It is in my mandate letter to implement by the end of the year 2020. We remain committed to doing just that.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous youth are marching in streets across this country with signs that say "reconciliation is dead". That is on the Prime Minister. They do not believe him anymore, and the trains are stopped across this country. To get them started, the Prime Minister needs to put a credible plan on the table, yet he continues to fail the test of leadership.

The Prime Minister can fly to Africa and he can go to Barbados, yet he cannot pick up the phone to talk to the hereditary chiefs in our own country. When is he going to show up, put his boots on, go to Wet'suwet'en territory and de-escalate this crisis? When is he going to show up?

• (1450)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership are on their way to Tyendinaga to discuss these important issues in the next few days. There is a clear plan of action for de-escalation, but that involves dialogue.

To all Canadians out there suffering, we understand that this is a very difficult period and we are working diligently. Indeed, the whole cabinet is seized of this, and we will work hour by hour, minute by minute to resolve this situation peacefully.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past summer, I was joined by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and my colleagues in Brampton to highlight how this government is fighting climate change by investing in clean transportation solutions that reduce our emissions while growing the economy.

Could the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain to the House about how our government is supporting innovative projects that will pave the way for zero emission transportation in Brampton and across Canada?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past summer our government invested over \$11 million to support the world's largest fleet of interoperable battery-electric buses and overhead bus charging stations for Brampton's public transit system.

We know that cleaner vehicles are good for our communities, our economy and the environment. This critical investment in breakthrough electric bus technology will help support the Canadian clean-tech sector while keeping our air healthy and leading the fight against climate change.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing rail blockades across this land are crippling our country and holding our economy hostage.

CN and VIA Rail have been forced to lay off hundreds of workers as a result of the Prime Minister's weakness. Canadian industry is warning of empty shelves, and production shutdowns will soon follow.

Can the Prime Minister tell this House exactly what these blockades are costing the Canadian economy each day they go on?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very fully conscious of the impact of these blockades on the country. Yes, they are costing us quite a bit. There is no question about it. Because of the slowdowns and certain products not getting to their destinations, because certain people have had to be laid off, and because certain materials are in critical shortage at this point, we are aware of the fact that there is a significant impact due to the blockages.

That is why we are working very hard to resolve this peacefully through dialogue as soon as possible.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the numerous rail blockades have already had serious repercussions on our agriculture sector. Grain from the west is not moving. Farmers in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces are having to ration propane. Mills in my riding, including Agri-Marché, are facing shortages as early as next week. Farmers want supplies to start flowing, but they do not want temporary measures.

Does the minister have a tangible plan for getting things back to normal?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of how important the railway is for transporting grain, especially grain from certain provinces in the country, to our ports for export.

We understand our farmers' anxiety over this serious problem. That is why we are working very hard to resolve this problem as quickly as possible in a peaceful and long-term way.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, layoffs from the illegal blockades are rising every day while the government does nothing.

Does the Prime Minister know how many jobs have already been lost and how many Canadians will now have to struggle to rejoin the middle class because the government's failure to uphold the rule of law?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are following, extremely closely, the impact that this is having not only on the Canadian economy but also as it is touching individual Canadians. In some cases, there have been layoffs in certain locations with certain companies because of the fact that the trains are not moving.

That is why we are working even harder to bring this to a resolution as quickly as possible, but to do it the right way, to do it through dialogue, peacefully and as quickly as possible.

* * *

• (1455)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that Coastal GasLink is good for the environment. It will replace dirty coal plants in Asia with clean, lower-emitting natural gas facilities and reduce global emissions.

Trains are not moving because of the Prime Minister's weak leadership and inability to handle illegal blockades. What he permits, he promotes. More trucks must be put on the road to transport goods and services.

Can the Prime Minister tell this House what the environmental impact is of the emissions from these trucks?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. As I have already said a number of times, I believe the time has come for the barricades to come down.

However, when the member suggests that it is our government that is somehow stopping the police from enforcing the injunctions, that is simply not correct. It is the responsibility of the police of jurisdiction, under their respective—

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. minister appreciates the coaching he is getting from the other side, but it is not necessary and it is not within the rules of the House. I want to ask everyone to take a deep breath, and we will listen to the questions and we will listen to the answers.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why the members opposite are afraid to hear the truth.

The reality is that the police are committed to resolving this situation peacefully, and, through our efforts, to bring about a reconciliation to address the issues that gave rise to these blockades in the first place. We are providing every assistance to them in achieving that peaceful resolution.

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*[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the consequences of the rail blockades will soon cost every family in Quebec quite dearly, and I mean financially. This weekend, there is a good chance that grocery store shelves will start to empty out, simply because we will not have enough stock. Hon. members across the way mentioned this earlier. What is more, all signs point to an increase in food prices as supplies dwindle. The Liberal government's lack of leadership will cost everyone dearly.

What is the Prime Minister's game plan for ensuring that the blockades are removed, because—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague and his constituents that we fully understand the impact of these blockades. It is hitting some people hard, particularly those who have been laid off, but also those who are experiencing shortages of important commodities because the railways are not operating. That is precisely why we are working very hard and as quickly as we can to resolve this issue so that the trains can start running again as soon as possible.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone is affected by the rail blockades. Companies across Quebec are laying off workers. Montreal's south shore is paralyzed by the commuter train shutdown. Our farmers are facing their second propane shortage in three months. Even grocery stores are running out of stock. At this point, more than two and a half weeks into the crisis, it is not complicated. Just about everyone in Quebec is affected.

Will the government finally take responsibility?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that we take our responsibilities very seriously. We know that we have to address this issue because we are aware of the economic impact on Canadians, on the people who live in her riding, in the south shore and across Canada. That is why we are working very hard to resolve the issue the right way, through dialogue, so that we can find a long-term, lasting way to solve this problem.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a country governed by the rule of law, all laws are enforceable. Unfortunately, the problem needs to be named. Finally, after 14 days of absolute inaction, to put it mildly, the Prime Minister correctly named the problem. Barricades are illegal. That is a step in the right direction, but naming the problem is just the beginning. Now we need action.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tell us when our laws will be enforced and when the barricades will be removed?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is a very important question, and I ask the member opposite, because it is a great opportunity to clarify, who is responsible for enforcing the laws in those jurisdictions? It is the police of local jurisdiction. It is their responsibility, but they fulfill that responsibility by working diligently to resolve this as peacefully as possible.

Our role and responsibility is to work with the impacted communities to seek and determine a peaceful resolution, but the responsibility for enforcing the law is the responsibility of the police of jurisdiction under their respective provincial authorities.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is facing a crisis, and the Prime Minister is too weak to act.

Yesterday the Prime Minister finally admitted that these blockades were illegal. The preamble to the Constitution Act, championed by Pierre Trudeau himself, states that Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the rule of law, yet when the Prime Minister is faced with a situation which he now admits is illegal, his reaction so far has been to do nothing.

When will this weak Prime Minister recognize the founding principle and start enforcing the rule of law?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is always useful when someone invokes the rule of law, because it gives us an opportunity to explain to people what that means. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that police independence underpins the rule of law and is necessary for the maintenance of public order and the preservation of the peace. Police independence is crucial to public trust in our institutions and of primary concern to the RCMP in its preser-

vation of public and officer safety. We are not, in any way, obstructing or interfering with the lawful decisions of the RCMP.

The previous government once said that it trusts the RCMP. Mr. Speaker, so do I.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting, because in 2010 the now Minister of Public Safety had zero qualms about his role as Toronto police chief with his approach to protesters at the G20 Summit.

However, today he cannot find it in himself to defend the rule of law in a situation where the law is clearly being broken, as admitted by the Prime Minister himself.

What is it about the Prime Minister's fecklessness that just seems to rub off on everybody else? This is not a laughing matter. When is the rule of law going to be enforced?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can share with the House that in the 39 years I was a police officer and 10 years as the chief of police in Toronto, I never submitted to any political interference in any decision I made.

I will take the opportunity to once again remind the members of the House that police independence underpins the rule of law. Operational decisions on the enforcement of that law are made independently by our police services. We trust their judgment.

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FINANCE

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board tabled supplementary estimates (B) in this place on Tuesday.

Could the President of the Treasury Board update the House on new budgetary spending plans found within the supplementary estimates (B)?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton Centre for his hard work for his community.

The supplementary estimates I tabled just a few days ago will fund important investments in support of our armed forces, in support of indigenous communities and in support of our fight against climate change. These investments are the sorts of things that have created 1.1 million new jobs and have helped lift a million Canadians out of poverty in the last four years.

We will continue to grow the middle class, grow the economy, protect our environment, reduce poverty and give everyone a fair chance in life.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, illegal blockades are grinding our economy to a halt.

Oral Questions

In Abbotsford, my chicken, egg and dairy farmers fear they will not be able to feed their animals because the feed mills are running out of grain. Businesses are shutting down, farmers are losing millions and Canadians are out of work. Why? Because of the Prime Minister's feckless and weak leadership. The truth is he would rather be in Barbados lobbying for a UN Security Council seat.

When will the blockades be removed? When will the Prime Minister put Canadians to work? When will he finally get up in the House and answer a question?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague from B.C. that we are very aware of the impact that this is having on egg farmers, on grain farmers and on chicken farmers. We certainly understand the impact that it is having, and it is a big impact. We recognize that and we are tracking it on a daily basis. That is why it is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1505)

The Speaker: I want to remind everyone of what I said when I was elected as Speaker: to think of what the people back home are thinking of them when members open their mouths. Hopefully they are proud of what members are saying. I am looking around and I am seeing certain members for whom I usually have respect and who are usually very quiet, and even they are shouting. I want to remind everyone to calm down and listen.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I just want to repeat that we are very conscious of the impact this is having on dairy farmers, on egg farmers, on chicken farmers, on all farmers, including grain farmers as well. We are tracking that on a daily basis so we have an accurate assessment of the impact, which is considerable. That is why we are working so hard to resolve this problem.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak leadership has led Atlantic Container Lines to stop using the port of Halifax. Instead, it will now use American ports.

The CEO of the port of Halifax, Andy Abbott, said there are virtually no containers left in Ontario to even truck goods. Its Canadian operations have been shut down for almost two weeks. The port of Halifax is at risk of never seeing that container traffic again.

When will the Prime Minister show leadership and help lift the blockade?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a very important point. Even though at this point we are talking mainly about the stoppage of trains in the country, those trains typically do go to ports. There is no question that this is having an impact on the ports. That is why we are working so hard to find a durable solution, and a solution that goes through dialogue, so we can resolve this for the long term.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers depend on rail service to get their goods

to market. They are now planning for the spring and need to sell their crops and pay the cash advancements following a poor harvest season.

With dramatically reduced rail speeds and blockades happening across Canada, it is clear that the Liberals do not care about the importance of rail for farmers, based on their lack of action.

How will the Prime Minister ensure that grain gets to market in the face of these blockades?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, that is why we are working so hard.

However, I do want to make the point that there are trains moving in the west. There are trains that are picking up natural resources and moving them across the country. The challenge, of course, is that we want to get rid of all the blockades so we can get all the trains moving. That is why we are working so hard to find a long-term, peaceful, durable solution.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by introducing the national housing strategy, our government is committed to addressing housing shortages and high housing costs.

I have heard from many families in Ottawa South that have expressed concern about their ability to find a safe and affordable place that they can call home.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please update us on what our government is doing to ensure that Ottawa families can access high-quality and affordable housing options?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced the national housing strategy in order to restore federal leadership in housing. We have made unprecedented investments that have resulted in over a million Canadians finding a place to call home.

I am proud to update the House that just yesterday we announced an investment of over \$150 million in Ottawa that would increase the supply of affordable housing for Ottawa families, resulting in the assistance of over 321 families to find a place to call home.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trade deals affect every part of Canadians' lives, from jobs to drug prices to the environment.

After extensive negotiations with the government, we were able to deliver a meaningful step forward to make Canadian trade negotiations more open and transparent. We are bringing more decisions out of the back room and into the light. For future deals, the government will need to give 90 days notice of its intent to negotiate, table negotiation objectives 30 days before it begins and provide an economic impact assessment with the ratifying legislation.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister confirm the government's commitment to moving ahead with these improvements?

• (1510)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the proposals from the member for Elmwood—Transcona, and we will be formally amending the government's policy on tabling treaties in Parliament in line with his excellent suggestions. It has been a pleasure to work with him.

I also appreciate his work to ensure an expeditious ratification of the new NAFTA. It is a shame that I cannot say the same of the Conservatives, who used to be the party of free trade. Unfortunately, thanks to their weak and feckless leadership, it is up to the NDP to do that job.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, that is a hard act to follow.

Underpinning all the propaganda from Coastal GasLink and other LNG boosters is the claim that shipping our LNG overseas will be good for the climate crisis and will reduce greenhouse gases overall. Unfortunately, that claim is not true.

I would ask the minister if he is aware of recent studies that show a dangerous spike in greenhouse gas methane emissions as a result of fracking and show that fracked gas has the same carbon footprint as coal.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her environmental advocacy.

We are taking climate change very seriously. That is why we put in place the most robust plan in Canadian history, over 50 measures, that will help us meet our Paris targets. Coupled with our investments, we are 75% of the way there, but we know that we need to not only meet them—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to interrupt the hon. member for a second. There is some shouting going on back and forth from the front benches. I want to point out that we are trying to hear the answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, we know that we need to not only meet our Paris targets but exceed them. We owe it to our kids and grandkids. That is why I welcome any discussions and any work with not only my hon. colleague but all members of the House.

Privilege

Let us look at how we can use technology and our natural resources to help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in Canada and all around the world.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Bronwyn Eyre, Minister of Energy and Resources, Minister responsible for SaskWater and Minister responsible for SaskEnergy for the province of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE BY NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on something the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader said this morning in response to the question of privilege I raised yesterday on the misleading response from the Minister of Natural Resources to my written Question No. 50.

The parliamentary secretary should know that when one is in a hole one should stop digging. I say that because his intervention only added to the records of this House more misleading and conflicting information. It caused more confusion and cast more doubt, if that is even possible, on the integrity of the government he supports to give straight-up, honest answers to inquiries from members of this House.

The parliamentary secretary argued that the funds that were paid to Pembina Institute were grants and not contracts, and since my question asked about contracts, the government was accurate in stating that it had not granted any contracts to Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, if you follow the references I cited in my submission yesterday, and I have no idea why the parliamentary secretary did not do that, you will note that the items I referred to yesterday were paid for by Natural Resources Canada to the Pembina Institute and they all had contract dates, contract period start dates, contract period end dates and contract values. For example, the item with reference number C-2019-2020-Q2-00393 is listed as:

Procurement Identification Number: 3000696225

Vendor Name: PEMBINA INSTITUTE

Contract Date: 2019-09-19

Economic Object Code: 341

Description of work: Communications research services

Contract Period Start Date: 2019-09-19

Contract Period End Date or Delivery Date: 2019-12-13

Contract Value: \$33,900.00

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The payment for communications research services is not a grant. It is a service.

All of the items I referenced yesterday are listed in the same way. They do not just look like contracts or smell like contracts or sound like contracts, they are reported as contracts.

As I said yesterday, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion and I am now prepared to amend the motion to also refer the misleading statements of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

• (1515)

The Speaker: We will add that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion: That given the unanimous declaration of the House on February 22, 2007, to condemn all forms of human trafficking and slavery, this House: (a) encourage Canadians to raise awareness of the magnitude of modern-day slavery in Canada and abroad and to take steps to combat human trafficking; and (b) to recognize February 22 as national human trafficking awareness day.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As some members will know, yesterday we had a vote on whether or not the EI sickness benefits should be extended to 50 weeks. This morning I introduced a bill to do just that.

I am hoping that if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-212, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (special benefits), be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask the Thursday question. I am interested to hear from the government House leader what we will be doing for the remainder of this week, as well as next week. I know there are a number of things the country is seized with, which includes something that the Deputy Prime Minister just mentioned, which is the new NAFTA.

I do not think the Deputy Prime Minister is fully aware of the fact that it was the government House leader, in an answer to a Conservative question on February 6, who said that he believed the new NAFTA should be split into a number of studies when it goes to committee. I feel it is important to point that out because, for some reason, the Deputy Prime Minister is trying to politicize this very important agreement that workers across the country and premiers are concerned about. Although the Conservative Party has been very clear when talking about some of the impacts of the new NAFTA, we are the party of free trade. It really is sad when the government House leader rises and says he thinks a bill should be split and then the Deputy Prime Minister says the Conservatives are stalling it. It is completely untrue and inaccurate and poisons the good relationship and good work that the government House leader and I and other House leaders have been doing.

As I ask the government House leader today to please let us know what business we will be looking at, I would like for him to keep that in mind so that our relationship and the work we do can continue to be done in good faith.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that we have a very good working relationship, but I want to clarify something. We all agree on dividing the bill for different committees. That is not what she was referring to. She was referring to the date that the bill has to come back. We all agree, including the Deputy Prime Minister, on separating it for different committees.

