



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

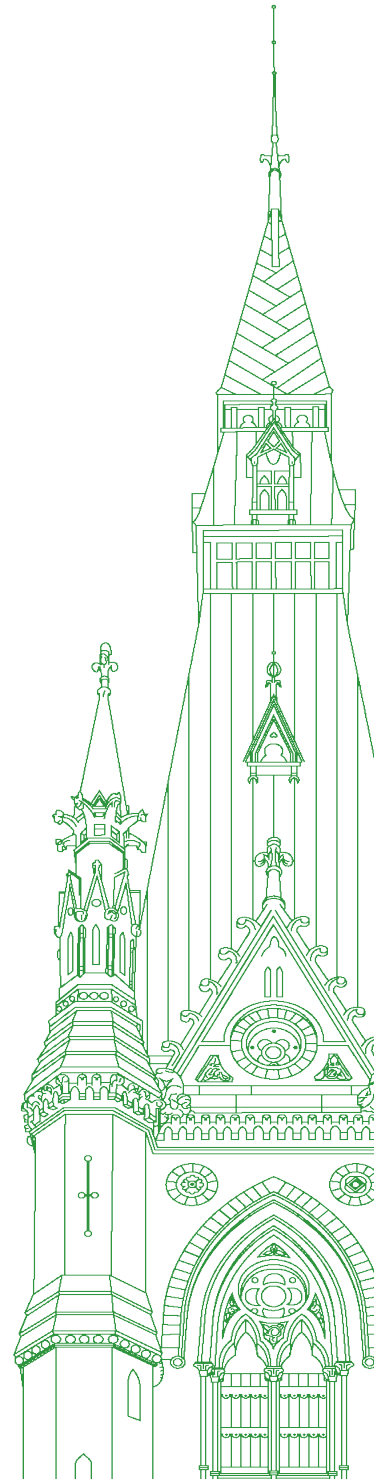
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 30, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[English]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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, virtually since the leader of the Liberal Party became the leader of the Liberal Party, one of the strongest senses of commitment that I have seen in the leader, who is now Prime Minister, is his sense of commitment toward indigenous peoples and wanting to establish that nation-to-nation relationship.

If we take a look at what we have been able to accomplish as a government over the last number of years, we can all share in recognizing the valuable contributions as legislators that members on all sides of the House have made on this very important issue. Members would be very familiar with the calls to action in regard to reconciliation. There are 94 calls to action asking for governments and other agencies to do what they can to move towards reconciliation.

The bill we are debating today, and have debated for a couple of days, is just that. It is one of the calls for reconciliation. I would encourage all members to seriously consider supporting this legislation.

I have had the opportunity and am very proud to represent Winnipeg North. Winnipeg North has an interesting, diverse makeup of people. One of the largest and growing communities is the indigenous community in Winnipeg North. I estimate it is probably somewhere in the area of 18% to 22%, with some areas of the riding having a higher percentage than others. I like to think that, going forward as a community, Winnipeg North wants and should push

for and encourage, wherever we can, reconciliation, by taking the actions necessary to ensure that there is more harmony within our society.

We have such a wonderful, diverse community. For me personally, I think the bill we are debating today will go a long way in being helpful. It does not matter which member of Parliament or which area of the country we represent, the community of Canada will in fact benefit from the recognition of this statutory holiday.

I have taken the initiative, and it is not too often I do this, to quote something from constituents in regard to this specific bill. I have two quotes I would like to share with members. These are from constituents with indigenous backgrounds. I indicated that I would be debating Bill C-5, the need for a statutory holiday, and I asked for their thoughts. I would like to share a couple of the comments I received.

This comes from one of my constituents, who says, "As a parent, we teach our children about the tooth fairy and Santa, and as children, they eventually outgrow these make-believe images and beliefs. Contrasted to racism and some Canadians' lack of understanding of residential schools, Indian-based schools and treaties negotiated with my peoples, which are the cornerstone of our nation's legal foundation, many Canadian children are growing up with a false or make-believe history, which contributes to the latter intolerance we see in hospital beds in Quebec and at the fishermen's wharf in Nova Scotia. Education is the only solution and is needed to create understanding. Understanding is the sunlight where racism and falsehoods die. September 30 should be a day when all Canadian people reflect on our true history and the hardships that first peoples continue to face, in a day focused on culture, language, history, understanding, truth and the united path of reconciliation."

Government Orders

● (1005)

Another constituent, in this case a mother of indigenous background, sent me this. She says, "As stated in the TRC report, reconciliation must inspire indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace and prosperity on these lands we now share. Imagine the opportunities for families, individuals and businesses to grow their understanding and make progress towards reconciliation, to pass this down from one generation to the next. Imagine the events that would be hosted in communities from coast to coast to coast. Reconciliation is every Canadian's responsibility. It is not enough to leave this to certain sectors like education in school. As a government, as individuals, as Canadians, we need to honour the spirit and intent of the call to action number 80 and establish a statutory holiday and enact a day of truth and reconciliation in partnership with indigenous people."

I have a very short quote from her 12-year old daughter who, by the way, had a grandmother who actually went to a residential school. She said, "It would be so much better if everyone could participate instead of just having Orange Shirt Day at school."

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada conducted an extensive public review in terms of what we needed to do during this era of Canada's history where it is really important for us to try to make amends. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission came up with 94 recommendations. If we look at all 94 recommendations, 76 of those fall, at least in part, under federal responsibility. What we have seen over the last number of years is a government, with support from other parties, dealing with issues such as language and child welfare. We have seen budgetary measures to support the principles of reconciliation in different forms.

The call to action we are talking about today is number 80. Allow me to quote from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

Whether it is my constituents or the calls to action, these are good reasons for members to recognize the value. We have seen that in different forms. It was not that long ago that I was talking about recognizing Filipino Heritage Month in June, or standing in the chamber calling for members of Parliament to recognize a Sikh Heritage Month in April. On many occasions I have stood in my place and talked about the importance of heritage and the designation of days, weeks or months.

We are saying here that we need to have a statutory holiday to recognize the true value of what has taken place in order for us to move forward and be part of reconciliation in a positive way, to reflect on the many speeches in which we talk about Canada's great diversity, and to understand and appreciate the value of what Bill C-5 is offering all of us. Today is an opportunity to send a strong, powerful message to our indigenous peoples.

● (1010)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would say that there is pretty much unanimous support on this one.

I am just wondering about some of the other issues that were in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, and also about the relationship that we have with indigenous peoples across the country.

I come from a riding with 14 first nations communities across northern Alberta. One of the frustrations that is often brought up to me is around those band members who live off-reserve: how they incorporate with the folks who live on-reserve, and why services that are available on-reserve are not necessarily available off-reserve. Many of these questions are brought up to me.

I recently had a meeting with Denise from my riding, and she brought it up. The other thing that she was frustrated with was the lack of enforcement of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. Her community recently got a "cows and plows" settlement, and she said they do not know where that money is going. She would really like to know if the Liberals will be enforcing the First Nations Financial Transparency Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there are numerous issues. It has taken us many years to get to the point we are at today, and not all issues will be resolved overnight. I believe that we need to move more on an urban indigenous strategy and how that would fit into society, moving forward.

It is important that we have faith and trust in indigenous leadership and encourage it wherever we can. I appreciate the question, and the suggestion from the member that he would be—

● (1015)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Bill C-5 is really exciting and interesting. As we know, it resonates with many Quebecers because they have always been close to indigenous peoples and they want to maintain that closeness.

When we talk about the right to redress in the bill, we are talking about the right of victims to get redress for the harm that was done to them. This finds its expression in the duty that the state has to satisfy the victims by restoring their past status, fairly compensating them for the harm done or offering them the opportunity for rehabilitation.

What does the government have to say about the Bloc Québécois motion? That is exactly what we are asking for, redress and an apology from the federal government.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am not sure. Is the member talking about yesterday's motion?

Today we are talking about truth and reconciliation. The bill that is before us is a significant step in terms of recognizing how important it is that all Canadians have a role to play in reconciliation. I would think that is a step forward, as I would anticipate that we would see many different activities on the statutory holiday that would be educational for all of us.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with having a national day for truth and reconciliation. It is an important step in the right direction. However, what is even more important is for Canada to recognize the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am wondering how long it is going to take for that piece of legislation that is so needed, and we are seeing that across Canada right now.

When is that going to be tabled?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government, in fact Liberal members of Parliament, have been very clear in support of it. I suspect it is only a question of time. There was an attempt previously that made it fairly far; unfortunately, it got stalled at the Senate level. I appreciate the question.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be here today to speak in support of Bill C-5. I wish to honour the important work of sister Georgina Jolibois that initiated the development of the bill, and to commend the government's effort to ensure that this legislation is realized. This is a critical piece of legislation: a small piece of justice as we begin to move forward learning about the true history of Canada. These are stories I also possess as somebody who has had to work through her own intergenerational impacts.

My mother was from Wood Mountain Lakota First Nation in Treaty 4 territory in the province of Saskatchewan. She was a street kid who ended up in child welfare after my grandmother abandoned her and her younger brother in a motel room in Moose Jaw when she was five years of age. Due to the fact she was the eldest child, my grandmother left her in charge of her younger brother with specific instructions to ration a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter and jam for the five days she had to leave them in search of money.

There were no supports for indigenous women in the 1930s. There were no social safety nets. There were no human rights. Sexism was rampant and racism was fierce. My grandmother had no one to turn to, especially as an indigenous single mother, so she left her children. I remember my mother telling me how she, along with my uncle, gleefully ate the loaf of bread, resulting in a complete depletion of their food ration in only one day. Hungry, scared and alone, my mother decided to contact the Children's Aid Society. At five years old, my mother had become street savvy and, having no other relatives to turn to at the time, contacted the Children's Aid Society. My mother and her brother needed to eat. They were hungry.

It is beyond most people's imaginations, especially those persons who have been privileged with human rights, how a mother could leave her young children in a motel room. It is beyond the minds of many privileged persons to genuinely appreciate what events in my mother's life led her, at five years of age, to understand how to deal with her and her brother's hunger. My mother knew who to call, and how to work with the bureaucratic child welfare system, to get

fed. She had learned to survive just like my grandmother, who had absolutely no resources or supports to assist her. I am sure my grandmother's struggle rang so loudly that she could not hear the musical and healing reverberations of the jingle dress. The jingles were too faint and muzzled to hear above the noise of the struggle she faced every day. There was no time for healing or inner reflection. She was hungry and alone while the Canadian government wilfully perpetrated acts of genocide, making it impossible for her to survive.

My grandmother's choice to leave her young children in a room did not stem from a lack of love. My grandmother started living on the streets as a child and eventually became an alcoholic in adult life as a way to deal with the violent genocide she experienced as an indigenous child and then woman. Dislocated from her family for reasons directly impacted by the Indian Act of 1876 and the institutional disruptions to my family, including residential schools and the child welfare system, she did not have anyone or anywhere she could turn to. She was not even considered a human being by the Canadian government under the 1876 Indian Act, which defined a person as any individual other than an Indian. This violent colonial history has often been invisible to settler populations, due to the masterful way governments have hidden their dirty little secrets of genocide. This has supported a level of cognitive dissonance in Canada that has paved the way forward for ongoing human rights violations against indigenous peoples.

It is not surprising that many indigenous people suffer from unresolved colonial trauma today, and continue to suffer as a result of the wilful human rights violations perpetrated by governments. One only has to look at the number of indigenous children currently in care, more now than at the height of residential schools, to see the long-term impacts that violating indigenous people's fundamental indigenous human rights has had on indigenous nations.

● (1020)

The contemporary child welfare system, or what I like to refer to as the dumping ground of society, is there so that no one has to see the legacy of cultural, social and family disruption that has resulted from colonization.

Understanding the impacts of colonialism in Canada is imperative if we are going to move forward in a manner that honours all persons. Going back in our shared history and reflecting on historical disruptions to better understand why things are the way they are today is imperative. For Canada, it is about exposing truth and working through all the cognitive dissonance that keeps it sick. For families and communities that have experienced genocide, it is about relearning how to be together as families, communities and nations. This is the journey I have had to follow while trying to understand my grandmother's reasons for causing such pain towards my mother, whom I love dearly. This has been a very difficult journey for me.

Government Orders

As a result of my family history, for most of my younger years, I grew up without extended family. In fact, we were so devoid of family connections that my parents asked a close friend if we could call him “Uncle” Larry. He was not a biological uncle; however, they wanted us to experience having family outside of our own immediate unit. I remember how excited I was to meet Uncle Larry. It was my first time ever being able to call somebody “uncle”, and I remember talking about my Uncle Larry to my friends. Finally, I was able to participate in playground conversations about weekend family engagements with extended family members. I was not close to Larry. In fact, if I saw him today, I would not even know what he looked like. I do not even remember his last name, but our relationship made me feel normal.

I was pretty much without extended relations until my mother's side of the family had a reunion when I was 13 years old, and I was reunited with my aunts, uncles and cousins who had been separated by child welfare. It felt like I had known my relatives my whole life. Our instant closeness flowed through our blood members' shared stories of resistance, struggle, survival, hope and pride in our ancestors.

We are the descendants of Sitting Bull: one of the most revered leaders in North America. Our nation's history, in fact, has become a Hollywood story, often romanticized in movies like *Dances with Wolves*, which chose a Caucasian woman to star as the leading Lakota lady. Painted in brown theatrical makeup, she was swept off her feet by the white soldier who was part of the U.S. army. They fell in love, and she willingly chose to leave her family to build a new life with this heroic, white settler. I vividly remember that, for at least two years after *Dances with Wolves* was released, any time I mentioned I was Lakota, I would frequently hear, “Wow, *Dances with Wolves*.” That comment would make me nauseous, because it epitomized the myth of the kind white settler who lived side by side with indigenous peoples resulting in a respectful, lasting and loving relationship: the great colonial lie.

This myth makes a mockery of the violent colonial attacks against the Lakota Nation, and contradicts historical accounts passed down orally by my ancestors who settled in Wood Mountain after the Battle of Little Bighorn. This battle between the U.S. army and indigenous nations, including the Cheyenne Nation, occurred as an act of resistance to the wrongful dispossession of our ancestral lands. Led by Chief Sitting Bull, indigenous people bravely fought to defend our lands from the U.S. army. Under the barbaric racism and violent leadership of General George Custer, white settlers attempted to encroach on our territory.

Although I often hear about the sad death of Custer during this battle in history books, rarely do I hear any discussion about the many women and children who were violently murdered while the army attempted to attack one of our camps. To me, Custer symbolizes the greedy white settler with a compromised moral character who stole our lands.

• (1025)

Our story was not of great white saviours, but of a massacre led by the racist American army under the leadership of the violent and savage General George Custer. Canada has now celebrated over

150 years as a nation on stolen indigenous lands and talk about reconciliation with indigenous peoples seems to be the new trend.

However, there is no reconciliation in the absence of justice and it is becoming clearer that the present Liberal government is unwilling to move beyond mere rhetoric. I have become increasingly annoyed each day watching the news, seeing my indigenous brothers and sisters fighting for justice without action by current governments. Who really needs to reconcile?

In the case of the Lakota nation, our only goal was to stay on our lands, maintain our families and our culture. We did what any community members would do if a group of people came onto their land, forcing them to move without cause. Of course, their first action would be to defend their lands. Moreover, if the same party continued to violate their human rights, tensions would continue to rise, resulting in a need to take action. That is exactly what we did.

The experience of my beautiful Lakota nation was violent, exploitive and marked by grotesque violence against our women and girls by our colonizers. Great leaders such as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, our women and girls, children, grandmothers and grandfathers were murdered or forced to flee our ancestral land to make room for the settlers. We were forced off the very lands we had lived on since time immemorial. Our beautiful way of life was disrupted by violent colonialism, and it is not over.