• (1520)

[Translation]

In answer to her question, we will continue debate on the Conservative Party motion this afternoon. Tomorrow, we will resume the second reading debate on Bill C-3, the border services act. On Monday, we will begin debate on Bill C-6 on the citizenship oath, which was introduced earlier this week. Tuesday is an allotted day.

[English]

We expect to have additional legislation announced very soon, and we will give the opposition parties an update on the business for the rest of that week.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COASTAL GASLINK PROJECT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to address the ongoing protests in relation to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project and the Wet'suwet'en First Nation.

Our government is committed to a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. The RCMP is also committed to reconciliation with indigenous peoples based on cultural awareness and humility, shared history, collaboration, communication and empathy. Many of the RCMP's current reconciliation initiatives are taking place within continued relationship-building efforts.

It is important to note that Canada's police services, including the RCMP, act independently of all levels of government. They are mandated with protecting the public and enforcing applicable laws, including the Criminal Code of Canada. The concept of police independence requires that police officers be free from political direction or influence in carrying out law enforcement functions and making operational decisions.

As outlined by the Supreme Court, police independence underpins the rule of law. This has been upheld by the APEC inquiry, which ruled that when the RCMP is performing law enforcement functions, it is entirely independent of the federal government and answerable to the law and courts. As well, the Ipperwash inquiry report noted that police independence is a safeguard against powers being used for political ends. In 2015 the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, when he was the Conservative public safety minister, said the government needs to respect the operational independence of the RCMP. Even former prime minister Stephen Harper weighed in on the issue. He said, "The RCMP has an investigative process. The government does not interfere in that process. We put our complete trust in the RCMP to handle this investigation." I am surprised that some members still do not fully understand that premise.

Decisions are made by police based on individual circumstances and should continue to do so without political interference. The primary role of police in any demonstration or assembly is to preserve the peace, protect life and property, and enforce the law. All Canadians have fundamental freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. However, individuals who choose to use these rights must do so in accordance with the law. In some cases, in various types of civil protest, the RCMP's increased involvement is necessary as part of the effort to maintain peace and order and to uphold the law.

The dispute over the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline remains an issue under the purview of the Province of British Columbia and not the federal government. As the police of jurisdiction in British Columbia, the RCMP can be lawfully mandated to implement enforcement clauses of injunction orders. These orders may be obtained in the courts by resource companies in their efforts to gain unfettered access to areas being restricted and/or impeded by protesters.

Police must abide by conditions set out in any given court injunction. They can, however, exercise police discretion in special instances, such as adopting a delay to enforcement while reasonable efforts are made to achieve peaceful outcomes. When implementing the enforcement clauses of court injunctions, the RCMP employs a measured approach that facilitates lawful, peaceful and safe protest in an environment that is safe for protesters and members of the public. Police also undertake proactive engagement to maintain the peace or to facilitate the resolution of public disorder and the restoration of the peace. The approach preserves traditional polic-

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ing options and respects the lawful exercise of personal rights and freedoms.

In relation to Coastal GasLink, significant efforts were made by the RCMP to facilitate dialogue between all stakeholders over the course of this past year. The RCMP continues to be in regular communication with all stakeholders to maintain regular discussions toward a peaceful resolution. The RCMP commanding officer in British Columbia remains in direct contact with the hereditary and elected chiefs and councils to discuss their concerns.

The RCMP has always maintained its preference for peaceful options requiring no, or minimal, use of force. This includes an emphasis on voluntary peaceful arrests with no force being used and no handcuffs being employed.

• (1525)

During enforcement activities, the level of intervention was applied in the context of a careful assessment of risk, taking into account the likelihood and extent of injury and damage to property as a result of the intervention.

Members of the RCMP are trained to assess situations and respond appropriately. Every effort was, and continues to be, made by the RCMP to ensure lines of communication remain open among all stakeholders, including the Wet'suwet'en elected council members and the hereditary chiefs, Coastal GasLink and provincial and federal government representatives.

The RCMP's major enforcement operations have concluded. The Morice West Forest Service Road has since been reopened for access to Coastal GasLink construction teams, members of the Wet'suwet'en community and members of the public. The enforcement actions resulted in a number of arrests with no injuries to protesters or the officers involved.

Regardless of where any individual stands on this issue, there is a common concern for everyone's safety. There are ways for safe, peaceful and lawful discourse or dissent to take place without any risk to public safety. An RCMP presence in the area remains for the purpose of maintaining peace and order as the situation persists.

As the police of jurisdiction, it would be neither appropriate nor feasible for the RCMP to leave the area entirely. However, the RCMP will continuously review the situation.

In relation to further anticipated protests on site in Wet'suwet'en territory, and protests in support of the Wet'suwet'en that have begun to emerge across the country, the RCMP will be responding where it is the police force of jurisdiction, in collaboration with other police services as appropriate to ensure the safety and security of all individuals at these various protests.

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Everyone has the right of freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly. The general public, local residents and businesses also have the right to a safe environment. The RCMP will continue to strive to uphold public and officer safety and enforce the law, maintaining a balance with rights and freedoms. The RCMP will also continue to collaborate with indigenous communities, representative organizations and advisory groups to further build on reconciliation efforts and strengthen trust and relationships.

All communities should benefit from policing that is professional and dedicated, and indigenous communities are no exception. That is why we will co-develop a legislative framework for first nations policing and expand the number of communities served by the first nations policing program. We will ensure police officers and services have the necessary tools and resources to protect the vulnerable and increase community safety.

These commitments build upon the investments of up to \$291.2 million over five years made in 2018 by our government for the first nations policing program to improve officer safety, equipment and salaries, and to hire additional officers.

We heard there is a need for more transformative changes in the way first nations and Inuit policing is supported in this country. We will develop and co-develop a legislative framework for first nations policing that recognizes it as an essential service.

In closing, I would like to thank members for their time and the opportunity to speak on this issue.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

[English]

When talking about first nations, we always have to keep in mind who we are talking about. Based on the facts and based on some observations made by the hereditary chiefs, 85% of this first nation were supportive of this program. More than that, 20 first nations out of 20 are supportive of that.

My question for the hon. member is quite simple. With this huge support of first nations, why is the Liberal government not doing anything to ensure that this project goes on and we get back to the reality of the situation for all Canadians?

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Speaker, things are being done and conversations are taking place. There is much work being done. However, the notion of using our influence to force a decision upon the police who have jurisdiction, whether in British Columbia or Ontario, is not on.

We have had countless discussions. We heard my colleague, the former chief of the Toronto police, discuss in detail why that does not happen.

Conversations are happening to resolve this issue. We will not force the police to do anything that would be unlawful by the government to do so.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the rail stoppage is affecting people's jobs and livelihoods.

People in London—Fanshawe, my community, have certainly commented on that, and they want a clear resolution.

However, we need a real, lasting solution. We do not want to just get back to the way that things were. We need to really move forward in positive ways.

I need to know, will the government commit to working out a lasting, sustainable and just solution to the issue of title?

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the comments that are included in that question. The answer is absolutely.

That is why we cannot support the opposition day motion which condemns “the radical activists who are exploiting divisions.” We do not need this kind of language, this rhetoric and angry rebuttal to a situation that is being dealt with.

On the larger point, which my friend from Windsor West has noted, that is why we are continuing the way we are. This problem did not start two weeks ago, it started 200 years ago.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my hon. friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, who I know is well aware of the impacts these blockades are having on the Atlantic region, a question.

I was talking yesterday, in fact, with a representative of Shannex, which owns a number of seniors' residences in Nova Scotia, where there are approximately 4,000 seniors. They use propane to heat those buildings, as well as for cooking. This is a great concern for them and for many communities, including the Port of Halifax, in a variety of ways.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree that it is important for a solution to be found as soon as possible to resolve this situation in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question for probably every community in Canada.

I could mention my own community, where millions of dollars are being spent by steel companies to move very heavy loads by truck from the east coast ports and so on. These would normally travel by rail.

Furthermore, costs in the area of \$50 million a month are being spent to deliver finished products from the plants to customers.

This is a huge problem that needs to be solved quickly, but not in the manner that is being proposed by the other side.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying I am going to split my time with my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I made a statement in the House yesterday during Question Period that garnered a lot of heckling from the other side. I stated that I, along with my Conservative colleagues, support the Wet'suwet'en people.

I suppose to the Liberals and the NDP it was a funny thing for a Conservative to say, and a funny thing that we would support 20 out of 20 of the band councils that approved the Coastal GasLink pipeline, that we would support economic opportunity for first nations communities, that we would support law and order and that we would support indigenous communities raising themselves up.

Having said all that, the history of humanity is rife with situations of people not actually understanding each other all the time, their motivations, their values or desires. However, we have persevered and found ways to understand each other. We have built civilizations, we have co-operated and we have accomplished great things together.

The key to the complex process of understanding one another, of perceiving others' intentions and their motivations, is empathy. The neuroscience of empathy is quite fascinating. Humanity, meaning all of us without exception, is egocentric. We are inherently ugly people. We are narcissistic and at times preoccupied with fulfilling our own needs and desires. However, somewhere in our ancient past, we recognized the importance of caring for our children. We realized the benefits of co-operation, and our capacity for compassion and tolerance grew.

There is a part of the brain that recognizes our self-centredness. The right supramarginal gyrus recognizes the lack of empathy, and it adjusts our thinking accordingly. Researchers actually found that, when we make rash decisions, this part of the cerebral cortex does not work properly. Our ability to understand others is reduced greatly when we do not take the time to hear the views of others.

Researchers made another interesting discovery. When we are in a state of comfort or in a pleasant situation, we are less able to empathize with another's pain and suffering. They seized upon and verified an important truth: In order for humanity to make effective and compassionate decisions, we must be able to connect to that part of the brain that allows us to recognize our selfish nature. We do that most effectively by taking the time to hear, see and put ourselves in uncomfortable situations, the same situations as those we are empathizing with.

Fortunately for our species, and perhaps a testament to the great accomplishments we have all made together, the human brain is adjustable. Our capacity for empathy and compassion is never fixed. If we put ourselves in someone else's shoes and do unto others as we would have them do unto us, we can reinforce those neural connections and we can move down the road of reconciliation together.

The road will not be easy. Thousands of years of history have taught us that, but they have also taught us that together we can achieve amazing things.

Here we are asking the House to stand in solidarity with the majority of the Wet'suwet'en people who support the Coastal GasLink project. However, there are two sides. Not everyone supports the decisions of the majority of the Wet'suwet'en people or the 20 democratically elected leaders of the indigenous communities along

Business of Supply

the proposed pipeline route. While we struggle to put ourselves in other's shoes, we empathize with their concerns.

I have to wonder if those activists have put themselves in the shoes of the majority of indigenous peoples who value self-reliance, communication and fiscal accountability, who believe that resources should be sustainable and equitable, and who believe that governance should be based on their collective heritage. The Wet'suwet'en do. Those values are listed in their mission statement along with a powerful vision and purpose declaration stating:

We are proud, progressive Wet'suwet'en dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of our culture, traditions and territories; working as one for the betterment of all.

"For the betterment of all" is a very empathetic statement to be sure, one that should hang from the very ceiling of this place. Is that not why we are here, for the betterment of Canada and Canadians, one and all?

● (1535)

We also need to take a step back. We need to hear each other. We need to see each other. We need time to sort out these issues and to address them, to reconcile our differences and make agreements. This is why we need to end those blockades. It is not in order to punish, but to ease tension and move forward. Let us demonstrate that here, so we can do it there. We have waited far too long to act.

As people in all parts of our country fear shortages of essential goods and as job losses mount, the number of people demanding resolution grows. The Council of the Federation, a group composed of all of Canada's premiers, is calling for an immediate and peaceful end to these protests. Temperatures are rising. Yesterday in Edmonton, counter-protesters showed up and dismantled a barricade. Heated words were exchanged. Threats were made. Out of frustration and fear, people are not listening or looking at each other. We are all better than that.

During this upheaval the country is looking for leadership, yet despite calls from the hereditary chiefs for the Prime Minister to get involved, the Liberal government has done everything it could to distance itself from the ongoing conflict. The Prime Minister will now, I hope, start taking this matter very seriously. It is a national crisis that needs the utmost attention.

We ask the Prime Minister to act now, to stand with the majority of the Wet'suwet'en people who want to work as one for the betterment of all. Self-reliance fosters self-determination, and this is at the heart of economic reconciliation.

The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board produced its 2016 report, "Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy by \$27.7 Billion".

The board found that:

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If Indigenous peoples had the same education and training as non-Indigenous peoples, the resulting increase in productivity would mean an additional \$8.5 billion in income earned annually by the Indigenous population.

It went on:

If Indigenous peoples were given the same access to economic opportunities available to other Canadians, the resulting increase in employment would result in an additional \$6.9 billion per year in employment income and approximately 135,000 newly employed Indigenous people.

If the poverty rates among Indigenous Peoples were reduced, the fiscal costs associated with supporting people living in poverty, would decline by an estimated \$8.4 billion annually.

Overall, if the gap in opportunities for Indigenous communities across Canada were closed, it would result in an increase in GDP of \$27.7 billion annually or a boost of about 1.5% to Canada's economy.

If we want to have true reconciliation, we must have economic reconciliation. It is good for indigenous communities. It is good for local municipalities and it is good for the Canadian economy.

The \$6 billion, 670-kilometre Coastal GasLink pipeline, which received approval from the province, the 20 first nations band councils, including five of the six band councils in the Wet'suwet'en nation, is about economic reconciliation. It is ultimately about a shared future, one where government-to-government co-operation benefits all Canadians, both indigenous and non-indigenous.

Bonnie George, a Wet'suwet'en woman who has been ridiculed and called a traitor, maintains an enlightened view of the world. When asked about how the police and governments were handling this situation, she said:

The authorities, they're just like the rest of us. They have a job to fulfil. They have an injunction in front of them that they have to enforce and they did all possible, you know, to try to de-escalate.

She went on:

As a Wet'suwet'en person, it is really disheartening to see all of this unravel as it has, because our people—our hereditary chiefs and our elders in the past—they've always had discussions.

Let us allow Canadians to get back to work, allow the goods that Canadians need to ensure their health and safety to flow and our railways to go, our borders to be safe, and then, with earnest and swift resolve, meet with the Wet'suwet'en people and take the time to hear and see and to put ourselves in their position.

● (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we have seen is a different way of approaching this critically important issue. Parties inside the chamber, the governing Liberals, the Bloc, the NDP or the Green, are saying de-escalation, try to work things through. Then we have the leader of the Conservatives saying, let us just instruct the RCMP to clear the barricades. That is if the Conservatives were in power. That caused a great deal of concern.

Would the member agree that whenever we take an action, especially of that nature in terms of what the leader of the Conservative Party recommended, there is a consequence to that action? That consequence could end up costing the economy a great deal more than what they are talking about today.

● (1545)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, first of all, we have to recognize that this situation did not happen overnight. This situation has been bubbling for a long time and has gotten progressively worse, especially in the last few weeks, and that is because of a lack of leadership by the Prime Minister to actually work with the community to get this fixed.

The second part of it is the fact that the left likes to lump everyone together. There are the Wet'suwet'en people who have disagreements among themselves, some with their hereditary chiefs, some with their elected councils, and there are traditional methods that they can use and should be using. I am sure they are going forward to work out those differences. However, what they do not seem to realize is that there are people who are glomming onto this situation who have no connection to the Wet'suwet'en and are just anti-energy activists who are bent on shutting down Canada's energy industry.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock is a good friend of mine and I appreciate his comments today.

As the member knows, I live in the Nuw-chah-nulth territory, and a very good friend of mine is the Tyee Ha'wilt of the Ahousaht Nation, which is the highest-level chief. As established and proven in the court of law, affirmed by the Delgamuukw decision, they are the highest governing body in this land and certainly in our territory. They carry a huge amount of inherent responsibility in that they have a duty to their ancestors. Their relationship goes back 17 generations, they have responsibility to their people in their territories today and, of course, to future generations to look after the land. Chief Maquinna often cites that he is responsible for certain valleys in his territory. He knows that people in the Wet'suwet'en territory have the same responsibility.

Does the member believe that the government should have the right to arrest hereditary chiefs who are defending their inherent right and responsibility in the valleys of the Wet'suwet'en territory?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend's question from the NDP. I call him a friend, and I appreciate the work he does on behalf of his constituents.

As I mentioned in my last answer, the Wet'suwet'en people do have traditional methods that they use to work out conflicts. I encourage that, and no one in this place, on this side of the House anyway, has stopped or discouraged that from happening.

There is also a difference between peaceful and illegal protests. However, what is happening here is that there are groups of people who are not associated with the Wet'suwet'en people who have glommed onto this cause because they have another agenda, which is to shut down the Canadian energy industry. That is their goal, and not lifting up the people of these indigenous communities who want responsible resource development as a way to be fiscally independent and prosperous.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we heard in question period moments ago a Liberal cabinet minister speaking about reconciliation for the benefit of all Canadians, or reconciliation for Canadians. However, what we have not seen is reconciliation for the Canadians who have been out there working and building this country.