In Canada, governments continue to violate our ways of life with wilful and violent acts with almost a complete disregard for our fundamental indigenous human rights. That was the kind of violent colonialism my grandmother experienced throughout her lifetime. She was born into colonial violence and as a result never lived a life where she was honoured as a life-giver and a human being. Unlike the main character of *Dances with Wolves*, she could not wash the brown off her skin and enjoy all the privileges that one's pigment can offer. She had to endure the violent racism that was perpetrated against her every day. In spite of all her barriers, she survived. It may not have been a story of *My Fair Lady*, but she survived. That does not speak of her weakness, but to her resilience as an indigenous woman finding her way through daily human rights violations.

My grandmother was a human being, deserving to be loved and to experience joy. This was made impossible through the insidious violence and racism enacted by the Indian Act of 1876. She did not have many choices. When people are stripped of the basic necessities they require to have joy such as housing, food and safety, growing into a whole person becomes difficult. That was also true for my grandmother, whose life journey was defined by the systemic impoverishment of indigenous people that began with the dispossession of our lands. Based on justifications rooted in the doctrine of discovery, they deny our right to self-determination and continued to wilfully violate our fundamental indigenous human rights. It is exactly that belief, enforced through colonial policies and legislation, that left my grandmother homeless.

I only met my grandmother twice. The last time was when my mother welcomed her to stay in our home prior to a lung operation that would end her life. My mother, in spite of being abandoned in a hotel room, took her mother home. She shared love, compassion, laughter and care with my grandmother in her final days, in spite of her own struggles that resulted from her being a child in care. My mother's kindness came from a place of non-judgment, a place of love and a place of compassion.

● (1030)

I remember asking my mom how she could take my grandmother into her home when she had abandoned my mother as a child. She responded by saying her mother was pretty much on her own when she was 12. She was completely alone in the world. She had no rights and no way to support herself. There were no social safety nets at the time and she did the very best she could with the tools she had.

That was the most powerful teaching of forgiveness that I have ever heard in my life. As I sit here and think of my grandmother, the very thought of the isolation she must have felt brings me to tears. How sad that due to racist, paternalistic and misogynistic policies, my grandmother was never given an equal chance to have joy. Instead, her life consisted of finding ways to survive the obstacles of human rights violations that continue to be enforced under the Indian Act and within Canadian policies.

My mother deeply understood the realities that my grandmother faced and instead of becoming resentful, she focused on the love her mother demonstrated while she was pregnant with her. Although my grandmother was an alcoholic, she sacrificed her addiction to alcohol to support a healthy pregnancy with my mom. I remember my mom saying that in spite of the fact that my grandmother was an alcoholic, "she abstained from alcohol while she was pregnant with me, gifting me with all the physical tools I needed in life to succeed and it was for that reason that I would always love her". My mother understood that as a result of colonizations, relationships became messy and that ethical decisions extended beyond an individual's choices because injustice left individuals without choices.

I often wonder if people could physically see what a heart looks like when it has been broken or wounded. Maybe it would encourage them to be a little kinder, a little more gentle, a little less judgmental, a little more loving and a little less hurtful. Unfortunately, the life of my grandmother reminds me that when we completely dehumanize a person, we can begin to justify unthinkable acts and are able to turn a blind eye to human suffering.

I think I carry some of her pain and sorrow in my blood memory. It is the kind of intergenerational trauma that brings on feelings of being unlovable and unworthy of joy. These are the words we learned in Canadian institutions that tried to assimilate us. I still hear those voices in my mind and heart at times, but I have found ways to overpower those voices. It is the resiliency I inherited from my ancestors, the kind of resiliency that was emulated through my mother's spirit.

Unlike the trauma that overtook my grandmother's life, my mother managed to overcome great obstacles. She became a statistical miracle and because of that, I was afforded the good life. Can

anyone imagine living through the trials and tribulations that my mother did and making it out sane? This was in spite of the genocide and the gross human rights violations she experienced early on in life. She was one of the first indigenous psychiatric nurses in Saskatchewan, an award-winning researcher, a scholar and a social justice warrior who assisted in changing child welfare legislation to support former children in care and rights for persons experiencing mental health issues. My mother was a woman of beauty and grace.

I honour my mother and grandmother today. It is a day, one day of remembrance, one day to honour. We need that day, as do thousands and thousands of Canadians who are open to learning about Canada's true and consistently evolving history in our relationship with indigenous peoples. There is no reconciliation in the absence of justice, so I am here to state loudly that we need to honour this little piece of justice.

● (1035)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have often said one of the great honours of being a parliamentarian is to hear speeches like that in this House. While we have to do it virtually during COVID, I want to thank the member opposite for reminding us of the shameful and troubling history that we inherit in this country, but the important and critical work we have to do going forward.

I listened to what can only be described as a story that is as powerfully painful as it is joyful in terms of where it is leading us as a country and in the transformation in one family's life. I ask the member opposite, as we move toward recognizing this day, what she would see as important ways to mark the day, what children should do, what government members should do, what educators should do, what all the parts of Canadian society should do to make sure that this day of reconciliation is not a day of reconciliation, but in fact the celebration of the achievements of reconciliation that I hope we see in the days ahead.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize it is a day of reflection, and part of what I was sharing today are some of my reflections and many of the reflections I have on that very important day, but we need to go beyond that day.

I was trying to share is that it is a day, but that does not change the living realities of indigenous people in this country, whether it be defending our lands or me as an indigenous woman walking down the street being hypersexualized. We need to make sure that day flows into what we do every day, and that this is an important day for us as indigenous people to reflect on our experiences, but for fellow Canadians and allies to learn about this history and think of ways to do better.

Government Orders

• (1040)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the member on a great honour to her mother. I wonder what advice the member would say her mother might have to newcomers, who are maybe coming from very difficult situations, so they can make it just like her mother did.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, first I would like to point out that for newcomers coming to Canada, one of the first steps in inviting new people on Turtle Island is teaching them the true history of this country. I know many people in my riding, which is a very diverse riding, who are shocked when they find out true Canadian history. That is a first step, but it goes beyond people to how we need to change systems to ensure people can thrive and not just survive.

This is the story of my grandmother at a time with no social safety net, and now during COVID we see an inadequate social safety net. It is more than inspirational stories, it is about putting forward programs and services and legislating human rights so everybody can have what they need to survive and thrive.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague and her family for their resilience and strength in the face of those hardships.

The first nations and the Inuit and Métis peoples have suffered greatly. The creation of a day of commemoration is a first step. I am thinking of various events, such as the kidnappings perpetrated by Jacques Cartier, General Amherst's idea to give indigenous people blankets infected with smallpox and Macdonald's genocidal actions with the highly racist 1876 act. I do not want to name it because its title is racist. That law is still in effect.

In addition to a day of commemoration, does my colleague not agree that real and sincere reconciliation will not be possible unless the 1876 act is completely reformed?

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, this is, like I said, a little piece of justice. It is critical we fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The kinds of acts of genocide that have been perpetrated against indigenous peoples are very clearly linked to willful and violent human rights violations.

However, we need to do more than just adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we need to act on it and we need to respect it in the kinds of decisions we make in the House of Commons or in all places of power and decision-making so that indigenous peoples throughout these lands can finally have their minimum human rights recognized.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I felt very compelled today to rise and share what a deep honour and privilege it is to serve beside the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. Her existence in this space is an act of resistance.

In her sharing today, she talked about the importance of land and every child becoming an adult and working through their traumas. I

am wondering if the hon. member could expound on the connection between the dispossession of land and the apprehension of children as it relates to her experience and those of indigenous peoples from Turtle Island all the way to Palestine.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, culture is rooted in land. When they dispossessed us of our land, they dispossessed us of our power. Our language and teachings come from the land. If we look at what is happening across the country right now, indigenous people are rising to defend their lands. That is our lifeblood.

All we have left are these small parcels of land. We have less than 1% of the total land mass in the country, yet governments continue to infringe on our human rights, violently taking us off our lands and trying to maintain this neo-colonial project to integrate us. We just want to be on our land. We want to stay on the little bit of land we have, which is less than 1% of the total Canadian land mass right now. We want to live our way of life, our culture and pass the teachings down to future generations.

When we dispossess people of their lands, we dispossess them of their identity and culture. That is what we are seeing around the country. They are doing what anybody would do if somebody came onto their lands, without cause, and took them out to push forward a political and economic agenda. We need to stop that.

• (1045)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I was deeply moved by the member for Winnipeg Centre. I am always interested and moved by the personal stories she shares, which are important perspectives to hear in this place.

I hear from indigenous people in my riding that reconciliation is dead or it is just a word. What would the member see as the priorities to move on next from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations? It is important to have this day, to recognize it and commemorate it, but what would she like to see us move on next as a Parliament?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, this is a little piece of justice, but it is important to remind everyone that these were calls to action, not calls to discussion. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission laid out 94 calls to action very clearly. We have to go beyond discussion and flowery words about forming relationships. We develop relationships, respectful relationships, through action.

If we are really serious in this country about reconciliation, then we have to fundamentally change the way we do things, and it must be rooted in human rights, the kind of human rights that are articulated through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The frustration comes from that. On one hand, we hear talks of reconciliation, but then when we look at the news, we continue to see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): My apologies but we need to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin today by acknowledging we are on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation, and it continues to be home to many first nations, Métis and Inuit people.

We hear about land acknowledgements a fair bit these days when we go to different events and the like. It is very important that we treat this not as a checkmark, as we continue to talk about issues and about a national day of truth and reconciliation, but as an opportunity to learn the history of the lands.

Last night, as I was preparing for today, I took some time to learn more about the history of this region. This is an important part of what the bill can be, going forward. We are talking about a day, but it is more than just a day. It is about ensuring that Canadians, in working with indigenous communities and peoples across the country, learn the true history, about which the member for Winnipeg Centre so eloquently spoke. I really do appreciate having heard from the member for Winnipeg Centre. She had much to contribute to this conversation. Then we can build our path forward as a country.

This bill would create a national day of truth and reconciliation on September 30 each year. It would be a federal statutory holiday. Creating this day responds to call to action 80 of the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. We have a commitment to respond to all the calls to action that fall within the federal space, and this is one step forward.

It has its roots, though, in the private member's bill that was brought forward by a former member of this place, Georgina Jolibois. I really want to thank her for all the work she did to bring this forward. The work that we did on her bill in committee in the last Parliament set the base for where we are now. I had the honour to be the chair of the committee that studied her bill. It was a great starting place for a lot of learning.

I would like to point out, because I forgot to mention it in advance, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mount Royal, who will also have much to say on the bill.

I hope we can build on all the work we did in committee. We can take that as a starting place when this bill goes to committee and move quickly together on it. From everything I have heard in the debate, we are in a good place to get it there and will be able to move quickly to ensure we can celebrate and commemorate this day on September 30 of 2021.

I would also like to thank all the witnesses who came to committee and shared their knowledge. As we heard from the member for Bow River, who also served with me on that committee in the last Parliament, it was a place for tremendous learning for the members. It is worth thanking the people who took the time to inform us in that way.

As one step forward on the path to reconciliation, the bill is important as it creates a pause, a chance for us to educate, remember, commemorate and to think about where we want to go as we move forward.

Government Orders

When I was in high school, residential schools were still open. In fact, through most of my time at law school, residential schools were still open. However, I never learned about them. We never talked about them. We learned so little about indigenous history and indigenous leaders. This was a tremendous loss. We need to do better. We need to ensure that we take this opportunity so this essential learning is there and is recognized. We need to take that time.

I listened to the member for Cariboo—Prince George speak about growing up. He lived just down the street from the residential school, which is at the heart of Orange Shirt Day. He did not know about the school. He did not know what was happening. He talked about his process of learning more about it and about this day being a difficult one. It is going to require us to rethink parts of our history, a history about which we had not been taught. It is important we hear from people like the member for Winnipeg Centre and about the hard, honest truths.

• (1050)

I mentioned some of the previous speakers in this debate. I want to highlight the fact that this has been a special debate for this place. So often it is partisan in here. We do not truly speak with one another and share. Then there are those moments, those bills where we have a debate and we get to hear and share stories, learn from one another and come together. This debate has been one of those times. I want to thank everyone who has participated. I look forward to working with all of them as we go forward to ensure we move the bill through this place quickly and on to the other place.

I mentioned the members for Cariboo—Prince George and Bow River. The members for Fredericton and North Island—Powell River also told very personal stories about their children, their histories. They talked about the importance of recognition and respectful learning as a path forward for their children, that dignity. I would like to thank them for sharing that. It was important to have that part of our history.

When we talk about this day, it is important to think about the words in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report:

All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the residential schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of Indigenous nations who continue to make such a strong contribution to Canada, including our very name and collective identity as a country. For Canadians from all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together.

We have spent a lot of time in this place talking about residential school history and the need to tell the truth about our history. However, that statement also includes the path of hope, the fact that it is about reconciliation and offering a new way of living together. It highlights the need to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of indigenous nations.

During the study of the bill put forward by Georgina Jolibois in the last Parliament, there was much discussion about how this day should be commemorated. On that point, I find that the words of the president of ITK, Natan Obed, go to the heart of some of this conversation. He said:

Statements by Members

It would be, in our position, much better for the day to be positive and be forward-looking than to be a remembrance day of sorts for certain grievances in the past—although history will be, of course, a part of the overarching conversation. I know there are direct links between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and this particular piece of legislation. I don't want to lose those entirely, but I do want Canadians and first nations, Inuit and Métis to have the ability to talk about the positive and the great strength that we bring to Canadian society, and the great leaders we have within our communities, and the visions we have for the future as Canadians but also as indigenous peoples exercising our right to self-determination.

It highlights the need that as we talk about our history, we also remember to learn more about strong indigenous leaders and their contributions to the country.

I would like briefly talk about why September 30 is important, an issue that has come up in the past.

September 30 is an important date because September was seen, as was told by Phyllis Webstad, as the crying month. That date is at a time when kids are back in school, so it is an opportunity for teachers to speak with their students about these issues. At the committee, some people suggested that perhaps we should look at appropriating another day, for example Remembrance Day. That is not the right way to go. The debate I have heard so far in this place has centred very much on the idea that we should move forward with the date that has been chosen.

I look forward to working with members from all across this place to ensure we can move quickly to make this day a reality.

• (1055)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for recognizing my speech last week. She talked a lot about sharing stories. I want acknowledge that when we look at this day, what we are asking is for indigenous people to share stories that are intimate, painful and, often, from their lived experience. I am wondering how do we create a safer environment where we are not asking indigenous people to bleed to educate non-indigenous people.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question because it is very important. We need to take direction from indigenous people at how best to approach this because the burden should absolutely not be placed on them to retell this honest and difficult history.

This has to be something that we work on together. We need to work together to find the appropriate way to commemorate and respectfully tell the story in a way that does not push down indigenous voices while we are trying to create a safe space. We need to find a way that actually empowers those voices and the sharing of those stories that, at the same time, acknowledges this should not be an extra burden for indigenous people. I absolutely think that we need to very much take our cues from indigenous people in our country as to how best to approach this. That should be an important part of our discussions as to how we will commemorate it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have three minutes and 30 seconds after Oral Questions for questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the month of November will mark the 10th anniversary of Financial Literacy Month, with this year's focus aimed at helping Canadians learn how to manage their finances in challenging times.

During Financial Literacy Month, virtual events will be ongoing to encourage Canadians to better educate themselves in areas such as emphasizing the 10 things to know in times of financial uncertainty, including protecting oneself from financial fraud, building good financial habits and having a plan to repay borrowed funds.