Last night I took a call from a constituent of mine who is working in northern Alberta. He is a workplace safety coordinator and he is worried about the safety of the people he supervises, because they are so focused on losing their jobs and supporting their families that they cannot focus on the dangerous work that they are doing.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that type of reconciliation that is needed—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We only had enough time for a very brief question, and the member took up all the time.

I will allow a brief answer so that we can continue on with the debate.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I agree with my friend. We do need to have a fiscal conversation with the first nations communities, and that is on the sharing of resource development. As I have said many times, 20 out of 20 elected councils and chiefs support this. Let us move forward with it.

• (1550)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we face a national crisis and we need strong leadership to address it. We have a natural gas pipeline project that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by displacing coal with cleaner natural gas. It will create jobs and opportunity, and it has the support of all elected indigenous leaders in the area and a majority of the local hereditary chiefs.

A small minority of hereditary chiefs oppose the designated route for this project, and so radical activists, many of whom are not indigenous, are using this issue as an excuse to shut down critical infrastructure and paralyze our national economy. These activists are operating openly under the banner Shut Down Canada, and they are succeeding to some extent. This is our winter of discontent.

These illegal blockades have forced massive job losses already and risk creating shortages of vital commodities in certain regions. There has also been tampering with rail lines, putting many people at risk. How bizarre that activists who claim to care about the environment are shutting down rail transport.

As the government fails to act, escalation continues. Escalation is the result of the messages that the government is sending that this kind of lawlessness is permissible. We have some members of this House who are explicitly celebrating these violent, illegal and dangerous protests. The longer this goes on, the more likely that we will see a repeat of these illegal blockades every time anyone tries to build anything.

We need a strong response from the government. We need the government to give policy direction to enforce the law. The govern-

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ment says it cannot direct the police force. Certainly it cannot direct operational aspects of its response, but it is the responsibility of an elected government in a democracy to give broad policy direction to our police. We accept, in many cases, that this kind of policy direction is right and necessary already.

In fact, the government is saying explicitly in this House that the police should not enforce the law. As such, the government is already giving policy direction. From my perspective, it is the wrong policy direction, but either way, I do not think here there is any serious dispute of the idea that civilian authority giving policy direction to police is legitimate. Indeed it is already happening. Civilian oversight of police is part of how democracy works.

Also in a democracy, the principle that justifies the use of force by police is the idea that police are there to protect society and law-abiding citizens, people who want to work and take the train to buy the things they need. The police have a moral obligation to protect law-abiding citizens by enforcing the law. There is a reasonable margin of discretion in enforcement, but if the police fail to enforce the law on a grand scale in a way that is injurious to the rights of law-abiding citizens, then they bring the law into disrepute and reintroduce a state of nature in which people feel they have no choice but to take the law into their own hands.

Conservatives' contention is that it is the obligation of the government and the police to ensure that the law is enforced. A failure to enforce the law leads to escalation as more and more people feel they do not have to respect the law. It then leads to a response from citizens and further chaos with devastating social and economic implications.

This present escalation is a national crisis, and it requires real leadership. The Prime Minister's response to this crisis has been to emphasize dialogue in isolation. He talks about the need to understand the experience of people with different perspectives. I will make two specific points about dialogue. The first is about the right time and place for dialogue and the second is about the question of with whom the government should be undertaking dialogue.

First, when is the right time and place for dialogue? It is critically important for all of us to seek to understand the experience and perspectives of different people. This is something I personally take very seriously. Over the Christmas break, I read *Love & Courage*, the NDP leader's book, which is by the way very good and very worth reading. I also read *Common Ground*, by Jonathan Kay. I read them both because I decided that it was important for me to understand the ideas and experience that influence the leaders of other parties.

In addition to reading and listening, after the appropriate period of proportionate deliberation, leaders must also have the capacity to take decisions in the public interest. There is a time for talk and there is a time for action. We must dialogue with people with whom we disagree, but we must also insist that we do not stand in the middle of railroad tracks in the process.

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If a violent assailant came into my home to attack my family, I might be very curious to know his ideological motivation, whether he is motivated by some particular kind of violent extremism or reacting to violence he has experienced in his own life or something else. These would be interesting and perhaps important questions, but my first response to the violent assailant would obviously be to protect myself and my family.

When our vital national infrastructure is being violently blocked in violation of the rule of law and when rail tampering is not only endangering the economy but people's lives, then we must act to end the violence. We must dialogue, yes, but from a strong position of commitment to law and order. Dialogue and enforcement can happen concurrently on separate tracks, and not on train tracks.

• (1555)

Of greater importance is the question about with whom we should be dialoguing. There are large and complex issues involved in indigenous reconciliation, but these protests and the debate today are about a very specific issue: the development of the Coastal GasLink project.

All of the band councils impacted, and a majority of the hereditary chiefs, support the project. All of us in the House want to have a respectful, collaborative, serious and functioning nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples. In order for one nation to have a functioning relationship with another nation, each nation's representatives must know who the representatives of the other nation are and be able to talk to them.

When Canada and the U.S. negotiate on trade issues, for example, we need to know who speaks for the American people so that we can talk to them and negotiate with them. Of course, we recognize that a nation's decision-making structure can be complex, but to work together two nations need a process through which the right people can talk to each other about the right things.

In the case of our relationship with a nation like the United Kingdom, we understand that there is an elected leadership in the British House of Commons and a hereditary structure in the royal family.

Although we recognize the important role in the British constitution and in our own Constitution for this form of hereditary leadership, we still understand that any nation-to-nation dialogue involves the pursuit of agreement with the elected representatives of the British people. If Canada and the U.K. were to negotiate a free trade deal through their elected governments and Houses of Parliament, and a member of the Royal Family decided that he or she did not like it, we would say that it is not necessarily for that person but rather for the elected representatives to speak on behalf of the nation.

Even if the present relationship of the Crown and Parliament was imposed through a Dutch colonial intervention in British affairs in 1688, it is still the law as it is.

This is what is required for a functioning nation-to-nation relationship. If we are to have a functioning nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous nations in Canada, then we must know who speaks for particular indigenous nations and who speaks for the Canadian government so that representatives for each side can dia-

logue and come to agreement. If we do not seek to identify who our dialogue partners are going to be, then we can never move forward together on anything.

I believe that while dialogue can happen between any groups of people, negotiation and a realization of agreements on behalf of a people are the responsibility of the elected representatives of that people. The idea that the elected representatives of a people speak for the people is not rooted in a particular cultural or intellectual tradition. Rather, it has come to be recognized as part of the body of universal human rights.

Article 21, subsection 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Similar UN declarations recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions. Indeed, it is the right of indigenous peoples to maintain, develop or change their own models of government, but that is a right vested in the peoples of indigenous nations, not in their hereditary leaders.

I believe in the rights of indigenous peoples and all peoples to democratically elect their own leaders. It must be the decisions of elected indigenous leaders that carry the day.

There could certainly be a role for hereditary chiefs in a democratic system, just as our system has a role for hereditary leadership in the form of the Canadian Crown. However, it is the fundamental human right of people to choose to develop if they wish. Our dialogue about the development plans of particular nations needs to be with the elected representatives of those particular nations.

Members have rightly spoken about the horrific violations of fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples in the past, but those violations do not justify the violations today of the rights of indigenous people to democratic self-determination. Those who think that they can overrule the democratically expressed wishes of this indigenous nation are just as colonialist in their thinking as the colonizers of the past.

We cannot negotiate with people who do not speak for these communities about the future of these communities. We must dialogue with the right people. Solidarity with people who are vulnerable is important. Being in solidarity with someone, though, does not mean that we claim to speak for them. I have not spoken about whether this project should go ahead, simply that the will of the elected leadership must prevail.

One thing that I have heard often from other members that is quite offensive is the suggestion that indigenous people who support development are somehow only doing it because of the money.

That is ridiculous. Legislators of all backgrounds and at all levels generally support economic development in their communities because they want a bright and more prosperous future for their children and grandchildren. These are reasonable decisions for elected indigenous leaders to make in view of the common good for the communities that they are elected to govern.

It is time that we clear the blockades and let the Wet'suwet'en people make their own choice.

• (1600)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always respect my colleague's speeches.

He stated in his speech that he heard the government instruct the police, in this place, not to enforce the law. I have listened very carefully to the Minister of Public Safety, and I have listened very carefully to the other ministers who have spoken about this issue. Each and every one of them has said that the police have discretion in terms of what to do and that the government does not instruct the police on what to do.

Could he please tell us exactly which minister said that the police should not enforce the law, and at what time they said that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear about what I said. I was talking about how it is legitimate for the government to give broad policy direction to the police.

When the government says that the path forward is dialogue, when it says that it is not a good idea for blockades to be cleared, that is giving broad policy direction. It is something we hear over and over again from the government members.

The member is right to say that a minister has not gotten up and said, "I am saying that the police should, on this day, at this place, undertake such and such an action." However, the government has expressed the way that it would like law enforcement to approach this issue in general.

We have said that it is appropriate for the government to express how it thinks these issues should be approached on a broad level of policy, and we have said that the policy direction that should be given is to enforce the law.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I live in a territory where the Nuu-chah-nulth have been in court with the Government of Canada. They won in the Supreme Court, and twice it was appealed by the government. They, again, won those appeals, which affirmed their right to catch and sell fish.

We have seen what has happened with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal when it comes to child welfare and the discriminatory practices of the government and its policies.

Again, I do not see the Conservatives there, defending the laws of this country, fighting for indigenous people when they win in court, the dozens and dozens of court cases that side with indigenous people, reaffirming their constitutional rights in this country. Here, today, they are saying they are standing up for indigenous communities. Where were they for the Nuu-chah-nulth people?

The member states that the government fails to enforce the law, or that it takes the law into its own hands, and that failure to enforce the law leads to escalation, social and economic unrest and challenges.

When do indigenous people start to take things into their own hands? When the government does not enforce its own laws and its

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own courts of this country. Maybe the member could enlighten us on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member spoke about many issues that were different from the Coastal GasLink project. I agree with the member that there are many instances that need to be identified and discussed, instances of injustice against indigenous peoples and of violation of fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples.

I made the very specific point in my remarks that one of the rights, which has in the past at times been denied to indigenous people, is the right to democratic self-determination. This means the choice to proceed or not proceed with certain development projects.

What we have before us right now is debate on a motion about a case in which the democratically elected representatives of an indigenous nation want to move forward with a project. In fact, all 20 affected nations want to move forward. Then there are radical activists, in a different province predominantly, who are opposed to that democratic decision by indigenous people.

This is one issue on which I think we should be able to agree: that respecting indigenous rights means respecting the rights of those elected representatives. There are many other issues that we need to talk about. My speech was about this particular issue.

However, I agree with the member that more work needs to be done across a broad spectrum of issues on reconciliation. I look forward to working together on those issues.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Conservative member for the impetus taken in the debate. I listened to the rhapsodies from my colleague.

I have a simple question for the member. Not too long ago a convoy of trucks came to Ottawa because of the drivers' grievances. They felt they needed to be heard here. During that blockade, I was walking to the House. It could have been perceived that my parliamentary privilege was impeded because I could not actually get here. That is fine.

My question is, would he describe any of those grievances or that convoy as luxurious?

• (1605)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I quibble with a number of the facts, in terms of the way the member described those events.

If, during that day, somebody was violently preventing him from doing his job and from accessing Parliament Hill, I would say that would be very bad. If that had happened, the member should have contacted the appropriate authorities, and he should have raised a question of privilege in the House of Commons. My recollection is that he did not. If any protester representing any cause is disrupting members' access to their legislature, that protester is violating the law.

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However, it is fairly common that we would allow marches to take place on the streets in front of Parliament. Those happen through a coordination with the police, and those happen with permission, from time to time. That is a completely different instance from somebody violently, in violation of the law, blockading our railway.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that when we indicate that it is a brief question and a brief answer, that it exactly should be a brief question and a brief answer.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mount Royal.

I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

The motion before us today addresses a pressing issue impacting communities across the country. The current situation is difficult for everyone: indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, impacted communities, businesses, workers and travellers. I believe there remains time for all parties to engage in open and respectful dialogue to ensure the situation is resolved peacefully.

For more than 150 years, indigenous peoples in Canada have faced systemic discrimination in every aspect of their lives. Canada has prevented a true equal partnership from developing with indigenous peoples, imposing instead a relationship based on colonial ways of thinking and doing, paternalism and control.

The relationship of the past has provided us with a legacy of devastation, pain and suffering. For decades, indigenous peoples have been calling on the Canadian government to respect their right to jurisdiction over their own affairs and to have control and agency over their land, housing, education, and child and family services.

This history and growing awareness was the genesis of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which enshrines the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination. Its 46 articles cover collective and individual rights on everything from cultural identity and education to language and health rights. It is a universal framework for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous people all over the world.

I am very proud this was endorsed by Canada without qualification in 2016 and I am proud our government has committed to developing legislation to fully and effectively implement this framework by the end of this year.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action describe the declaration as the framework for reconciliation. That is because the declaration, fundamentally, is about advancing self-determination and rebalancing the relationship between states and indigenous peoples.

This is just one step on the long path toward reconciliation our government is taking. We are working to build a new relationship with indigenous peoples grounded in the affirmation of these rights, in respect, in co-operation, in partnership and in the aim for a new

legacy built on a solid foundation of self-determination that we can be proud of.

As the Minister of Indigenous Services stated, it is clear that self-determination is the right path to take. We are making progress from coast to coast to coast. We are doing the work.

Indigenous self-government is important. Self-governing indigenous peoples have better socio-economic outcomes. More of their children finish high school. Fewer of their people are unemployed, and health outcomes are better.

Self-determination improves the health, well-being and prosperity of indigenous communities, and it benefits all Canadians. Conversations about self-determination and self-governance have never been more urgent, and steps are being taken to bring our country toward a future where indigenous peoples are the drivers of their own destinies and where the federal government is there to support them in any way they see fit.

It is a privilege to represent a riding that encompasses the territories of three first nations. We know that indigenizing our education systems empowers first nations, which is why the Ts'zil Learning Centre was the right step to help Lil'wat Nation thrive. Their learning philosophy is based in Lil'wat cultural renewal, holistic learning and personal growth. The learning centre is a potent example of what indigenous self-government looks like in education.

On the Sunshine Coast, the shishálh Nation is leading the way. In 1986 they became the first band in Canada to achieve self-governance after a dialogue and partnership with the government that resulted in legislation being passed. They now hold elections, have control over their lands, administer services and share their culture with the community. They are excited to be embarking on a new affordable housing project for their people. They also recently had their first election after making their election process even more inclusive.

There are mechanisms within our power in order to help first nations partners. We are taking steps in the right direction. One of these mechanisms is to have regular meetings between the Prime Minister, key cabinet ministers and first nations, Inuit and Métis nations. These meetings are to identify each community's distinct priorities and help the government and indigenous peoples work together to develop solutions.

● (1610)

These permanent bilateral mechanisms were created to better serve indigenous peoples engaged in the important work of advancing greater self-determination. They also enable Crown-indigenous co-operation in identifying priorities and developing policies. This important national work will reflect the diversity and unique priorities of first nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada.

Another vehicle for advancing self-determination is through the negotiation of new treaties, self-government and other constructive arrangements. In the last four years, the government has created 90 new negotiation tables, including with the Wet'suwet'en, and there are now more than 150 active negotiation tables across the country to advance the relationship with indigenous peoples and support the spirit of self-determination.

We have taken steps to ensure that indigenous partners can fully participate in these discussions and advance conversations that promote the rebuilding of their nations.

We are also making changes to how we support indigenous participation in these negotiations. For example, we stopped requiring groups to take loans to sit down with us, and we are in the process of forgiving and reimbursing about \$1.4 billion of comprehensive land claim loan debt. More than \$100 million is provided annually to support indigenous participation in negotiations and to enhance capacity.

Progress is being made at these tables.

I have spoken of a number of successes in self-determination and self-governance. What many of these successes have in common is that they were achieved through co-operation. They were based on listening to indigenous partners as they led us to discuss and codevelop solutions to the issues that are most important to their communities.

We can learn from that, and to do so we need to understand that recognizing and affirming rights is a first step in finding a way forward. We need to support our indigenous partners to identify our challenges, and then we need to rise to them. We need to recognize that the most important actions that we can take are to listen to the hard truths, embrace change and welcome creative ideas.

We have all seen what happens when we do not come together to get the conversation going. It results in mistrust and confusion, which can be the root of conflicts. It is a barrier to moving forward together. We have seen that in the past. We must learn from those mistakes and make sure it does not happen again.

The Prime Minister noted that the issues we are facing were not created overnight. They were not created because we embarked upon a path of reconciliation recently in our history. It is because for too long and for too many years, we failed to take this path. After all this time, finding a solution will not be simple.

It is up to the rights holders to determine who speaks on their behalf regarding their aboriginal rights and title. Our government is committed to dedicating effort to continue those conversations.

We here in the House do not speak for our indigenous partners, but I hope we can take part in speaking with them. Standing up for the empowerment of first nations peoples and for their freedom of speech and self-governance is a vital role of the government in this instance. Acknowledging all of these challenges, the hard work ahead of us is worth the effort.