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, IC Savings credit union is an outstanding, long-time community partner, which is assisting its clients in learning how to budget, educating them on new products and assessing their financial goals. Since the onset of the pandemic, it has helped its clients access many of the federal relief programs, such as CEBA for their business and CERB, if they lost their job due to COVID-19.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Financial Literacy Month, I encourage all Canadians to go to Canada.ca and access fantastic resources by searching for “Financial Literacy Month”.

* * *

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week a truly remarkable thing occurred. For the first time in roughly 50 years, sockeye salmon have returned to Okanagan Lake. In the 1950s and 1960s, flood control work, which included dams, the channelling of rivers and other irrigation water system infrastructure, destroyed the natural salmon habitat. It has taken over a decade of hard work by the Okanagan Nation Alliance to rebuild and restore this precious river system so it can again be navigated by sockeye salmon. These are very important first steps to restoring indigenous fisheries in our region.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance was created in 1981 and includes the Okanagan Indian band, Upper Nicola Indian band, Westbank First Nation, Penticton Indian band, Osoyoos Indian band, the Lower and Upper Similkameen Indian bands, and the Colville confederated tribes with respect to areas of common concern.

I would ask all members of this place to join me in recognizing the hard work and success of the Okanagan Nation Alliance in reaching this historic milestone.

WINNIPEG NORTH

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since day one this government has been working very aggressively with different types of organizations and levels of government to fight the coronavirus pandemic. I think it is time we recognize some of those partners that have been working along with government.

Today, I would like to tell members of some of those organizations that are working in Winnipeg North, where we have Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre; Mount Carmel Clinic, and its Ann Ross Day Nursery; The Day Nursery Centre; Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre; the Bear Clan Patrol; CEDA, the Community Education Development Association; David Livingstone School; North End Women's Resource Centre; Tina's Safe Haven; Little Stars PLAYhouse; and Access NorWest.

Organizations throughout our great country have really stepped up to help the federal government work with different levels of government to make sure the health and well-being of Canadians is that much better off.

* * *

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to thank the countless number of first responders, who sacrifice so much, not just in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni, but across Canada. October 20 marked the 10-year anniversary of the tragic loss of ambulance paramedics Ivan Polivka and Jo-Ann Fuller. Ivan and Jo-Ann were both from the Tofino station. They were returning from the hospital in Port Alberni when their ambulance was involved in a single-vehicle accident. This week community members gathered online and in person to honour their memory and pay tribute to their compassion and courage, and the care they provided for their fellow citizens.

While Ivan and Jo-Ann were special, and they are still greatly missed after 10 years, they were not unique. Thousands of first responders answer our calls for help in emergencies throughout Canada on a daily basis, often at risk to their own safety and well-being.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and all members in the House join me in remembering Ivan and Jo-Ann, and in thanking every first responder, past and present, for their service to their communities across our nation.

* * *

BEATRICE MOREIRA-LAIDLAW

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I take the floor with a heavy heart as our community has lost a dear friend and leader Beatrice Moreira-Laidlaw.

Affectionately known as “Queen Bea”, Beatrice had recently been appointed general manager of the Port Credit BIA, but she was central to our community for years in so many other ways. Whether she was offering young people their first opportunity to volunteer at local events, championing local businesses or simply greeting neighbours with a smile from her signature go-cart, Beatrice brought inspiration and kindness to everyone she met. She was so fundamental in creating the Port Credit we know and love today, the lighthouse landing was fittingly named “The Queen Bea Look-out”.

Beyond all she did for us, she was a proud mother to her son Josh. Her family meant everything to her.

Beatrice will be profoundly missed, and our community will never be the same. We will honour her by ensuring that Port Credit remains resilient, vibrant and full of life. Her vision and legacy will live on.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, great leaders are revealed in times of great crisis. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed the Liberal Prime Minister's great shortcomings.

People undoubtedly remember his 2015 campaign promise to run small deficits. He said it was not a big deal because budgets can balance themselves. As a result, the Prime Minister ran record deficits when things were going well. We must not forget all of the Liberals' ethical violations.

Then the pandemic hit. The Prime Minister was too slow to close the borders, to provide Canadians with rapid tests and to sign contracts to supply vaccines to Canadians.

The WE scandal broke and, instead of being transparent, he propped Parliament because the Liberals absolutely did not want us to find out the truth.

Then this week, he told us that he thinks the sky is the limit when it comes to spending. He has no fiscal anchor and no respect for the middle-class workers who are paying for his out-of-control spending.

Current and future generations of Canadians, even Canadians who have not yet been born, will have to pay the price for a Prime Minister who does not know how to count and who cannot be counted on.

* * *

SENIORS

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we all know, seniors have been hit hard by the pandemic, and especially by the lockdown measures. After speaking with a few seniors from Brome—Missisquoi, I realized that, for many of them, isolation and loneliness are having as much of an impact as the virus.

Statements by Members

The current context has brought new meaning to the use of digital devices, which allow them to stay in touch with their friends and family. This is why I was so pleased to be able to distribute new tablet computers to a number of seniors in Bedford and Stanbridge East over the past few weeks. Thanks to this donation, a few hundred seniors will be able to participate virtually in their favourite activities and maintain that important contact with their loved ones. This project was made possible by the new horizons for seniors program, which provides valuable assistance to our organizations every year.

I want to thank everyone who participated in the 2020 program and benefited from our government's support.

I want seniors in Brome—Missisquoi and all across Canada to know that we are here for them. Together, we will get through this crisis.

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[English]

THE SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Salvation Army, Khi Community, which serves families in Milton, believes in supporting those who need it most. This pandemic has affected families across Canada. When parents were worried about putting food on the table or affording diapers and formula, our Salvation Army doubled its efforts to get families in Milton the help they need.

It was not always easy. In the early months of the pandemic, collecting donations and raising funds was very challenging. That is why our government committed to supporting the work of community-serving organizations such as the Salvation Army. That is why we launched the emergency fund for food security, committing \$100 million to tackle food insecurity during these difficult times, a piece of which, through Feed Ontario, went to support the great work our local Salvation Army does.

This means that Ruth Hickman, captain the SAKC, and her team can deliver more fresh food boxes and ensure they meet the diverse needs of our community. It means families will be able to purchase Christmas presents for their kids through the Khi Community gift card program. To the Salvation Army, Khi Community in Milton, and to Salvation Armies across Canada, I send my thanks for all the amazing work done every day.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues its second wave, so too continues the second wave of job losses. The Liberals say they are going to create a million jobs, but they are on the way to destroying thousands of jobs in my riding due to increased carbon taxes, the clean fuel standard and their upcoming single-use plastic ban.

Now is absolutely not the time for measures that will force the closures of plants and factories that employ thousands of hard-working Canadians and are making products to help keep us safe during this pandemic. This includes takeout containers used by

restaurants across the country, and plastic knives, forks and stir sticks, such as those used right here in the House of Commons.

The Liberals' abysmal response to this pandemic will only be made worse by these measures, and I implore them to reconsider, knowing the thousands of lives and livelihoods that are at stake if they proceed as planned.

* * *

• (1110)

[Translation]

RÉGINALD BÉLAIR

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a former MP from the area of my hometown, Kapuskasing, passed away on March 3.

From 1988 to 2004, Réginald Bélaire represented the riding of Cochrane—Superior and later Timmins—James Bay.

In his first speech to the House on December 3, 1988, this nature lover said that “this northern land is very welcoming; it is an ideal place to relax, to fish, to hunt, to go cross-country skiing or ice-fishing, etc. It has wide open spaces that ease the mind and challenge us to get to know nature better.” These words are still true today.

In 2004, as deputy speaker of the House of Commons, Mr. Bélaire said to his colleagues, “Nevertheless, I would ask you to be generous with each other and cooperate a little in order to maintain some decorum in the House.” That still stands up as good advice today.