It is worth it for the youth of the next generation and for the ones after that, who will grow up seeing the Crown and indigenous peoples putting in the hard work, together, to invest in their future, improve their quality of life and heal.

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It will take determination, persistence, patience and truth-telling. It will mean listening to and learning from indigenous partners, communities and youth and acting decisively on what we have heard, building trust and healing. It will mean doing everything we can to support the inherent right to self-determination of indigenous peoples.

We are at a critical juncture in Canada. Canadians want to see indigenous rights honoured, and they are impatient for meaningful progress. They are counting on us to engage with indigenous leaders, communities and peoples to achieve lasting, long-term results. This is what our government is committed to.

We can, and we will, build a better Canada together, one in which healthy, prosperous, self-determining and self-governing indigenous nations are key partners.

• (1615)

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the member talks about self-determination and empowerment in this chamber, which I believe is an example of that, 50% plus one means that a bill passes and a decision is made by the House. The Wet'suwet'en people, through 85% of a vote, determined that they wanted to have this pipeline. Now the lack of action by the government is disempowering those very people.

What does the member think about the action of his government in regard to self-determination and empowerment, and is it actually doing that job or quite the contrary?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, when we talk about self-determination of indigenous peoples, we need to keep in mind both the hereditary process and the colonial band councils that were put in place. We need to also be careful about who speaks for indigenous nations.

There are processes that need to happen internally within the nation to determine how they make decisions and how the reconciliation will happen between these levels of government. It is dangerous for the government to insert itself in that situation. Instead, it should be there to support capacity building in those nations to make decisions on their own. That is what our government is committed to doing.

[*Translation*]

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

He gave a lengthy explanation of everything the Liberal government has done in the past to promote reconciliation with indigenous peoples and how it will work in the future to improve its relationships with the Wet'suwet'en nation and all indigenous nations in Canada. However, we are in the middle of a crisis right now. The economy is paralyzed, trains are immobilized and the government is doing nothing.

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I have a simple question for my colleague. What does he think of the Bloc Québécois's four-point plan to solve this crisis, specifically, suspend work on the pipeline, have the RCMP withdraw from the territory, replace the RCMP with an indigenous police force, and sit down and negotiate?

[English]

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, we need to be a little careful about the level of direction the federal government has over the police force. This agency is contracted to the province, and we do not direct it on what it should or should not do.

One of the measures I have been very encouraged to see is how all parties have been able to work together. In the meetings, the Liberals, the Bloc, the NDP and the Greens have come together about discussing solutions. Working together is where we are going to find—

• (1620)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That is not all the parties. What about dialogue and listening to and respecting others?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is very hard for someone trying to put his point across to keep his mind on track when other people are trying to answer the question or asking other questions. I would ask that members respect those who have the floor.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, we can discuss some of the great ideas that all parties have and look forward to working together to put them into practice.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the member has a background in indigenous and environmental law and I agree with much of what he said.

I want to pick up on his point about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We passed Bill C-262 two years ago. The government had an opportunity to act on and implement that bill and others since then, but it did not.

I wonder if the member can comment on how it might have changed the situation we are in now if the government were actually living up to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely critical that we bring the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law. We have committed to do it this year. We supported that in the last Parliament, but it died in the Senate.

When we look at environmental assessments of industrial projects as we are implementing the articles of UNDRIP, it creates new opportunities to work with first nations and give them an opportunity to participate in the decision-making in their territories. Those ideas have already been instilled in the new Impact Assessment Act. As we move forward and implement this, it will cause major changes in a lot of our federal laws. It is something that is long overdue.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, words have meaning. Words particularly have meaning when they are said in this House of Commons. Tone is important, particularly at a time when the country is facing this type of escalation.

There are people who are frustrated. There are many people in my riding who are frustrated, and I empathize deeply with each and every one of them: the commuters who are impacted because they are unable to take the train to Toronto; the small business that is unable to get supplies; those who are facing shortages and need to lay off workers; those workers who are being laid off, and their families; farmers who are having trouble getting goods to market; or those who are worried they may be short of propane or chlorine.

Canadians are worried, but our indigenous people are also worried and concerned. They are concerned that their voices are not being heard, concerned that their treaty rights are being violated, and concerned, in the case of the Wet'suwet'en, if we listen to the press conference that happened in British Columbia today, that the RCMP's police actions have not followed the rule of law. There have been many concerns expressed, and tempers are flaring. When tempers are flaring, calm is important: calm, measured words.

We have all been faced with what has recently happened with our neighbour to the south, in the United States, where some politicians on one side of the aisle have sought to blame identifiable groups for the problems that face society. Some people have blamed Mexicans. Some people have blamed immigrants and refugees. Some people have blamed Muslims. On the other side of the aisle, some people have blamed Wall Street. Some people have blamed millionaires and billionaires.

As we know, there are good people and bad people in every group. There are good millionaires and bad millionaires. There are good Jews and bad Jews, good Christians and bad Christians, and good Muslims and bad Muslims. Whether it is race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or political conviction, we have good people and bad people in every group. My biggest fear is that by using words that are inflammatory, words like "radical" or "anarchist", we seek to inflame tensions where those tensions are already on the point of being inflamed.

Indigenous Canadians should not be vilified. Indigenous Canadians should not pay the price for illegal blockades. The vast majority of indigenous Canadians never asked for these blockades, and the vast majority of indigenous Canadians are not responsible for these blockades. I am worried that by using language that is inflammatory, we will cause Canadians who are already upset about their own issues and problems that have been caused by the illegal blockades to take it out on others.

I appeal to all of my colleagues. I heard the most eloquent statement the other day from the member for North Island—Powell River, who talked about her concern for family members who she was afraid were being scapegoated. We have all recently seen, in the case of the coronavirus, how Chinese Canadians have been singled out. We, as members of Parliament, beyond anything else, have the duty to show all Canadians who are affected by this crisis that we empathize with them, that we understand the anguish they are going through and that we are seeking constructive solutions. The worst thing that we can do is inflame passions by using heated rhetoric and language.

It is totally important for us to recognize that negotiations do not happen in the public space.

• (1625)

[Translation]

As the Bloc Québécois leader has acknowledged in his questions over the past few days, we all know that the ministers are in negotiations with first nations on this matter. However, it would be impossible for these negotiations to take place in public.

We know that business owners and lawyers never release the details of their negotiations. That is just not possible.

As an MP, I am very pleased with my cabinet colleagues who are working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to build ties with indigenous peoples and everyone who is protesting. I am confident that progress has been made.

Today the RCMP announced that it would leave the occupied road, the one the hereditary chiefs see as the greatest provocation. Progress is being made. We must continue to negotiate. However, we cannot publicly reveal the details of those negotiations.

It is easy to say that the ministers are doing nothing, but we all know that they are doing something, and that they have built relationships with various groups in order to negotiate. I firmly believe we will see concrete results.

[English]

I also want to point out two different things. The first is that policing is best left to those who have operational knowledge in the local sphere. We, as national politicians, do not know exactly what is happening at each blockade.

[Translation]

I am confident that the Sûreté du Québec knows how to do its job.

[English]

I trust that the Ontario Provincial Police know what they are doing. I trust that the RCMP know what they are doing, far more than I would know as one individual member of Parliament without all of the information about what is happening at every local site.

All police forces have their own protocols that they use to deal with situations like this one. In most cases, the use of force to remove protesters is something of a last resort, not a first resort. It is not something that could never be done or should never be done,

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but it should wait until all options of negotiation have been exhausted within a reasonable framework.

If people go in and remove protesters when we are talking about an issue as sensitive as this one, I believe the end result would be that a lot more people across Canada would want to create further blockades. The only practical way to fully resolve this issue is to deal with the core issue and achieve results.

However, Canadians cannot wait forever, and rightly so. We cannot be seized forever with illegal blockades that stop goods and services from getting across Canada, grain from getting to market and passengers from getting to where they are going. At a certain time, there is a point where patience will be exhausted. We have not come to that point, but it is rapidly approaching. I beg and plead with the hereditary chiefs and I beg and plead with those people who are blockading to recognize that two wrongs do not make a right. If something horrible has happened throughout history, if Canadians have violated the rights of indigenous people or have not respected those rights, it is not best to plead that cause by illegally blockading and stopping Canadians from going to work or going to their jobs.

Government has an obligation to listen and to dialogue, as do those who are causing the blockades. I hope that we will peacefully resolve this situation very shortly, because that is what all Canadians expect of us.

• (1630)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the quotes we have is from hereditary chief Helen Michelle of the Skin Tyee Nation. She states, “A lot of the protestors are not even Wet’suwet’en.” She goes on to say, “Our people said go ahead to Coastal GasLink.”

If we go back to the actual motion for today, it says to “condemn the radical activists who are exploiting divisions within the Wet’suwet’en community, holding the Canadian economy hostage”.

What part of the motion that we have today speaks to all of the items that the member spoke of earlier?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, our common goal should be to end the blockades. When members of the House of Commons call people who are doing the blockades “radical activists”, including members of the Mohawk nation, it does not in any way further a solution or cause those people to want to dialogue with the members of the House of Commons who are calling them radical activists.

As I mentioned before, name-calling is not acceptable. There are good people and bad people in every group, and I would include the people doing the blockades. There are going to be good people and bad people. Some people are doing it for what they believe to be very good reasons, and others perhaps not.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

You are an extraordinary orator. I am impressed, and I say that sincerely. It is not—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the member to address his remarks to the Chair, not directly to the member.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, duly noted.

There are three points that I would like to come back to.

First, this crisis could have been avoided. It has gone on for far too long.

Next, we all know that negotiations are taking place. We know that various departments are working on this crisis. Now, indigenous peoples have made a request. They want to meet with the Prime Minister. They want to talk to the Prime Minister. That seems to be a must.

I am therefore disappointed. That is the second point I wanted to comment on, with respect to my colleague's speech.

The third point I will add is that this crisis is now two weeks old and there is a risk that things will escalate. We know this is a crisis. We also know how it began. Now, after two weeks, there is a good chance the conflict will escalate.

Those are my comments.

• (1635)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his kind comments.

What I can say is that I trust we will do what is required to engage in dialogue and find a solution. I am certain that the Prime Minister of Canada will do everything he can to find a solution, as will the Minister of Indigenous Services and all those involved.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's perspective that this situation could have been avoided if the government had decided to not think that it could pick and choose when to support and recognize indigenous rights in this country. We cannot pick and choose when it comes to recognizing inherent rights and respecting them.

Dr. Judith Sayers, whom I respect greatly, is the president of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council. She would like this question answered:

Do you really consider that dealing with rights and title should be based on a score card or how many First Nations say yes against those who say no? How can you lawfully override the Hereditary Chiefs title that was evidenced in the Supreme court of Canada Delgamuukw decision?

This is a question that she has, and I hope the parliamentary secretary can answer that question.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, that question is too complex to answer.

Mr. Gord Johns: It is simple.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, there is an elected council. The majority of the elected council supports the project. With respect to the hereditary chiefs, I acknowledge that outside the limited territory that the band council controls, there is power of the hereditary chiefs that has been recognized, and again there has to be negotiation with them. I am hoping that this negotiation will hap-

pen over the next couple of days and that there will be a fortuitously good outcome.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members once again that when someone has the floor, should the member who asked the question, or anybody else, have anything to say, then he or she should wait and stand the next time there are questions and comments.

[Translation]

Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Consular Affairs; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Infrastructure; and the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Privacy.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today about the relationship our country has with our first nations peoples.

As a teacher for over 34 years, for 32 of those years, I proudly displayed a commemorative plaque from the Treaty Six Centennial celebrations that I attended at the Saddle Lake Reserve with Peter Lougheed, Bob Clark, the leader of the opposition, and Grant Notley. It was a very poignant opportunity for me to get a chance to see what was important to indigenous people. Engraved on the plaque are the words "For as long as the Sun shines, the Rivers flow and the Grass grows", a reminder that is still proudly displayed in my office in Ottawa.

Additionally, I was proud to sit at the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee when we were in government and to pursue initiatives like matrimonial property rights and transparency legislation that were asked for by our first nations groups. These initiatives did not always sit well with some of the band leaders, but they did resonate with members.

When our government sought to improve the first nations education system, which would have included some of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, I asked to once again sit at this committee. Sadly, that initiative, spearheaded by former grand chief Shawn Atleo, in conjunction with Prime Minister Harper, was shut down before it could take off. As a former teacher, I was truly disappointed.

From my experience as a teacher, I have seen the inequity, the gaps in learning and the unacceptable dropout rates. I shared the frustration that existed with our first nation parents who wanted more for their children, for as Ts'im-shian author Calvin Helin had alluded to in his book, *Dances with Dependency*, the cycle of dependency was only broken when the bonds of colonialism were cut. He argued that the ancestors would not have accepted their children to live without hope and purpose, that they would have wanted their children to know of their culture and their heritage and that the ancestors would expect them to look after their community and ensure they lived proudly.

This is why I proudly stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route and with every band council that chooses this land's natural wealth as its path forward for its people. The band councils understand that using Canadian oil and gas is not only more economically sensible for their membership, but also a humanitarian and environmentally friendly solution for the globe. This is also why I stand with the majority of the hereditary chiefs and the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people and why I condemn the radical activists who use issues like this to undermine opportunities for all Canadians.

Now we are faced with an interesting challenge, given the political climate in our country right now. Some people in Ottawa have a narrow focus on what it means to be good stewards of the environment. They think that the sum of a society's commitment to the environment is the amount of carbon they produce in Canada and what that source of carbon is. Very real and important conservation initiatives have been going on throughout Canada in the oil and gas sector that have simply been glossed over to fulfill their narrative.

Similarly, these activists' rationale for holding Canada's economy hostage is as varied as the foreign interests that fund them, whether it be investors in renewable energy or oil and gas interests that simply know they can buy up our resources cheaply in the future, reaping the benefits when the rest of the world's energy dries up. Believe me, none of this is in our nation's best interest.

Where are we now? For the past 15 days, the country has been held hostage and the government has done nothing. Our economy, our people and our security as Canadians are being held up by a protest movement that is disrespectful to the majority of our indigenous peoples' desire to give their children and grandchildren the opportunities they never had, and the Liberal government has done nothing.

The protests have temporarily stopped VIA Rail passenger trains as well as CN trains, cutting off routes between Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Kingston, and the Liberal government has done nothing.

• (1640)

A variety of shipments, whether it be food, construction materials, lumber, aluminum, coal, propane, things that people need to survive, have been affected by the rail blockades, and the Liberal government once again has done nothing.

CN Rail announced the laying off of 450 workers in its operation in eastern Canada as a result of the blockades. What has the Liberal government done? Nothing. The government's inaction has led to a national crisis in Canada, and it still will not act.

Canada's retailers and manufacturers are braced for shutdowns and face dwindling supplies as blockades at ports and on rail lines bring much of the country's rail freight network to a halt. CN rail's coast to coast system is at risk of shutting down.

As reported by CBC this morning, some of the members of the Wet'suwet'en people want the protesters to stop. Currently, the protests are not helping their communities, which they say already have fractured governance. These protests have amplified the con-

flict in the community and distracted Wet'suwet'en people from resolving their differences.

As I said before, the vast majority of these people support the Coastal GasLink project. Every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route supports the project. Even the majority of hereditary chiefs support this project. The vast majority of first nations community members support the project because it will create jobs, opportunities and investments in communities, and in the end it will help reduce global greenhouse emissions.

Democracy and the rule of law are fundamental pillars of our country, and it is time they are enforced. Our democratic values ensure that every person has the right to freedom of speech and freedom to protest, but people do not have the right to harm the security and livelihood of other Canadians.

The Prime Minister needs to denounce the illegal actions of the radical activists, formulate an action plan that will put an end to the blockages, ensure that the support for this project expressed by the vast majority of the Wet'suwet'en people is upheld and get our economy back on track. If he does not, the Liberal government will be setting a dangerous precedent that the civil unrest of a few can have a devastating impact on the lives of countless Canadians and that the government is not willing to enforce the law to protect Canadians.

Additionally, counter-protesters have started rising up to voice their dissatisfaction with the current situation. With these heightened tensions, leaving things as they are now is irresponsible.

The impact is also being felt beyond Canada's borders and is harming the country's reputation as a stable and viable supply chain partner.

These groups are emboldened and will continue to create havoc as the inaction tells all activists they can have a devastating impact on the lives of countless Canadians and the government is not willing to enforce the law to protect those Canadians.

As was evident in the Vice-Admiral Mark Norman case, the shameful treatment of the former attorney general, ethics violations and so many other transgressions, the government's opinion of right and wrong is truly suspect.

I urge the government to work night and day to resolve this issue, because to give opportunities for indigenous people to share in our world-class resource development is the right thing. Now is the time to act.

• (1645)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned several times that our government had done nothing in the face of the accelerated tensions we were facing as a country. I wonder whether the hon. member is aware that our Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and our Minister of Indigenous Services are both meeting with indigenous peoples on the west coast and in Ontario and that we are trying to come to a peaceful resolution through discussion and dialogue rather than inflamed rhetoric.