Mr. Bélaire's passing is a painful loss to his family, his wife Jo-Anne and his two daughters Annie and Julie.

Farewell Mr. Bélaire and thank you for serving Canada.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Deputy Prime Minister provided the closest thing to a fiscal update that Canadians have seen in over a year. However, instead of announcing anything resembling a plan on getting our economy back on track, she was content on hammering home the same Liberal message as always: more spending. Canadians are left wondering what their return on investment is going to be.

Canada's unemployment rate is the highest in the G7, with nearly 12% in Alberta. Millions of Canadians are still out of work. Businesses across Canada are on the brink of bankruptcy. Canadians need a plan to deal with this pandemic and improve the economy. For Alberta, there are energy projects awaiting this government's approval that would bring thousands of jobs to an industry that the Liberals have decimated in the last five years.

We need a results-based plan. We need a government focused on jobs. We need a government that cuts red tape to help businesses grow their business instead of punishing them with barriers.

* * *

COVID-19 TESTING

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, the self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister talks a lot about applying a gender lens to every policy decision. The reality is that a quick application reveals that his failure to prioritize rapid tests is failing women.

Women make up the majority of residents in long-term care and the vast majority of staff. These care homes have been the epicentre of this pandemic. Experts have been clear that access to rapid testing is key to mitigating outbreaks and fatalities in long-term care. We are now well into the second wave with numbers surging, yet our highly vulnerable senior population still has no readily available access to rapid testing. In fact, Canada is months behind other countries when it comes to procuring and approving rapid tests.

Women living and working in long-term care do not need feminist lip service. They need immediate supports to ensure their health and safety.

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FANSHAWE COLLEGE'S CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight the incredible work being done in my riding by Fanshawe College's Centre for Research and Innovation.

Dr. Abdulla Mahboob and his team have worked on a research project that involves custom-made peptide inhibitors that can halt the spread of the coronavirus within infected patients. As with many viruses, COVID-19 has mutations that increase resistance to treatments. The Fanshawe team's technology is a non-infectious replicon of the virus that can be easily modified to test the effectiveness of new treatments against COVID-19 and other viral outbreaks in the future, and this technology is faster and safer than ever before.

The applied research and high quality of work produced in our Canadian college research centres sometimes go unnoticed by the government. Dr. Mahboob and his team are now ready to take this development beyond a college lab and need help to make it more accessible for treatment testing centres around the world. I call on everyone to share this development and help spread the word of this talented team. We are extremely proud.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

QUEBEC

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, 25 years ago Quebec came within a hair's breadth of becoming independent in the 1995 referendum. It will not take another 25 years for Quebec to make the obvious decision to take total control of its destiny.

Let us seize the opportunity to point out that what our adversaries would like to see die is tenacious, whether it is the very idea of independence that continues to inspire one third of youth, or political vehicles like the Bloc Québécois, which many thought was dead and buried, not so long ago.

Let us seize the opportunity to again start the conversation about the Quebec of tomorrow, a Quebec with a green and innovative economy, especially in the regions, and a generation that is ready to hear about this vision for the first time.

Let us seize the opportunity to promote and also defend our language, our culture and our identity, which, more than ever before, are in conflict with Canadian culture. That is why we do not have to wait another 25 years.

* * *

● (1115)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, this weekend we will see many images of deformed, warty, greenish women, and I am, of course, referring to the modern imagery of witches.

Throughout the course of history, women have been burned at the stake and tortured for being witches. In reality, they were herbalists, midwives or just too independent for the patriarchy's liking. I am sure after being shut away, beaten and left to sit in their own filth, these women did look misshapen, and purple and green with the marks of violence.

Today we might not literally burn women at the stake, but we still do not believe them when they are abused. We still punish them when they speak truth to power, a shout-out to the member for Vancouver Granville, and we tacitly shun women who own and use the power that is innate to all of us.

Oral Questions

On the occasion of this rare blue moon Samhain, let us push aside those who cause us to doubt our magic and celebrate those who, with humility and strength, manifest great things for the world. To all the witches out there, keep rocking it, blessed Samhain and happy Halloween.

* * *

MOVEMBER

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to speak to a cause that is very close to my heart. On November 1, we begin the annual Movember campaign to spread awareness on men's health specifically related to prostate and testicular cancer, men's mental health and suicide prevention. These issues affect us all.

In Canada, 75% of people who die by suicide are men, and one in 10 men will suffer from serious depression in his lifetime. Seeking help is a sign of strength, and having open conversations is critical. The mental health of young men needs more attention, and I applaud the good work that organizations like Home on the Hill, Krasman Centre and CCSYR are doing in my riding of Richmond Hill to increase awareness.

I invite all of my colleagues to take part in Movember. I challenge my male colleagues to grow a mo and save a bro. If they cannot grow a mo, I ask them to spread awareness, share resources and continue the conversation on men's mental health.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is clear Canadian drone systems were diverted to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in violation of the Arms Trade Treaty, the Wassenaar Arrangement and Canadian law. There is lots of reputable photographic and video evidence.

Here is what we know: On April 23, the Prime Minister spoke with Turkish President Erdogan. In that conversation, did he agree to President Erdogan's request to approve the export of these drone systems from Canada to Turkey, yes or no?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I think everyone in the House knows, our government is committed to a strong and rigorous arms export system. That is why we acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty. Human rights considerations are now at the centre of our exports regime. When we became aware of possible uses of military equipment that had been exported to Turkey, the minister immediately ceased export permits, suspended them, and they are under review at this time.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government did not answer my question. Exporting these drone systems contributes to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

My question is simple and I will ask it again: Did the government agree to President Erdogan's request and bypass officials to approve the export of these drone systems, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I believe I did answer the question. We are committed to a rigorous arms export regime. We follow all our international commitments and even more through legislation passed by this House of Commons. Everything we do with respect to our arms exports follows international law, and we are subject to no undue pressure from any external forces.

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[Translation]

UKRAINE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT 725

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been nearly 10 months since Ukraine International flight 752 was shot down. The victims' loved ones want justice for the 85 Canadian citizens and residents who perished.

When will the government listen to these families and impose sanctions on those responsible? When will it follow the democratic will of this House and impose sanctions on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran?

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge to the member opposite and to the House that we are very concerned with the activities of various hostile state actors as it pertains to their activities around human rights and their impact on Canadians. We are vigorously reviewing, constantly, the criminal legislation that allows for the listing of certain organizations.

With respect to the particular regime he refers to, we have in fact listed a number of its proxies as terrorist organizations. We will continue to act in the best interests of the safety of Canadians.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, not only has the government failed to impose sanctions in regard to the downing of the Ukrainian airliner that killed so many Canadians, but the families are now being revictimized. People like Hamed Esmaeilion of Richmond Hill are being threatened, bullied and harassed by the Iranian regime right here in Canada.

When will the government take seriously the threat of foreign influence operations run here in this country by Iran, by China and by Russia? When will it get serious and use the full power of the Government of Canada to shut these operations down?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree completely that any activity directed toward the families of the victims of that terrible tragedy of the downing of that airliner is outrageous and unacceptable.

I want to assure the member opposite that the national security establishment and our law enforcement agencies are vigorously engaged on that issue. We will do what is necessary to protect those individuals, and we share in the member's denunciation of that activity on Canadian soil.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, two months ago, Russia used the chemical weapon Novichok to poison opposition leader, Alexei Navalny. Two years ago, Russia used that same chemical weapon to poison people in the U.K., one of whom died. Two weeks ago, Europe and Britain imposed sanctions on Russian officials for the poisoning of Navalny.

The government says that it believes in multilateralism, but when given the opportunity often does not act accordingly. When will the government join our allies and impose Magnitsky sanctions on the Russian officials responsible for the poisoning of opposition leader Navalny?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the member knows that Canada has strongly condemned and will continue to condemn the attack against Alexei Navalny, who had been poisoned with a chemical nerve agent. We thank Germany for its steadfast support of him through this process. We strongly condemn this outrageous attack. Russian authorities have to explain what happened so that those responsible may be held to account without delay. The use of chemical weapons is abhorrent and unacceptable.

Canada joins the international community and will continue to stand with Mr. Navalny and his family in the search for justice.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government finally tabled its report explaining why it prorogued the House over the summer. I read the report, but I still do not know why the Liberals shut down Parliament. I still do not know why the prorogation lasted six weeks instead of 24 hours, if the sole purpose was to adapt our work in the House to the realities of the pandemic. I still do not know why it took six weeks for them to come up with a throne speech that was nearly identical to the previous budget.

My memory fails me. Could the government remind me what, exactly, happened on August 18 when it decided to shut down Parliament?

[English]

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

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since day one the government's and the Prime Minister's focus have been combatting the coronavirus pandemic. We have put in a multitude of different programs that have really had a positive impact on all Canadians in all regions.

We prorogued the session because it was very important for all of us to remain focused and work collaboratively on doing what Canadians want us to do, and that is to put in our best efforts in fighting the coronavirus.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, when something is urgent, you do not take six weeks, you take 24 hours.

There were two words missing from the report on the prorogation. The words I heard were "WE Charity". The Liberals forgot to say that it was convenient for them to shut down the four committees that were looking into a Liberal scandal. They forgot to mention that they were looking to kill time for six weeks so that people would stop talking about WE Charity.

Plus, they are still trying to stall the committees to cover up the scandal. Why can they not be honest and admit that they shut down Parliament because of WE Charity?

• (1125)

[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, the House of Commons, for the first time since 1988, sat during July and August. We actually sat more days in the summer-time than we lost through prorogation. I know members of the opposition might say technically we did not sit as the House of Commons, but we all sat on the floor of the House of Commons. There were literally hundreds of questions and opportunities for all opposition parties to hold the government to account. The reality is that we will continue to be focused on combatting the coronavirus.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Logan's, a long-time live music venue in Victoria, announced this week that it had to shut its doors for good. Logan's was a beloved watering hole where people came together to talk politics, listen to live music and go to the Sunday Hootenanny. I have heard from countless small businesses just like Logan's that are struggling to stay open, and Victoria is facing the impending loss of many of the places that make our community what it is. Logan's will be missed. We need to support these small businesses.

Why are small businesses like Logan's still waiting on the government to give them the kind of help that would keep them afloat?

Oral Questions

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue about that local live venue and the importance of this venue. By the ongoing compliance with public health guidelines, Canada's theatres and live venues have been doing their part to keep Canadians safe during the pandemic, but these cancellations have had an impact on the businesses. We recognize the importance of ensuring the viability and that we have a strong, robust industry. We have committed through emergency funds \$500 million to help maintain jobs and support this business community. We will continue to be there and continue to work for a robust recovery.

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HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canada had a severe housing crisis before the outbreak of COVID-19, but due to the severe economic impacts of the pandemic, many more Canadians are at risk of losing their homes. They need the federal government to help, yet in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway an agency of the government is ordering the Still Creek Housing Co-op to raise its rents by over 5%.

Will the Liberals instruct the CMHC to cancel this policy that will hurt many single-parent families, low-income individuals, disabled folks and seniors?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this government through the national housing strategy has actually restored lapsed funding agreements with co-ops to sustain the rent geared to income program that the Conservative government was letting disappear under its watch.

Regarding the co-op in question, I would be happy to sit with the member to review what CMHC has done around re-establishing those subsidies, but in response to COVID, this government is now taking the unprecedented step of launching the rapid housing initiative, a \$1-billion initiative to acquire, renovate and provide emergency housing immediately for cities across this country. We look forward to continuing to work with Parliament to achieve on this file.

* * *

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, Canada has the highest unemployment rate of all the G7 countries. Unfortunately, Canada is the only G7 country that does not have an economic recovery plan. Unfortunately, Canada still does not have a government that knows where it is going in matters of public finance. It has no budget and no economic update. What is worse, the Prime Minister said this week that spending is not being regulated. We suspected as much, but at least now he has finally admitted it.

Could the Prime Minister tell Canadians that he is aware that when his government spends recklessly, sooner or later, our children and our grandchildren will have to pay the price?

[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, as I am sure the member is aware, in the last number of months, the government has engaged in many different ways, with different levels of government, to work collaboratively on a restart program, amongst many other programs, to ensure that Canadians as a whole are in a much better position to combat the coronavirus and its impacts.

We are looking to the official opposition and others to work collaboratively with the government so that we can continue to be there for Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the lengthy silence that preceded the parliamentary secretary's answer is very telling. Obviously, the government has no idea where it is going with regard to public spending.

Meanwhile, the Government of Quebec already has an economic update in place. Yes, the Quebec government is running deficits, but it has a goal. The Quebec finance minister said that the budget would be balanced by 2026.

What is the federal government's plan?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I would say to the hon. member is that if his house was on fire, I would tell him to save the people inside and put the fire out. The Conservative approach seems, instead, to be to shut off the hose over the concern of the future price of water.

We entered this pandemic with the healthiest fiscal situation in the G7. We have used the fiscal firepower we have to help families keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. We have used that fiscal firepower to help keep the doors open at businesses and workers on the payroll.

Canadians deserve to have a government that will commit to getting them through this pandemic, no matter what it takes. That is exactly what we are going to deliver.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week the money laundering inquiry in B.C. said the RCMP does not have enough resources and officers to fight it.

Dirty money bought up billions of dollars' worth of B.C. real estate in 2018, inflating home prices by 5%. The C.D. Howe Institute says that dirty money laundered into Canada could be over \$100 billion a year.

The public safety minister was the minister for organized crime reduction. He has known about this problem for years. When will he finally take money laundering and fighting organized crime seriously?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for a great question that gives me an opportunity to remind the member that during the last four years of the Conservative government, they slashed the RCMP budget by over half a billion dollars and closed all the integrated proceeds of crime units.

By contrast, and it is a sharp contrast, we have invested over \$172 million restoring the ability of the RCMP, FINTRAC and CRA to establish enforcement teams. We have worked with the Province of British Columbia on this matter. We have created new offences. We are actually investing in dealing with the very serious problem of money laundering and restoring the very unfortunate cuts made by a previous Conservative government.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, this minister has been in power for half a decade, so he should stop blaming everyone else. He should stop pointing fingers and actually do his job, because I would think he would get the big picture here, as a former police chief. It goes beyond legal casinos in B.C. China-based transnational cartels, connected to the Chinese Communist Party, have been operating underground casinos in B.C. and Ontario. It looks like foreign interference in Canada. Money laundering to fund organized crime is tearing Canadian families and communities apart. This is a real threat to Canada.

When will the minister actually do something, stop talking—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member points out that this is a problem right across Canada. In fact, Canada used to have 12 integrated proceeds of crime units that were staffed by excellent and qualified RCMP officers who conducted those investigations, until the Conservatives closed all 12.

We have begun to restore those cuts and to replace those officers with a significant investment in the RCMP to ensure it now has the capacity to do that important work. I appreciate the member's newfound interest in this, but the Conservatives' record speaks for itself.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, Loblaw's, Metro and Walmart are increasing fees to suppliers for the privilege of selling to their grocery stores. On Wednesday, the CEO of Sobeys announced that his grocery chain would not increase fees to farmers and processors. He said, "I don't

think it's healthy ...some of these behaviours are just plain bad for Canada."

When will the government step up like Conservatives have, call this out and side with Canadians like Sobeys has?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to see grocers impose these costly fees, which fall on the thousands of Canadian food processors who are working hard to feed Canadians and support their communities amid many challenges. Independent grocers, food producers and processors and their workers have played a critical role during this pandemic. We share the concern of Canadians about fair market practices, and we are committed to ensuring that Canada has the right conditions for all businesses to thrive.