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Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I should also mention at this point that I would like to split my time the member for Brandon—Souris.

Because of the force and the pressure of things we have been talking about now for the last 15 days, there indeed is an opportunity now for some dialogue. It is unfortunate that it has had to come to this, as we have talked about this for well over two weeks. We have seen the damage and destruction. We can add to that some of the other concerns we have had with regard to trade disruptions and issues there. All those kinds of concerns have a cascading effect.

I am involved in industry and agriculture. We have seen the effects that have taken place there, which are major concerns.

Yes, it is good to see that finally something is happening, but it did not have to take this long, with millions of dollars of damage happening every day. It should have been dealt with earlier.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we share the member's concern about the jobs and livelihoods of people who are affected by this rail stoppage and the blockade happening throughout our country. However, we need a real solution, not escalation, but de-escalation. I hope the member will agree with me that tough talk and a militarized approach will not resolve this issue. We are hearing now that the RCMP is considering pulling back and removing itself from the Wet'suwet'en territory.

Does the member agree that this is the right approach, that dialogue and taking a peaceful approach is the only solution to resolving this issue, and that a strong-armed approach will only escalate the situation and create more unrest across our country?

• (1650)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, as was mentioned earlier to another hon. member's question, we are starting to see things happen. I suppose the key thing I want to express is that it should have happened a lot sooner.

If we simply sit back and say that this will not affect anyone, we will have those who will just as soon have a little discontent so they can move forward with their own anti-oil plans. That is what I see when I look at this. It is an opportunity for them look at all this destruction and perhaps think this project should be postponed. What about the next project? We sure would not want to have these same difficulties.

It is sort of an escalation of everything we see, and we all should be concerned about that.

[Translation]

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

Canada is certainly in the midst of a serious crisis. The economy is paralyzed in my riding and across the entire Montérégie region. If the blockades are not lifted soon, there will be some serious consequences.

There is the crisis with indigenous peoples, but there is also the climate crisis. We have the Wet'suwet'en, but we also have the natural gas pipeline, which the Bloc Québécois also opposes because

half of Quebecers voted for a party that wants to seriously tackle climate change.

From what I gather from my Conservative Party colleagues, they are not too concerned about first nations, but they certainly are concerned about the development of the oil industry. Do people realize that time is running out to address climate change all around the world?

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, we are concerned about first nations. I am personally involved with first nations, and I am concerned.

As far as the environment is concerned, we should recognize that if we were able to move our liquid natural gas, which will be one of the key replacements for coal around the world, we will need to be the leaders. We will be the ones who will be able to displace the coal in places like China and India. However, the only way that can happen is if we can get it to ports. That is the problem I have with my good friends from the Bloc. I know that is not a problem for people from Quebec, but the people from the Bloc, unfortunately, think "Let's shut it down." I do not know where they think the rest of this energy will come from. It certainly will not come from countries that will benefit our country.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, never have we seen so much economic damage done by so few people in such a short period of time. In the absence of leadership, our nation is paying a heavy price. The worker, the farmer, the small-business owner, the traveller, the voter and Canada's reputation on the world stage are the victims in the wake of this calamity, the blockades holding our Canadian economy hostage. The politicians who refuse to denounce the illegal actions of those who seek to intimidate our nation have only further emboldened the protesters' resolve with their silence.

Canada's jobs and our economy are at risk. Grain cannot be moved, products cannot be shipped and passengers are left without a train. Those are the consequences when the rule of law is shelved and the democratic will of voters is ignored.

I stand in solidarity with every elected band council on the Coastal GasLink route, for it is the people they represent who are being silenced by those who cover their faces and partake in illegal activities. In a democracy it is the votes that count, not the decibels or hijinks of those who do not get their way.

We must ask ourselves if we are not setting a precedent by allowing the illegal actions to carry on. If people resort to illegal activities when they are opposed to a decision, are we not at risk of making decisions based out of fear? As elected officials, the only fear we should heed is that of a ballot box, not a handful of people who operate outside the bounds of the law.

In Parliament, the very place that has for generations been the heart of democracy, we have the shared responsibility to defend the democratic will of the Wet'suwet'en voters and elected band councils. No one in the House was elected to cherry-pick the laws of the nation that we expect to be enforced. If one wants to change the law, then table it, debate it and vote on it. That is how Canadian democracy works.

It was indigenous voters who voted freely to select their leaders, and they are now being shunted aside. There is not a member in the House who has questioned the validity of those elections and those who hold office. We must stand in solidarity and defend the democratic will of the Wet'suwet'en people. We can never waver, for if we turn our backs now, we have only given credibility to those who are openly and willingly breaking the law.

In Canada, when we oppose the decisions of our elected leaders we have the democratic right to replace them. In those elections, the charter protects the right to protest and speak freely without repercussions. However, we do not have the right to partake in illegal activities.

The appalling behaviour of some, such as the barricading of the Premier of British Columbia's home, is not acceptable. Using intimidation tactics and bullying fellow Canadians is not democratic. Preventing people from going to work is not, and should never be, acceptable in Canada. However noble they feel their cause is, it does not absolve them from the law.

As elected officials, we must continue to guarantee the very rights these protesters hold dear: the freedom of conscience, the freedom of thought, the freedom of expression, the freedom of peaceful assembly and the freedom of association. The pillars that protect these rights, all our rights, are built on the foundation that Canada is a nation of the rule of law. Unfortunately, it appears as though these protesters are only interested in respecting the rule of law when the courts side in their favour. This is not how a functioning democracy works. The rule of law must go both ways.

To those who are currently blocking roads, highways, ports and railways and infringing the rights of ordinary hard-working Canadians, I ask that they think for a moment of the suffering they have caused. People have been laid off, paycheques have stopped and orders have been cancelled. Families who work hard, play by the rules and pay their taxes are the ones feeling the brunt of these blockades. Farmers cannot fill grain orders and cannot get paid. Countries around the world are now looking at Canada as an unreliable supplier. The consequences of these illegal blockades will do irreparable harm. Canadians cannot be held in economic hostage or be used as a bargaining chip.

• (1655)

While our nation is far from perfect and election results may not go one's way, we must remain committed to the very principles that have protected our rights throughout the years. To those who try to justify the illegal blockades, no argument could persuade or convince me they are just. Not only is Coastal GasLink in possession of a valid environmental assessment certificate and permit from the BC Oil & Gas Commission, but the project is supported by every elected indigenous band along the pipeline's path.

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It must also be said that most hereditary chiefs along the pipeline's path are also in support of this, and the vast majority of first nations community members themselves support this project because it would create jobs. It would create opportunities. It would improve the livelihoods of many. It would lead to investments in local communities. It would help, as my colleague just finished saying, reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

While environmental organizations and indigenous groups opposed to resource development opportunities often turn to the courts to delay and prevent resource development, they must also respect the decisions of the courts. They must allow these economic opportunities to proceed. The democratic will of the Wet'suwet'en people cannot be ignored.

The process of approving this project was done accordingly. There is no legal argument that this project should not proceed. I encourage these protesters to continue to make their voices heard, but to do it in a way that does not impede upon innocent bystanders, who are being hurt through no fault of their own.

My message to those currently engaged in the blockades is to get politically involved, run for office and get elected, go out and knock on doors, organize petitions, protest and march as they see fit. However, they should not hold the Canadian economy hostage to advance their cause and should not purport to speak for people who have not given their blessing. Most of all, they should not hurt their fellow Canadians, who are being targeted through these blockades.

It must be said that opposing these illegal blockades does not contravene the reconciliation efforts throughout the country. It is the easily foreseeable consequence of ignoring a court order. More than ever, we need to better improve the economic and education opportunities of indigenous people in Canada. Those conversations must happen.

In this Parliament I expect solutions to be discussed and meaningful engagement with indigenous Canadians to occur. Improving the standard of living and the quality of life of indigenous Canadians must be a top priority. We know those conversations are not always going to be easy. People will agree or disagree, which is to be expected in a robust democracy.

We also know that in the weeks and months ahead, there will be other choices that elected leaders will have to make on resource projects. We cannot let our economy be brought to a halt every time a decision needs to be made or is made. We cannot set the precedent that it is acceptable to erect blockades in response to decisions that people disagree with.

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Canadians sent us to Parliament to speak on their behalf and work together to implement solutions to the challenges we face. Those are the same reasons why the Wet'suwet'en voters went to the polls to elect their councils. It is irresponsible for us to turn our backs on these duly elected councils. A decision was made, and regardless of whether we support or oppose their wishes, we cannot condone the actions of people who are exploiting divisions within the Wet'suwet'en community to advance their own agendas.

This is a difficult and challenging issue. I implore those who are currently engaged in the illegal blockades to relent and allow the movement of people and goods. They can protest, make their voices heard and stay involved, but they should do so within the bounds of the law.

The country is watching and, more than ever, people are looking for leadership. Let us speak as one and pass the motion with unanimous support.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are trying to simplify the issue. If we listen to their leader, in essence they are saying that the rule of law does not matter and the RCMP should be instructed to go in and take down the blockades. They would have liked to see that take place two weeks ago.

Had the Conservative leader had his way, does my friend across the way believe there would have been no consequence, that all the RCMP had to do was just walk in and arrest as many people as they could to prevent the blockade? Is that what the Conservative Party believes?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way asked if Conservatives think there are simple solutions. His government has made a very complex move by saying that we need dialogue. Of course we need dialogue; of course we need to have open conversations. I said that in my speech. We will have that, but people cannot break the law to get their points across. It does not matter what part of Canada one is represented in.

The government has abdicated its responsibilities with regard to the enforcement opportunities it has within the rule of law in this country. This situation has taken place in other jurisdictions, and previous governments, although not this one, have made changes to deal with these sorts of things in a more timely manner, before letting the whole country come under a blockade that brings the economy not to a halt but a standstill. It has certainly cost many jobs. We saw today that even VIA Rail has laid off over 1,000 people in the railroad system. It seems that the member for Winnipeg North does not acknowledge any of that.

• (1705)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are saying we should get rid of these blockades and then we will talk. The Wet'suwet'en have had a blockade on their territory for some years now. A year ago, the RCMP went in and dismantled it. They went in a couple of weeks ago and did the same. That second action by the RCMP has

fuelled the discontent across the country that has created more blockades.

I am wondering why the member thinks that removing blockades fixes this situation when it is clear that what we need is some real, honest and trusting discussion that addresses the situation the Wet'suwet'en are bringing forward.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, removing the blockades would help the Wet'suwet'en people recognize that the jobs are for them as well. Their chiefs already recognize that.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that under the Chrétien government in the nineties, when the member for Malpeque was solicitor general and Ralph Goodale was in government, a group of farmers protested and took a sack of wheat across the border. I remember the member for Malpeque said the law is the law is the law.

Could the member compare today to then? Those farmers went to jail. Could he explain to me why there is no action at this point?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, having stood on the border with those farmers, I certainly know the issue very well. There is a very big contradiction between what my colleague from Prince Albert is talking about and the lack of action from the government over the last few weeks. The member has made a very good point, and it shows the contradiction in the government's actions.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to the Conservative Party motion. It is unfortunate that the Conservatives are taking an approach that would only escalate tensions and does nothing to help resolve the current crisis.

The Bloc Québécois cannot support the Conservative motion's approach. Why not? The answer is obvious. This motion focuses on divisions within the Wet'suwet'en nation, in keeping with the good old colonial tactic of divide and conquer. It helps demonize the protesters. It attempts to set the first nations against each other. In no way does it help resolve the crisis.

Basically, this Conservative motion forces the House to take sides in a conflict that is none of its business. It forces us to choose between the hereditary chiefs and the band council. Adopting and enforcing this motion would only add fuel to the fire and would do nothing to resolve the crisis and lift the blockades.

I note that the Bloc Québécois seems to be the only party that has set aside partisanship in order to find potential solutions to this ongoing conflict. We have already made several proposals. For example, the Bloc Québécois asked that a war room be created with Ottawa and the provinces concerned. The Bloc Québécois called on the federal government to appoint a mediator tasked with initiating talks on the territorial issues with the independent Wet'suwet'en in exchange for an end to the railway blockades. The Bloc Québécois called for an emergency debate so that the House could discuss potential solutions to adopt. In a speech to the House, the leader of the Bloc Québécois proposed the temporary suspension of the Coastal GasLink pipeline in exchange for the removal of the barricades. The Bloc Québécois proposed that the Prime Minister apologize on behalf of the RCMP for considering the use of lethal force against the protesters. The Leader of the Bloc Québécois suggested that an indigenous police force selected by the Wet'suwet'en nation replace the RCMP on their territory.

Since the beginning of this crisis, it seems that only the Bloc Québécois has been trying to find concrete solutions to address the situation. We did not stand idly by, unlike the Prime Minister and his ministers, who did nothing for far too long, hoping that everything would fix itself. The federal government needs to step up and take action.

Quebec is taking action. This past Tuesday, the Quebec National Assembly adopted a motion that reads as follows:

THAT the National Assembly reaffirm its adherence to the principles of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;

THAT, accordingly, it invite the governments of Québec [and] Canada to maintain egalitarian nation-to-nation relations with the indigenous peoples of Québec and Canada...

THAT it acknowledge that the current conflict, which stems from the Coastal GasLink pipeline project, is having an undesirable impact on railway network users and on the [Quebec] economy;

THAT the National Assembly call for a negotiated, peaceful political solution to the current crisis, in order to prevent violence.

Unlike the Conservatives, who are taking a hard-line approach, the Bloc Québécois joins with Quebec's elected officials in their unanimous will to find a peaceful solution to this crisis. We urgently need action and a peaceful solution to this crisis.

With every day that this crisis goes on, our economy suffers even more. This crisis is affecting workers and ordinary folks. Just look at the number of CN employees who have been temporarily laid off because of the rail blockade. If nothing is done right now, many more employees will join their ranks.

I would like to list other major effects of this crisis. The blockade in Belleville is currently preventing the flow of \$2 billion worth of goods. It is hard for companies to find alternatives because, in addition to being 25% to 35% more expensive, the trucking industry is already facing a serious labour shortage.

• (1710)

The blockade is causing major problems for forestry companies, which are already struggling due to the current softwood lumber dispute, since they rely on rail transport to ship their lumber.

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Forestry producers do not get paid until the shipment is received. If this situation goes on much longer, it could lead to cash flow problems.

Thousands of containers of goods destined for western Canada are backlogged at Quebec's ports. Many perishable goods will spoil if they are not delivered. Trains full of perishable goods are sitting idle on the tracks. If the blockade goes on, Quebec could experience a propane shortage that could be extremely damaging, especially for farmers. Passenger trains will also suffer the consequences of these blockades. Many people need to take the train to get to work.

For all these reasons, the federal government must find a solution quickly to put an end to this crisis. It cannot go on.

Soon, Quebec consumers will suffer the consequences, as will those in neighbouring provinces. Quebec's food market relies on the railways running smoothly.

According to René Desmarais, a senior consultant with the Conseil québécois du commerce de détail, if the crisis continues, it is just a matter of days before Quebecers are faced with empty shelves at supermarkets and other stores. According to him, that could happen as early as this weekend.

The rail blockades have paralyzed most freight transportation for the past two weeks. The government needs to re-establish communication with representatives of the Wet'suwet'en nation because the entire transport logistics chain is in jeopardy.

This is the 15th day of the crisis, and nothing has been done. Where is the Liberal government's leadership in a crisis situation? We are not seeing it. The government needs to break the impasse and end the crisis that is disrupting our economy, causing job losses and affecting many families. This is a crisis of confidence that further undermines the agreement with all peoples of the nation. Let us negotiate and give them the legitimacy they deserve. Let us work together to establish a society worthy of the name.

In closing, I want to reiterate that we must find a peaceful way to resolve the crisis. The approach proposed by the Conservative Party will certainly not lead to such an outcome. That is why I cannot support the motion we are debating today. We do not want to relive the Oka crisis 30 years on, so it is important to find the right approach for putting an end to this crisis. The government will then have to find a permanent way to prevent this sort of crisis. The current government has set the bar extremely high when it comes to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. This has created expectations and has led to frustration and disappointment when the government does not live up to those expectations.

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● (1715)

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when do we say enough is enough? When do we say we have shut down enough ports, we have shut down enough jobs or we have shut down enough industries?

People cannot get contact lenses now in Ottawa. People in different parts of Canada cannot get baby formula. We cannot get grain to market. At what point does it become enough? When do we say we have to take action? The Premier of Quebec is ready to take action.

Could the member tell me when is the appropriate time?

[Translation]

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

I agree, enough is enough. This has to stop. The current Liberal government needs to make decisions and manage the crisis. We are here to work together.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Quebec for that very interesting and balanced speech.

Based on our shared experience of what happened at Oka, can she explain why it is a bad idea to use force instead of holding talks to find a longer-term solution?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Bloc Québécois wants a peaceful resolution to the crisis and negotiation with the other parties. Violence will not resolve the situation. This is like a critical wound, and we need to stop the bleeding.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned indigenous people in our country. I think of the indigenous people in my riding, who won a Supreme Court decision for the right to catch and sell fish that reaffirmed their right, which as we know is protected in our Constitution.

I find it interesting when we see a motion like this. We keep hearing about law and order, and the Conservatives say that we have to take a law-and-order approach. We have seen over 170 court cases in this country side with indigenous people. What does the government do? It appeals or ignores the decisions made in the courts and leaves people suffering.

Indigenous children are not able to access the same services as non-indigenous children. People like the Nuu-chah-nulth are blocked from self-determination and ways that they can support their own communities. We talk about the economic impact of the Conservative and Liberal approaches to this.

Could the member speak about how, when we stand up for indigenous rights, we need to be standing up for law and order, standing up for the courts in this country and respecting the inherent rights of the indigenous people of this land?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. The important thing is to respect indigenous rights. I think they are in the best position to show us the way and resolve this crisis. We need to initiate talks and negotiations.

● (1720)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member just said we need to respect indigenous peoples. Is the member aware that 20 indigenous communities are directly affected by this project and that all 20 support it? Is the member aware that, according to the National Coalition of Chiefs, the majority of the community's hereditary chiefs are in favour of the project?

Yes, some are against it, but the majority of the population is for it. According to one of the hereditary chiefs, 85% of the community is for it.

With everyone in agreement, what is the government waiting for?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, when we are talking about communities, about first nations, Inuit or indigenous peoples, it is up to them to come talk to us. That includes all indigenous peoples, even those who support this project. It is important to negotiate with all the indigenous nations.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to express my solidarity with the victims of the blockade. I am thinking of producers, small businesses and exporters, among others.

Practically speaking, a blockade is not a good solution. However, that is the situation we are facing right now, and we need to be in problem-solving mode.

With that in mind, the Bloc Québécois does not support the motion that the Conservatives put forward today, because it is irresponsible. From the outset, this irresponsible situation was created by the federal government, which let things get out of hand, claiming that it was not within its jurisdiction.

Although the Coastal GasLink project is under British Columbia's jurisdiction, the fact remains that the protesters' actions were directed at federal infrastructure. Unable to manage the crisis with true leadership, the federal government prefers to hide behind the provinces.

Does that mean the protesters will have to raise their voices and become radical extremists, as the Conservatives fear? Fortunately, we are not there yet.

While we support rapid resumption of rail service, we believe, as do the Mohawk chiefs who have spoken out, that this situation must be resolved peacefully. I think the word "peacefully" is key. A solution that condemns those at the barricades is dangerous, for both law enforcement and the protesters.

What would happen if this crisis resonated with other Canadians and they added their voices to those of the protesters? There have been a few examples of this in Quebec. Would the Conservatives also condemn them and call on the authorities to intervene with as much force?

Although the RCMP has withdrawn from the territory, it should still apologize for enforcing an injunction against the pipeline opponents, using force against the Wet'suwet'en community, and triggering hostilities that are currently creating more and more problems for all Canadians.

Given that this government is clearly refusing to listen, the protesters must shout even louder to be heard. Let us listen to them.

During these discussions, the government should at the very least negotiate the temporary suspension of the Coastal GasLink project in exchange for the removal of the blockades. That is the best and most reasonable solution. I would also remind members about the Bloc Québécois proposal. Perhaps calling in a mediator at this stage could be a solution. We are not there yet.

I am wondering if the Conservatives have thought about the consequences of their motion.

If we send the police in to intervene with force, we run the risk of making the situation worse and spoiling the efforts that have been made over the past few years to seek reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Again, the international reputations of Quebec and Canada could be tarnished by heavy-handed intervention and negligence in negotiations with these peoples.

I also want to mention the international context. Canada is seeking a seat on the UN Security Council. In that context, I think that it is advisable to have good relations with our indigenous peoples.

I would remind members that, a few days ago, Quebec and the Cree signed another historic economic agreement with a handshake and big smiles, in stark contrast to the Canadian government. When there is a genuine political will for a nation-to-nation relationship, we do not need barricades or law enforcement to solve problems or reach economic agreements.

While violent police action would bring a swift end to the situation, relations with indigenous people would yet again be poisoned for many years to come.

As Ghislain Picard said last month:

It is frustrating and disappointing that the Government of Canada is once again committing to the principles of free, prior and informed consent on the one hand, but on the other hand, allowing projects without seeking to work with the First Nations directly affected by them. Clearly, no project will be viable if it is imposed by force on First Nations communities.

In short, the Canadian government failed to demonstrate good statesmanship by not engaging in dialogue sooner.

During a crisis like this one, where the authorities take charge by force, I am happy to see that Quebec has its own strong, sovereign National Assembly to defend Quebecers' choices.

I feel deeply for the first nations, who do not have the strength of a sovereign national assembly behind them. There is no excuse for

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not seeing them, talking to them and listening to them, nation to nation. I say again, nation to nation.

Indigenous peoples must be treated with respect and dignity. It is not for us to judge their governance model.

• (1725)

That is why the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion on February 18:

THAT the National Assembly reaffirm its adherence to the principles of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;

THAT, accordingly, it invite the governments of Québec [and] Canada to maintain egalitarian nation-to-nation relations with the indigenous peoples of Québec and Canada, in keeping with the principle of a people's right to self-determination;

THAT it acknowledge that the current conflict, which stems from the Coastal GasLink pipeline project, is having an undesirable impact on railway network users and on the economy;

THAT the National Assembly call for a negotiated, peaceful political solution to the current crisis, in order to prevent violence.

This crisis worries me. In my riding of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, there is another pipeline project, the Gazoduq project, that is under review. This pipeline would cross through Abitibi-Témiscamingue from east to west, ending at Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, so that liquefied natural gas could be sold around the world. These objectives are very similar.

A lot of residents are worried, especially since they oppose this pipeline project. They are desperately looking for peaceful ways to make their voices heard. Will they take inspiration from what is being done for indigenous people and do the same thing in order to be heard?

The formula is starting to sound familiar. Oil projects get split into smaller projects so they are easier to push through. Was the same thing done with Coastal GasLink? That is the exact same approach being used for the Gazoduq project that would go through my riding.

It bothers me that the current federal government spent several billion dollars to buy a pipeline. That could mean that the federal government is in cahoots with developers and is taking advantage of the financial vulnerability of indigenous and rural areas.

If the government continues to impose pipelines across the country, how many times will we see this type of crisis? Should I be expecting this type of crisis when the Conservatives' natural gas pipeline or the hypothetical energy corridor is built in my home region?

In closing, I want to say that I believe there is a diplomatic and respectful way to resolve this crisis and to allow the first nations to decide how best to govern themselves. I am also convinced that there is way to ensure the economic development of the regions while respecting the principles of sustainable development and social licence. I do not think that it is through force that we will stimulate our economy and our vitality.

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Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that I heard what my colleague had to say because he seems to have forgotten some aspects of the situation.

It is not the big bad colonial power that imposed this pipeline project. This project has been in the works for six years and has gone through all the necessary approvals at both the federal and provincial levels. This project has the support of the provincial NDP government, which is supported by the Green Party. This project passes through 20 indigenous communities, and all of them support it. The majority of the hereditary chiefs of the community in question support the project. One hereditary chief even publicly stated that 85% of the community supported it. This is a far cry from the big bad white man imposing his colonial projects.

The member said that we should not resort to violence to solve the problem. We are simply talking about enforcing the law. Right now, in Quebec, there is a blockade in Saint-Lambert. An injunction was sought and granted. Does the member agree with this legal approach? Does he agree with the fact that the Prime Minister said that the blockade would be taken down as soon as the injunction was granted?

• (1730)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his comments and his question.

In response, I would say that white people did play a role in creating the indigenous governance system we are talking about now and that it was not done in accordance with indigenous traditions. The governance system was imposed in the 19th century. I have a problem with that because it is not up to us to tell indigenous peoples how to make decisions amongst themselves. This is simply a matter of respect.

With respect to indigenous governance, an expert from Ryerson University pointed out that it is the rule of law of those who make the rules, not the actual rule of law. The Prime Minister's reference to the rule of law is contrary to the Supreme Court's 1997 ruling in *Delgamuukw*, which recognized the hereditary chiefs' authority within their territory.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Those people are for it.

An hon. member: Not all of them.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, in this context, there may be solutions worth looking at, such as the pipeline route.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my colleague's very interesting speech by asking him if he thinks the authorities should use force when a blockade is put up on first nations territory.

Contrary to the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent's question, Premier Legault clearly stated that the only reason he is not ruling out police intervention is that the blockade is not on first nations territory.

That is my question for the Bloc Québécois member.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for answering the question

asked by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I did not have enough time to do so, and his intervention was well done. I appreciate the collaboration.

In my view, the use of force is unacceptable. What must be done, in a civilized way, is to come up with proposals for negotiations. For instance, a mediator could be used in this case to help come up with solutions. A temporary suspension of work on the Coastal GasLink project could also be part of the solution. Another route could be proposed, even though it might cost more, as much as \$600 million or \$800 million more, but this is a \$6.6 billion project. That would be less than 10% or 12%, less than the amount of tax.

In my view, there are other solutions that should be considered, and we must respect the fundamental rights of first nations and their hereditary chiefs.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that this toxic motion is not helpful at all in this situation. During most of the speeches, we have heard reference to the fact that it is not just Wet'suwet'en members taking part in the rallies but people who are not from the territory, and they are getting labelled as radical activists.

I want to put this in perspective. If we look back in history, and even today at many of the rallies, protests and similar blockades, a variety of individuals join in support and advocate other people's rights. We can look back in history to ending slavery; removing the discriminatory practices of not allowing indigenous people or women to vote, including my late grandma; removing discriminatory practices of not allowing indigenous children to attend public schools; and the Winnipeg general strike, just to name a few.

Does the member agree that these people are not radical, but are standing in solidarity to protect the inherent rights of the landowners of this country, which are constitutionally protected?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. She is an amazing member of Parliament. I am so proud to share my time with her today.

Today is a sad day. It is sad that our country has gone to this level. It did not need to be this way. Canada is a trading nation. We are a nation that sells some \$300 billion of goods around the world. Around the world, Canada is thought of as a friendly, polite and respectful nation. The rule of law is important in our nation. We tell other nations that the rule of law is what helps us to be who we are today.

We are talking about the barricades and what is going on in Canada, across western Canada, and the impact it is having on families right across the country. The inaction and the inability of the Liberal government to understand how serious things are is pretty disappointing. It shows how out of touch the Liberals are. The inability to react or know what to do shows us how weak the leadership of the Liberal government is.

Last week I was talking to a farmer friend of mine, Rick Lindsay, when this was happening. Rick had a couple of loads of wheat he wanted to get out. He has a cash advance just like every other farmer. He asked me what was going on. He said farmers have been fighting a hard harvest. They have a carbon tax. He wants to ship some grain, but he cannot get it shipped. He has contracts he wants to fulfill so he can get some cash flow and he has to start organizing and purchasing fertilizer for the spring, so he wants to know what is going on.

Let us look at the situation on the west coast with the Wet'suwet'en nation. The elected officials are in favour of this pipeline. The 20 bands along the route are in favour. How can three people, how can activists in Ontario, how can activists who have no skin in the game take a country down? That is what they want to do. They want to take this country down.

The member for Brandon—Souris talked about a group of farmers fighting for freedom. They were fighting for the freedom to sell the product they grow on their own. They did not want a Canadian wheat board. They protested, and that protest consisted of taking a sack of wheat across the border. They were arrested.

They were not being violent. They were not being smug to the RCMP. They were not being disrespectful. They were making a point. They were protesting. What did the Chrétien government do to those farmers?

People would be amazed to hear what that government did to those people. They were treated as if they were drug dealers. They were arrested and charged and thrown in jail. The minister at the time, who was from Malpeque, said the law is the law is the law. He said those farmers broke the law, so they had to go to jail. Minister Goodale at the time said he agreed that the law is the law is the law. He felt those farmers broke the law, so they had to go to jail.

It is easy to throw farmers in jail, because they are polite and respectful. They are not criminals and they are not anarchists. They are not trying to take down the country. Those farmers were fighting for something. They had skin in the game, something that was important to them. They were willing to cross that line to make a point. They were never going to put an RCMP officer's life at risk. They were never going to disrupt the country. They were never going to create a situation in which people would not be able to get contact lenses here in Ottawa or not get baby formula across the country or not get propane in eastern Canada. That was not their intent. They did not disrupt the whole Canadian economy. They wanted to make a point.

That is the difference between the type of protest we are seeing today versus a true protest. A true protest would be peaceful. A Gandhi-style protest would not include taking up arms. A Gandhi-style protest would not include protesters sitting on the ground and

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stating they are going to disrupt this country and take it to its knees. This protest going on is not a Gandhi-style protest. These people are anarchists. These people do not have skin in the game.

We need to ask ourselves what is going on and how it got to this point. When we do not enforce the rule of law, this is what happens. It is one of those things that just keeps growing and growing. If people get away with it once, with no slap on the wrist, they feel they can do it again.

We have a member from Vancouver who was arrested for protesting and received a slap on the wrist. There were no consequences. That makes people think they will do another one, since there were no consequences—

An. hon. member: The Green Party leader.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, the Green Party leader.

People want to do another one, and another one, and another one after that, because there are no consequences. They think it is fun. Then they put it on a crowdfunding site in the U.S. and get paid to do it. We have seen that happen. This can be happening at this point in time.

● (1735)

What is the goal of these protesters? The Liberals have to look at that very seriously as a government and ask if this is a real issue of reconciliation.

For some of them, for a small group, maybe it is. However, they are being abused by all of the other people who actually have no skin in the game. It is not their issue. They just want to stop development at all costs.

How do we deal with people like that? We enforce the rule of law. If we do not enforce the rule of law now, what prevents them from cranking it up later, and more and more going into the future?

I am very concerned that if we do not do things properly and fairly right now, if we do not deal with these issues in an appropriate fashion right now, it is going to lead to even more chaos as we get into the summer.

I will go back to the \$300 billion worth of goods every year. If I am a company owner who is thinking about building a plant in Canada, and think that Canada is a pretty good place and Canadians are good people, but I see in an article that Canada has protests going on and it has shut down its rail lines, it tells me that if I build in Canada, I may not be able to get propane for my plant.

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That is what we are telling the world right now. As folks in Canada are trying to sell investment opportunities in Canada to corporations or other companies, business people are asking why they would do that, when there is no rule of law in Canada. It is gone. The Prime Minister is not enforcing the law, and he is very weak.

I was in a committee last night where we had a witness whose business has seven facilities across Canada building IPEX pipes for plumbing and electrical goods, to run the cable through it. At the end of the testimony, I asked him how things were going. He said that four out of the company's seven plants are now shutting down because they cannot get the raw goods to make the pipes. That is one facility.

I had wings with a friend last night. He was wearing his glasses, and I asked him why he was wearing them. He said he could not get contact lenses. He could not find contacts in Ottawa, so he was wearing his glasses.

We are starting to see what is going to happen here unless the folks across the aisle start to deal with this in a serious manner. Our economy is shutting down, and there is going to be a tremendous cost.

Even if we were to end the blockades today, it will take time to get things going. I hear about vandalism to rails out on the west coast. Before a train can cross a bridge, that bridge is now going to have to be fully inspected. The consequences of what these folks have done in just more than two weeks are pretty serious. They are going to last quite a while.

Another thing I want to highlight is that the grain sector has had its challenges in shipping its product around the global market. I can remember having debates with CN and CP about them not delivering on time. I remember times when there were 50-plus ships sitting in the port of Vancouver. We are at 40 now, and 10 in Prince Rupert. A purchaser of Canadian grain, from Japan let us say, who needs just-in-time delivery is going to get tired of us in Canada and is going to buy from the U.S.

That is what is happening here. That is the breakdown. There are implications for this country of more and more unemployment and families not being able to pay their bills. It is a domino effect. The dominoes have started to fall, and it is not a pretty ending. This could have been stopped. It could have been prevented.

When we go to communities and say we are going to do this and this for them, when we raise expectations this high and then do nothing or very little, what do we expect? That is what the government has done. The reality is now Canadians are going to pay for it, and that is very disappointing.

There is no reason Canadians should be paying for this. This should have been dealt with a long time ago. It should never have gotten to this point, and it is sad that it has.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your patience, since I am

asking every speaker the same question. I think it is important, and I have rarely gotten an answer from the Conservatives on this.

My question is the same. Does the member truly believe that using force to resolve this situation will lead to lasting peace in this country?

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I talked about this. This is not a Gandhi-style protest. This is totally different from what a protest should be, if those involved have what they are protesting at heart.

Do you have to use force? Maybe you do some days. I hate it. I do. I hate that we are going to have to possibly use force. That is because you did not do your job to begin with. You could have nipped it in the bud a year ago, maybe two years ago, but you let it go on and on, and it has gotten to a level where now you have to use force. That is not the RCMP's fault; that is your fault. How did you let it get this bad?

• (1745)

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. member to direct his speech to the Chair, and to use the third person. It works just fine.

[Translation]

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources on a point of order.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE BY NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to unreservedly apologize to the House and to the member for Red Deer—Mountain View, to the hon. government House leader and to the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader, with respect to the handling of the governmental response to Order Paper question Q-50.

The government response from Natural Resources Canada to Q-50 is incorrect, and for that I apologize. Not only that, my office provided information to the government House leader's office to prepare a response to the question of privilege raised on February 19 by my colleague from Red Deer—Mountain View.

The information was provided and vetted by my department, which stated that the reason that a nil response was provided to Q-50 was that the contracts with Pembina Institute were grants, not contracts. I now know that a mistake was made, and this information was false.

In giving the government House leader's office that information, I have undermined its efforts to clear the record, and I am very sorry for that.

I want to correct the record. I will table a revised, correct and accurate response to Q-50 as soon as possible. I want to assure the House that I did not knowingly or intend to mislead the House. I take this matter extremely seriously. I am discussing the matter with my departmental officials to ensure this does not happen again. It came to light they made an error with the search terms when conducting the search.

I also want to express my deep regret to the member for Red Deer—Mountain View, who was simply seeking information in order to discharge his duties as a member of Parliament.

Again, I am deeply sorry to all members present and to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. minister for bringing this to the attention of the House, and doing so on a timely basis.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COASTAL GASLINK PROJECT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: We will now continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all day, MPs have been talking about the impact these blockades are having on their respective ridings. We agree on one thing: this crisis needs to end quickly.

My priority is to help Bow Plumbing Group, a business in my riding. I worry that the use of force will lead to an escalation of violence, which will hurt Bow Plumbing Group. Indigenous chiefs like Kanesatake Grand Chief Simon say they are worried this will be another Oka crisis.

Is creating another Oka crisis the answer to getting supplies flowing to businesses and getting the railways up and running again?

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share in her fear. It should never come to force. It should be able to be dealt with in a reasonable fashion. However, we are not creating the issue here, the Liberals are. The reality is that the RCMP have to do what the RCMP have to do, and hopefully not with force. Hopefully they can negotiate their way through it.

I was in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord talking to people at Rio Tinto. They were already bringing trucks in because they were concerned about getting their aluminum out and getting the bauxite in.

There was already an impact last week in that district on whether they could actually keep that facility running. The reality is that one

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does not just switch it off, then the next day receive some bauxite and clear some room and turn it back on.

It comes back to the fact that the Liberals could have headed this off a long time ago. If they had taken appropriate actions, dealt with things in an appropriate manner, managed expectations, been realistic and not lied to or misled people, we would not be here.

That is why we are here. The Liberals need to do some soul searching, and they have to understand they are the ones who created this problem. They need to fix it.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague commented a lot about the rule of law and order and the costs of not taking action. I think about the over 170 court cases that have sided with indigenous communities in this country, including the Nuu-chah-nulth's right to catch and sell fish.

What are the consequences of the government not honouring those court cases? For example, in Ahousat on Flores Island, they blocked the pathway to self-determination. They cannot even access the fish swimming right by their villages.

When it comes to the Human Rights Tribunal, children do not have access to the same benefits every other Canadian enjoys. What are the consequences? They are suicide and systemic poverty. The costs are enormous.

Where are the Conservatives when it comes to these injustices? Why are they not standing up with respect to these injustices? Why are they not standing up for the application of law and order when it comes to these files?

● (1750)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that we are not the government. It is not for us to stand up for them. We agree that the rule of law is the rule of law. We have to exercise the rule of law, and it has to be enforced. If they are not going to do that, there is not much I can do about it, other than speak in this chamber and say, "Do it."

The reality is that we are not in government. We do not have control. If we were in government, we would have control and we would deal with this in an appropriate fashion. We treat people fairly and with respect. That is what Prime Minister Harper always did. That is why we have never seen interruptions like this. Did they like us all the time? No, but we never lied to them.

I come from the riding of Prince Albert, the riding of John Diefenbaker. John Diefenbaker was the first prime minister to allow first nations people to vote. He was a Conservative leader, so the member should not say that we do not respect indigenous rights, because we do.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak in the emergency debate the other night. At that time, I was able to talk about the profound impacts this crisis was having throughout the country. Today, I want to build on my comments from that night. I am really glad this is an opposition day motion, because it is critical to continue that discussion.

I want to unpack some of what is happening with the current emergency crisis taking place.

Privilege

I will clearly state that the motion is about supporting the Wet'suwet'en community, which, by all accounts, has made an informed and democratic decision about the Coastal GasLink project. As has been stated many times today, every elected chief, the majority of the hereditary chiefs and the vast majority of community members are in favour of this project. They have gone through an exhaustive consultation process lasting many years. Some of the communities have held referendums. These are not my numbers, but the numbers shared by the community to the public and the newspapers.

As Candice George said, who has the authority to approve this project? The answer is the Wet'suwet'en people. What we have here is not a classic conflict between indigenous people and resource developers. I agree that for too many years resources were extracted from the traditional territory of indigenous communities with no benefit and very little engagement with the communities that were most impacted. However, from what I hear, from the very start, the consultation process has been thorough.

At the Prince George natural resources conference, I heard one of the elders, who is a hereditary chief, speak. She said that when people first came to the community, she thought "We do not want this project." However, as she learned about it, as she learned about fracking, as she learned about what this could do for the environment, as she listened, as she talked to my community, her opinion changed. She said that they had been very engaged throughout this process.

Therefore, like with anything, there will not be unanimity. Certainly, there is no unanimity in the House.

We do have a group of hereditary chiefs who are concerned. There is a governance structure in place, and it is not up to the House or anyone in it to determine what the governance structure is with respect to how they make decisions.

I want to use an example. They have a structure that has been in place many years. We have the House and the other place. The other place is unelected, and we are elected. We have roles to play in the decision-making of what legislation will go forward. Those roles are determined through legislation, our Constitution and convention. In some ways it is similar. We have senators and members of Parliament.

When the government introduced its environmental legislation in the last Parliament, we were opposed. However, it passed through the House and went to the Senate. A group of senators were opposed to the legislation because they thought it would create tremendous damage. However, the legislation passed in the Senate.

The senators who were opposed had to respect the will of the houses that made those determinations. Had they decided to go out and block railways because they thought the decision of the government was so bad, they immediately would have been subjected to a significant response by the police and others. We have heard about the Wheat Board and farmers taking grain across the border.

I look at the case of the gentleman who decided to take beer from one province to another province. The law was applied, and the person was charged because of that.

• (1755)

A decision was made on which there is no unanimity, but as I say, by all accounts, with the existing processes of this nation, it is the best decision it could have made. The federal and provincial agencies have approved this process; the courts issued an injunction and supported the work that had been done.

Throughout the country, more groups are claiming they are in solidarity with the hereditary chiefs. When there is an extinction rebellion to shut down Canada and a number of other climate groups are organizing the protests, I wonder if their motivation is supporting the hereditary chiefs as much as moving their own agendas forward. It seems that a vast majority of the action has been initiated by activists who are willing to engage selectively in the politics of indigenous rights and will actually weaken the people they claim to be supporting.

I will quote Candice George because I truly enjoy her Twitter feed. I recommend that everyone look at it. She is a community member. She said she talked to a number of the elders and asked how they felt about people who are not Wet'suwet'en, who have not asked for their guidance and are out protesting. The answer she said she got was, "Why do they do that? I'm right here. My tongue is not broken." She is indicating that the elders have told her that these people are certainly not representing their perspective.

There was a big meeting yesterday in Houston, and a number of people showed up. I understand there were about 200 people who took three hours out of their day and were clearly in support of the project. They went to the meeting to say they want to see the pipeline built. They said the project is going to create well-paid jobs and economic opportunities for their people. I will read from an article on this meeting, which contains a few quotes:

Among the supporters was Robert Skin, who said he was elected to the council of the Skin Tyee First Nation, which is part of the Wet'suwet'en Nation, to move the community forward.

He said the pipeline will mean a better life for the next generation.

"With the benefit agreement that [the Skin Tyee] did sign, I see us being in a better place even within the next five years," Skin said.

Speaking to the crowd at the theatre, he said protesters "only get one side of the story" and don't understand the advantages this type of infrastructure project can provide.

Further on the article continues:

The Wet'suwet'en people at the event said they resent the protests because they aren't helping their community, which they say already has fractured governance. They say the protests have amplified the conflict in the community and distracted Wet'suwet'en people from resolving their differences.

Another person who has a job opportunity talked about the "pugnacious and overbearing" impact of these protesters and said that they are professional protesters.

The article refers to Marion Tiljoe Shepherd and is particularly poignant. It states:

Privilege

Shepherd said she's increasingly angered by the protesters across the country. She said they don't speak for, nor represent her community.

"It's none of their business," she said in an interview following the event. "All of these protesters don't have the right to close down railways and ships. It's not right. Go away. I want them to leave."

In summary, we have a government that has been paralyzed by inaction. It did nothing. When people engage in civil disobedience, they do so knowingly. Even when the Green leader protested at Kinder Morgan, she knew she was going to be arrested. She knew she would be charged. Those were the expectations she had.

I am really concerned with the response of the government. The Prime Minister was missing in action. He was in Africa to get a UN seat. He finally showed up, and there are no consequences. There will be increasing problems in this country.

As I said the other night, I see this as a dress rehearsal if there are no repercussions for knowingly breaking the law, which there always have been. People know that if they engage in civil disobedience, there will be repercussions.

We have a problem, and it is quite literally at the government's feet. It is the government's fault.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you will understand that I completely disagree with my hon. colleague's analysis.

I have an important question. Does the hon. member believe that if we follow the recommendation in the motion moved by the Conservatives, it will lead to lasting peace?

I sincerely ask the hon. member to think about the Oka situation before she answers.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where our country is paralyzed. There are significant impacts throughout the country.

We need to be a country where there is the rule of law. I recognize the RCMP needs to be given latitude to try to decrease tension and to do the job it is expected to do. However, we cannot have a government that says the government should not do anything when there are situations such as this. The government did not deal with the situation when there were early indications. It allowed the situation to fester, and it has not done anything. If there are no consequences, there will be increasing problems in this country.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the repercussions are being felt even in Mauricie. Our economy is significantly affected by this dispute. We are still waiting for a passenger train, the HFR. Our trains primarily carry goods, which is why it is so important to break this impasse.

What is the Conservative Party's position on the use of force?

Will that really advance negotiations to resolve this conflict?

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concerns about the blockade of the railway. Today in the riding I represent the rail lines were blocked. It is a problem.

When home heating for our seniors, chlorine for our drinking water, and many services that people need are jeopardized, health and safety is jeopardized. No one in this House wants to see force being used. We need to trust our RCMP, our police services, to do the job they need to do, but there is also a responsibility to enforce injunctions and to move forward—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

• (1805)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can the member expect the use of force in getting rid of these blockades to solve the problem?

The Unist'ot'en camp has been in place in Wet'suwet'en territory for 10 years, since the Conservative government was in power here. One year ago, the RCMP went in and removed that camp and forcibly arrested 14 people, I believe. Then it went back again just recently. That has spawned all these blockades across the country.

How is this going to solve the problem?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, no one wants the use of force. Right now in Blue River, British Columbia, there is a camp. The camp is there to protest the Trans Mountain pipeline.

We all know that in this country we have the right to demonstrate and we have the right to be peaceful, but when people start to tamper with rail lines, when they start to jeopardize the health and safety of Canadians, we have a problem and we need to recognize it as such.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just found out in the last hour that there is a new blockade on the rail line, basically on the boundary between my riding and the member's riding. This is the CP Rail main line, which has approximately 30 trains per day. These are container trains, lumber trains, coal trains and petroleum trains. They carry all sorts of goods that keep this economy going, such as the grain trains. Saskatchewan will not be able to get its products to market.

How can this continue to go on? Is it because of the weak response of the government with no action being taken?

Privilege

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, this has been an issue for a number of months, and the Prime Minister has essentially ignored it. He said it was up to the provinces to deal with it. When it was becoming a crisis, he was in Africa advocating for his UN seat and ignoring the crisis at home.

The first action we have seen by the government was when it reached a boiling point. In health care, we look at a preventative approach. I would say there has been no preventative action to actually stop this problem before it even started.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will let the parliamentary secretary know there are only about seven minutes remaining in the time for debate on this motion, but I will give him the usual signal to interrupt him when we get to the end of Business of Supply.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my friend from Hull—Aylmer.

I rise to speak to the motion and respectfully acknowledge that I do so while standing on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I would like to begin by assuring the House that our government is working hard to find a peaceful solution so that travellers can take VIA Rail again, workers can return to their jobs, consumers can be assured supplies of essential goods will be in stock and businesses can again count on the logistics systems that keep our economy moving. I also want to acknowledge and welcome the letter from the RCMP in British Columbia that says they intend to withdraw from the outpost.

We are well aware that these protests are having a significant impact on Canadians, and my thoughts are with all those who are affected, including those who are protesting. The right to protest is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All people have the right to protest in a peaceful manner.

Prior to being elected as a member of Parliament, I took part in many protests. In fact, my first time coming to Ottawa was to protest, and I have on many occasions in my professional life defended people's right to protest.

[Translation]

When we take away people's right to protest, we deprive them of a space where they can express themselves peacefully.

[English]

I therefore stand in solidarity with all indigenous people, both those who are opposing the Coastal GasLink and those who support it. The Wet'suwet'en people have an inherent right to self-determination and have a right to decide who speaks for them. The matter of leadership with the Wet'suwet'en people is for their nation to decide, not for us to dictate.

Reconciliation is a journey and takes a great deal of effort and will by all those who are involved. Reconciliation does not take place overnight. It is an accumulation of years, decades, generations of incidents, actions and attitudes. For 500 years, indigenous peoples in this land have faced discrimination in every aspect of

their lives. It is only through meaningful engagement that those who have been ignored and disrespected for far too long can find a path forward.

Canada's long and painful history of colonialism, the legacy of residential schools, the immeasurable loss of language and culture and the displacement of lands and ways of life for 153 years have rendered indigenous people in Canada second-class citizens on their own lands.

• (1810)

[Translation]

For these people, the result is a loss of governance and control over their lives and their way of life.

[English]

Our Prime Minister and our government are absolutely determined to move forward with reconciliation, but this journey will have challenges and obstacles. The subject of the debate today is one such example. We will face moments in this path to reconciliation when our collective and historical failures are highlighted. This is one such moment. The challenge for us is to address these moments peacefully without further harm, learn from them and work to move forward toward the self-determination that will enable indigenous peoples to control their destiny.

Each day we make choices that either help to reconcile or help contribute to division. The motion presents us with such a choice today. Now is not the time for action that would divide and inflame. Now is the time, as the Prime Minister has said, for "creating a space for peaceful, honest dialogue with willing partners." We believe that in addressing this issue we are given an opportunity to close the gap and heal long-standing wounds. We believe it is essential to address the crisis in a constructive and peaceful way.

In this debate we need to acknowledge the importance of dialogue based on respect, co-operation and the recognition of rights. Perhaps most importantly, in this dialogue we must also learn to listen. We need to look beyond simply getting the trains running and see this for what it is: an opportunity to make progress and a journey toward transformative change. As the Minister of Indigenous Services said last night:

One of the steps necessary to achieve peaceful progress in an unreconciled country is to continue that open dialogue at the very highest levels of government based on a nation-to-nation and government-to-government relationship.

This is what has guided the actions of our government over the past few days.

I would like to remind the House of the views brought forward by National Chief Perry Bellegarde, who said:

I think we need to be patient and see what dialogue will bring.

Our people are taking action because they want to see action. And when they see positive action by the key players, when they see a commitment to real dialogue to address this difficult situation, people will respond in a positive way.

I believe that his words underscore the upside potential of this crisis. If we can resolve this situation peacefully and with mutual respect, we help build trust, and that trust can help shape a stronger Canada for tomorrow. I would suggest to the House that resolving this situation in a peaceful and respectful way will help provide a foundation for continued dialogue and mutual respect, and be in Canada's long-term interests for our society and our economy.

In the final analysis, it is in Canada's best interests, in the short term and the long term, to keep the discussions going in search of a peaceful and long-lasting solution, a solution that may put us further down the true road of reconciliation. I urge all hon. members to vote against the motion before us.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

• (1815)

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred to the end of the time provided for Government Orders on Monday, February 24, 2020.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday at the end of Government Orders.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House at this time, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian ambassador to China, Dominic Barton, the Prime Minister's hand-picked choice for that post, came before the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations on February 5. He spoke about his mandate. He said during his opening statement:

I want to say also that the utmost priority of my goal and objectives is to work for the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, and to seek clemency for Robert Schellenberg. That's right in the headlights, and I think about that every day.

Later in his testimony he said:

Getting to my mandate and priorities in discussions with the Prime Minister and then with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the overall objective is to restore the relationship, but with three priorities, and I would argue, one very important caveat that's in that.

First and foremost is to secure the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, and get clemency for Robert Schellenberg. That is core; that's a priority.

Notice that Ambassador Barton was not just speaking about his own personal priorities, he was speaking about the mandate he had been given by the Prime Minister. He returned to that specific formulation, "securing the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and gaining clemency for Robert Schellenberg", twice more during his remarks.

Certainly Canadians would expect the government to do all it can to secure the release of detained Canadians. However, when I asked about the case of another detained Canadian, Huseyin Celil, the ambassador initially appeared completely unaware of what I was talking about. He then said:

...Huseyin is not a Canadian citizenship holder, we aren't able to get access to him on a consular services side.

Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen, and he has been in prison for a decade and a half in China. It is, frankly, a disgrace that we would appoint an ambassador who is so ignorant of something so basic, and he seemed similarly unaware of Canada's policy in the South China Sea.

This is not principally about Ambassador Barton. It is evident that the Prime Minister gave a specific mandate to the ambassador to secure the release of some Canadians, but not all Canadians, detained in China.

Why did the Prime Minister give Ambassador Barton a mandate to seek the release of some Canadians but not others? Mr. Celil is a Uighur Muslim and a dual national. Some have wondered if racism has informed the decision to omit securing the release of Mr. Celil from Ambassador Barton's mandate.

At a time when China's government denies dual nationality and when religious and ethnic minorities in China, especially Uighur Muslims, face horrific abuses of human rights, it might be convenient to throw this Muslim Canadian under the bus and ignore his fundamental human rights. It might be convenient, but it is deeply immoral and contrary to our values.

I have no doubt that the government, now pressed on this issue, will say that it cares about Mr. Celil, and I fully expect the parliamentary secretary to say that.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, the government needs to explain why Ambassador Barton's mandate from the Prime Minister did not include securing the release of Mr. Celil. It needs to explain the mention four times of three other consular cases, but no mention of Mr. Celil during the introductory remarks.

The government must do more than just say that it cares. It must formally direct our ambassador to make securing the release of Mr. Celil a central part of his mandate. It must direct him to publicly clarify that he regards Mr. Celil as a Canadian citizen.

Will it?

• (1820)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address the issue that has been brought forward by the member of Parliament for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Huseyin Celil is a Canadian citizen, point final. As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have consistently stated, the government continues to be seized at all levels by cases of Canadians detained in China, including the long-standing case of Mr. Celil. Mr. Celil has been in detention in Xinjiang since 2006.

The provision of consular services to Canadians in China is governed by a bilateral agreement that details consular obligations and entitlements of our two countries in order to facilitate the protection of the rights and interests of our citizens. While China has agreed to provide consular access to Canadians who entered China on a Canadian travel document, China has not granted Canadian officials consular access in cases where China does not recognize the individual's Canadian citizenship.

In the case of Mr. Celil, despite repeated and ongoing attempts, Canadian officials have not been granted consular access. The government is deeply concerned about the case of Mr. Celil and will continue to raise his case at every opportunity at senior levels, frankly, as I did myself last spring when I travelled to China on a trip of the China-Canada legislative committee, on which the Conservatives chose not to go.

The government continues to be deeply concerned. Canadian officials will continue to advocate for Mr. Celil and seek consular access to him in order that they can verify his health and well-being and offer him assistance.

It is very well known to us that Mr. Celil is of Uighur ethnicity. Canada is deeply concerned, and any insinuation to the contrary is simply false. Canada remains deeply concerned by the mass detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang based on their ethnicity and religion under the pretext of countering extremism.

We acknowledge the pain and hardship experienced by Mr. Celil's family as a result of his detention. Consular officials are in communication with Mr. Celil's family and will continue to provide support until they are reunited.

Uighurs have been disappearing into detention in China. Getting information about their whereabouts can be incredibly challenging. Publicly and privately, in multilateral fora as well as in bilateral conversations, Canada has consistently called on the Chinese government to address the situation.

Canada has called on the Chinese government to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures immediate, unfettered, meaningful access to Xinjiang.

Finally, I would like to extend thanks to all consular officials working in Ottawa and in our missions abroad, offering and attempting to offer consular services. I have personally been extremely impressed and moved by the commitment they have to their work, which is the best in terms of public service I have ever seen.

Our government will always stand up for Canadians in need of assistance abroad. Mr. Celil will remain in our hearts at all times.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I know the parliamentary secretary and I take him at his word about his personal concern about this case.

I do think it is important to press the question about Ambassador Barton, the Prime Minister's choice, about his testimony and about his account of his mandate. While the parliamentary secretary may make the occasional trip to China along with other members, the ambassador is our most high-profile man representing the Government of Canada in China.

I think the parliamentary secretary would have to acknowledge the damage done when the ambassador makes the kinds of public statements he did. We still have not seen a public statement from the ambassador to clarify that he understands and supports the Government of Canada's position.

I would like to know why the Prime Minister's mandate to him, at least as he accounts for it, did not include any mention of Mr. Celil's case.

• (1825)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, as I said, remains deeply concerned about the ongoing detention of Mr. Celil, as well as over 100 Canadians in detention in China. As with all cases of Canadian citizens detained abroad, our officials have repeatedly sought consular access in order to determine Mr. Celil's well-being.

With respect to Dominic Barton, Canada is fortunate now to have Dominic Barton as our ambassador in Beijing. He has a deep knowledge and understanding of China and its history. He has been actively advocating for Canada in Beijing everyday. He is raising the cases of Canadians detained in China at every opportunity, including Mr. Celil, and working to improve our bilateral relations at the same time, including re-establishing full commercial ties for our farmers and other sectors.

I believe all Canadians and all members of the House should be supportive of these things.

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to follow up on a question I put to the Prime Minister some time ago. It is worth repeating the question I asked at the time. The Prime Minister loves talking about politics, transparency and openness. However, he led the Liberals in voting against our motion calling for the Auditor General to investigate the Liberal infrastructure fiasco.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported on the Liberal infrastructure fiasco. He revealed that in 2017, the Liberals spent only half of the infrastructure money they had promised to invest.

In 2018, the Parliamentary Budget Officer wrote another report calling on the Liberals to release their infrastructure plan. I would remind the House that the Liberals' infrastructure plan totalled \$186 billion. That is not chump change. It is a lot of money. It is Canadians' hard-earned money that they handed over to the government to take care of. Unfortunately, what was the response to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's request? What response did he receive?

[English]

It does not exist.

[Translation]

The plan did not exist in 2018, and we are talking about \$186 billion spread across 30 agencies and departments, in over 50 programs. It is no surprise that there is no trace of the money if there was no plan and the money was scattered all over the place.

In 2019, when the Parliamentary Budget Officer asked for the list of all of the commitments the government had made in the \$186-billion Investing in Canada plan, the government said that it would not be able to provide the data.

The Liberals lost track of the \$186 billion they had promised to invest. That is completely unacceptable. That is why the House voted in favour of asking the Auditor General to investigate the Liberals' fiasco.

Members will recall that 166 parliamentarians voted in favour of our motion, while 152 others, namely all the Liberals who were present, voted against transparency and openness, even though that was one of their mantras in all the election campaigns. They said that they would be open and transparent, that they would open the books, that they would do things differently. They are not doing things differently. In fact, they are doing worse than all the other previous governments. Members will recall that the Liberals were elected on the promise to run small deficits. They talked about a small deficit, followed by another small deficit, and another very small deficit after which they would finally balance the budget.

The reality today is that the Liberals have not only run huge deficits, but also lost track of the money they used to rack up those deficits. I am very pleased that the Auditor General finally agreed to look into the situation. He heard the call of the House and is going to conduct an investigation. We will have the opportunity to talk about that again in a few moments.

Adjournment Proceedings

I look forward to hearing what the Liberals have to say. They are doing everything in their power to appear above reproach, but we saw that, unfortunately, when it came time to show it, they voted against the majority of the House and lost a vote. That is how a minority government works.

● (1830)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a joke keeps playing in my head, but it is better if I keep it to myself. We can talk about it after the debate.

It is a pleasure for me to rise in the House of Commons to speak to the significance of the Auditor General's role.

As everyone in the House knows, the Auditor General provides Parliament with independent, impartial audits of the management of public funds. Through audits, the Auditor General's office provides Parliament with objective, factual information and specialized advice on the government's programs and activities.

This review allows parliamentarians to monitor the government's activities and hold it to account on how it manages taxpayers' money.

[English]

It bears repeating that the Auditor General is not accountable to the government of the day. As an officer of Parliament, he reports directly to the House of Commons with objective information so that members of Parliament can hold the government to account.

The Office of the Auditor General has a legislative basis in the Auditor General Act, the Financial Administration Act and a number of other statutes. In fact, it has a long Canadian tradition. The first independent Auditor General of Canada was established in 1878, over 140 years ago. In 1977, the Auditor General Act clarified and expanded the Auditor General's responsibilities.

In addition to examining the accuracy of financial statements, the Auditor General's mandate was expanded to examine how effectively the government managed its affairs. Importantly, the act maintained the principle that the Auditor General does not comment on policy choices but does examine how policies are implemented.

[Translation]

In 1995, the Auditor General Act was amended to include a specific mandate related to the environment and sustainable development. This mandate is carried out by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development on behalf of the Auditor General.

Our government appreciates the important work and the history of this institution. During the 2018-19 fiscal year, the reference levels of the Office of the Auditor General increased as a result of the greater volume and complexity of the government's operations and transactions.

This funding helped ensure that the office was able to continue meeting service standards, providing accurate and timely information regarding audits and upgrading its information technology systems.

Adjournment Proceedings

As a result, the number of full-time employees at the Office of the Auditor General has increased in order to meet its needs.

I see I am almost out of time, but I would like to add one final point.

[English]

As my colleagues in the House will know, in order to receive additional funding, any officer of Parliament, including the Auditor General, may make a request to the Minister of Finance, and the government regularly considers such requests to ensure that the office can continue to fulfill its mandate efficiently and effectively.

As an office of Parliament, the Office of the Auditor General will then work closely with the Treasury Board Secretariat to develop a submission to access the funding. This is the standard procedure for any department or office of Parliament seeking funding.

Our government is open to having good conversations with all officers of Parliament, including the Auditor General. We want to make sure that our investments are as effective as possible so that the government continues to work effectively for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, it is true that last year's increase in the Auditor General's budget allowed the Auditor General to hire more people.

However, it is important to remember that the government, the Prime Minister, is the biggest spender in Canadian history. The Auditor General's work needs to be more and more comprehensive because more and more money is being spent. More spending means more books to open.

The government had no trouble finding \$50 million to give to Mastercard. The Liberals are blithely using Canadians' credit cards without looking at what they are doing with the money being spent. They have not been able to meet 100% of the request for additional funding the Auditor General made last year based on the criteria my colleague just talked about.

Unfortunately, the Liberals were not able to respond. They did not want to respond. That did not prevent them from running a deficit of nearly \$30 billion this year.

Maybe instead of talking points and a history lesson about the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, interesting though it is, my colleague should have stuck with the joke he wanted to tell me off the top rather than spouting information available to everyone on the Auditor General's website.

• (1835)

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I completely understand why my hon. colleague does not want to talk about the history of the Auditor General. After all, his party's chapter in that history is pretty bleak. The Conservatives slashed the Auditor General's budget.

Since taking office in 2015, our government has not only increased the Auditor General's budget, but also erased the previous cuts. We also made it possible for the Office of the Auditor General to hire 38 full-time people to ensure that all Canadians can get ac-

curate, timely and complete information about government spending.

[English]

PRIVACY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, answers tabled in response to a query from my colleague, the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, showed 38 government agencies reported a total of more than 5,000 incidents last year in which classified or otherwise protected documents were mishandled and stored in a manner that did not meet security requirements. In reality this number is likely much higher as Global Affairs Canada did not disclose any reported breaches, but we know in the past it has mishandled sensitive information many times.

It is disturbing that this ethical disregard for the privacy of Canadians is so widespread throughout the government. Across 38 departments, sensitive information was mishandled 20 times per working day. The ethical bar that has been set by the Prime Minister and his cabinet is so low that this should not come as a surprise.

Disregard for ethics is a top-down problem for the government, where the Prime Minister himself has twice been found to have breached ethics laws. That is a hallmark of the government. It breaks ethics laws, and then tries to cover it up. From illegal vacations on a billionaire's island, clam scam and forgotten French villas to, of course, the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the government's ethical record is abysmal.

When the Prime Minister politically interfered in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin, it became clear that the government and the Prime Minister had no intention of reforming their actions and had thrown any ethical considerations by the wayside, all in the name of re-election.

The Liberals' contempt for ethics has led the Prime Minister to mandate that his ministers hold themselves to the highest ethical standards. However, they carry on their disregard for ethics by continuing to block investigations and awarding sole-sourced contracts to former Liberal MPs. It has gotten to the point that it is almost laughable, but of course it is not. Canadians are losing their confidence in public institutions and believe that there are now two sets of rules: one for the governing class and one for those it governs.

A government ought to operate at the intersection of responsibility and principle, being responsible for its actions and being a proper steward of the trust that Canadians give it to govern both rightly and justly. Further, when a government takes a principled approach to governance, being prudent and doing the right thing, it should have no problem working within the prescribed bounds of ethical law.

There is so much work to be done to restore the public's confidence in their institutions, but the government's negligence in cultivating that trust and its continued ethical apathy are not helping. Canadians deserve better.

Since I asked my initial question in this place, we have found out this week that personal information naming more than 69,000 victims of the government's failed Phoenix payroll system was shared across the government into dozens of departments. It was seen by hundreds of staff who had no business seeing it. More than 69,000 public servants' personal information was inappropriately handled.

This same week, we found out that the Prime Minister again failed to meet his obligations as set out under the conflict of interest code for members when he failed to file his disclosures.

We continue to see examples of failures or an unwillingness to follow ethical rules, and Canadians expect more of the government. They deserve more of the government.

I would like to ask, when will the government start to treat Canadians with respect?

● (1840)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House to follow up on the response that I provided to my hon. colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[Translation]

The government takes protecting Canadians' privacy very seriously. This protection is part of every aspect of our decision-making process. As Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, I have seen how hard public servants work every day to protect Canadians' privacy. Many of them process and study thousands of sensitive government documents, the vast majority of the time without issue, while meeting appropriate security standards.

[English]

This is because the public servants who deal with sensitive information are required to undergo security screening and security training. This is a fundamental exercise. It establishes and maintains a foundation of trust within government, between government and Canadians and between Canada and other countries.

Allow me to provide a bit of background for the hon. member and all Canadians participating in this debate.

All public servants who handle government documents undergo a level of security screening that is proportionate to the responsibilities of their positions. For positions that deal with more sensitive information, requirements are even more robust.

Adjournment Proceedings

Departments are required to renew the security status of employees on an ongoing basis. There are also times when enhanced security screening is required. It is undertaken when duties involve or directly support security and intelligence functions. These extensive processes help ensure the integrity of our system.

Let me stress an important point. Individuals must be officially granted a security status or clearance before they are assigned to a position and before they are granted access to sensitive information, including personal information.

[Translation]

Employees also take ongoing security training to better fulfill their obligations. It is important to note that public servants process a wide range of sensitive documents. Some of these documents may include personal information, others may be confidential cabinet documents, and some may be related to national security.

[English]

The vast majority of these documents are handled securely and appropriately without issue. However, when employees are found to have not followed the appropriate protocols, they are provided with additional guidance and assistance to help ensure that the mistake is not repeated. When it comes to privacy specifically, the Government of Canada also has a framework for protecting Canadians' information.

[Translation]

The directive on privacy practices requires government institutions to develop plans and establish procedures to manage privacy breaches and assign roles and responsibilities to that end. The directive also requires these institutions to report any substantial privacy breaches to the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to answer the question.

● (1845)

[English]

The guidelines for privacy breaches provide explicit guidance as to what is or is not a "material" breach. These are just some of the ways the government is working hard to safeguard the privacy of Canadians. It is of utmost importance to this government, and we will continue to practise due diligence and ensure that the privacy of Canadians is protected.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the robust system that is in place for the public servants who are responsible for handling these files. I talked about a top-down issue that they have. He also talked about the remedial training or support that public servants would receive if they mishandled information.

Given the top-down issue I identified and the several concrete examples I cited of the Prime Minister being found guilty of breaking the rules, will any remedial training be available to the Prime Minister? If not, I would be very happy to help the government create a curriculum that I think would be of great benefit to the Prime Minister and his ministers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the suggestion he has so kindly made just now. I hope we will have the opportunity to discuss it further.

As I said, the government is committed to protecting the privacy of Canadians. The Government of Canada has a very strong investigative and security system and provides extensive privacy training to its public servants. Without proper security clearance, public ser-

vants cannot be in a position where they have to deal with sensitive information.

Let me make one thing clear: The vast majority of sensitive government documents are handled securely, appropriately and without issue. It is also important to note that in the event of a privacy breach, departments must have plans and procedures in place to manage the breach. We can do even more.

[*English*]

Thanks to our targeted plan to manage privacy breaches in our government, I am convinced that we will be strengthening privacy and privacy breach management within policies, guidance and tools.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:47 p.m.)

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