• (1135)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, gouging fees by grocery giants could put farmers and processors out of business in the middle of a pandemic, putting Canadians' jobs and their food security at risk. The government should tell Canadians that it will take action now: not tomorrow and not next week, but now. The government needs to call out this unfair competition practice like the Conservatives have.

When will the Liberals show leadership for our farmers and help everyday Canadians with their grocery bills?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the House that we are following the situation very closely with my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, and also with my colleagues from the provinces. This is a very important issue that would fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces, and this is why we will facilitate the discussion while we will be meeting many times in November through our almost weekly FPT meetings.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, at yesterday's meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Auditor General reiterated that she does not have the budget to scrutinize all the new pandemic spending. That is troubling. She reiterated that she will not be able to analyze the \$343 billion in new spending unless she gets additional resources. That makes no sense.

Interestingly, the Liberal Party seems to be fine with that. We cannot let the government spend hundreds of billions of dollars with no oversight, especially not in light of the WE Charity scandal.

Oral Questions

The Auditor General is asking for \$31 million, which is very reasonable.

When will she finally get the resources she needs to do her job?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me start by assuring the new Auditor General of my full collaboration and that of the President of the Treasury Board. Our government is committed to supporting her important ongoing work.

As the Auditor General told the committee, she is feeling very positive about the work that is going on between her office and the Department of Finance.

We pledged to make sure her office has the resources it needs. We will have more to say in due course.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals awarded an untendered contract worth \$900 million to their friends at WE Charity. They awarded another untendered contract worth \$237 million to Frank Baylis, who was still a Liberal member of the House just last year. How many other similar contracts exist that we just do not know about?

The Auditor General is asking for \$31 million to scrutinize the \$343 billion the government has spent during the pandemic. Her office has requested a budget increase five times in the last five years.

Aside from furthering the interests of the Liberal Party and its good friends, could the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is a great question.

After Stephen Harper's Conservatives cut the Auditor General's budget by nearly \$6.5 million, we took steps to restore that funding.

In budget 2018, we invested over \$41 million in additional funding for the Office of the Auditor General. Thanks to that increased funding, that office was able to add the equivalent of 38 full-time employees to the team.

As I said in my previous answer, we are very encouraged by the discussion between—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

* * *

[English]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, the pandemic has clearly led to an increase in violence against women, in the form of both domestic abuse and human trafficking. While Canadian women are facing these grim realities, women in unstable areas of the world face unthinkable threats

to their safety and security. Unfortunately, Canada's leadership has been called into question when it comes to responding to these threats, in particular due to the lack of women peacekeepers who are available for deployment.

When will the government pick up the slack and take these issues seriously?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question.

No form of gender-based violence is tolerated in our country, and we are going to continue to work with Canadians to end it in every form.

Our government has made progress with the first-ever federal strategy to prevent gender-based violence that will support survivors and families. We know there is more work to be done, and that is why we have committed to a national action plan to ensure that anyone facing any violence has reliable and timely access to protection and services, no matter who they are or where they live.

Due to COVID-19, we have seen additional funding of over \$100 million to help women in need, and that—

• (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are speaking about the number of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. It is embarrassingly low. We are nowhere near our target of 25% of women in the Canadian Armed Forces by 2026. When women are caught in conflict zones, it is essential that women peacekeepers are there to offer compassionate and empathetic support.

What is the government's plan to meet this need and show Canadian leadership in peacekeeping efforts?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member who raised the question. We need to increase the number of women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

If we want to increase the number of women in peacekeeping, all of us, as allies, have to increase the number of women, and we are working very hard to increase our numbers. In fact, the current commander of the NATO training mission in Iraq is Jennie Carignan, and she has done fabulous work.

We will continue to increase our numbers and have an impact on peacekeeping operations.

ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, for someone who has nothing to hide, the Prime Minister is going a heck of a long way to cover up in the WE scandal. He threatened an election, he shut Parliament down for six weeks, and in his latest move he has paralyzed the finance committee with a 25-hour, 171,000-word, one-month-long filibuster. Rambling speeches this week ventured into a Liberal MP comparing the WE scandal documents that have been blacked out to sacred texts, like the Torah, the Bible and the Quran. That presumably means that he wants to black out sections of those texts as well.

Which ones would he like to black out?

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, it is interesting when the member talks about filibusters. I sat in this chamber when the member spoke for 14 hours on the budget. He talked about the stones of the chamber and all sorts of things that, some might say, were somewhat interesting.

As much as the Conservatives want to focus their efforts and concentration on WE, who are we to say that they cannot do what their priorities are?

What I can tell members is that this government's priority is to work for the health and well-being of Canadians and our economy. We are going to remain focused on the coronavirus and fight it.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, a big difference is that when the member for Carleton filibustered it was to expose corruption. The Liberals are filibustering to hide their corruption.

This week at the finance committee, the display by the member for Guelph where he likened the Bible, Torah, Quran and other sacred texts to the Liberals' blacked-out corruption documents is disgusting and, frankly, quite stupid. We know that, for this Liberal government, corruption is sacred.

Does the minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the member to please refrain from using unparliamentary language.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, does the minister agree that this language was wrong and that it was hurtful to Canadians of faith?

Will he apologize to the House and ask the member to do that same?

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, in my time I have heard Conservative members filibuster. When they talk about filibusters, I think they need to look in the mirror. It is important for us to realize what is taking place is a government that is focused on working collaboratively for those who want to work collaboratively on the number one priority of Canadians, which is the coronavirus and minimizing the negative impact it is having on our society. We look to the Conservatives to join with

Oral Questions

us and start working collaboratively, whether it is in committee or in the House.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week the environment commissioner told us that the risk assessment system for the transportation of dangerous goods is flawed, with incomplete and outdated data. At the same time, the Transportation Safety Board watch-list highlighted that uncontrollable movement of train incidents is on the rise, the same incident that killed three CP workers in February of 2019 with trains carrying the same dangerous goods that blew up in Lac-Mégantic. This is beyond unacceptable. What these watchdogs are telling us is that the next accident is around the corner.

When will the minister finally take action before he has to once more share his condolences with the families and communities affected?

● (1145)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we welcome the publication of the Transportation Safety Board of Canada's "Watchlist 2020", which provides key recommendations for the overall improvement of Canada's transportation system.

We are pleased to see the Transportation Safety Board of Canada recognize the significant progress made by the department in substantially reducing the backlog and addressing past safety recommendations, but we understand we need to do more. We share the Transportation Safety Board's commitment to advancing the safety of Canada's transportation system and take its recommendations seriously. We will never hesitate to take the necessary actions to continuously improve safety.

[Translation]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development released a report this week revealing that the risk assessment system is based on incomplete and outdated data.

The following day, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada's watch-list highlighted that the number of unplanned or uncontrolled movements is climbing. These are the same incidents that killed three CP workers in February of 2019, with trains carrying the same dangerous goods that caused the accident in Lac-Mégantic. We are being warned that the next serious accident is around the corner.

When will the minister do something to prevent the next—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Transport Canada has taken concrete action in response to safety issues identified on previous watch-lists, including implementing many measures to strengthen rail safety, such as implementing stricter rules to secure trains and reduce the risk of uncontrolled movement of railway equipment.

We published the locomotive voice and video recorder regulation to provide accident investigators with the insight into the sequence of events leading up to rail accidents. We will listen to the Transportation Safety Board and act on its recommendations, because rail safety is of fundamental importance to this minister and the department.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on October 7, our government announced it was moving forward with its commitment to ban harmful, single-use plastics as part of its plan to achieve zero plastic waste by 2030. However, for many Canadians with disabilities, plastic straws are essential for drinking. Without access to bendable, durable plastic straws, the simple act of taking a drink can become more challenging and potentially dangerous.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please share what steps our government is taking to ensure the needs of Canadians with disabilities—

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

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint John—Rothesay for his strong advocacy for Canadians with disabilities. Our government is taking ambitious action to eliminate plastic waste and pollution, including through a ban on harmful, single-use plastics.

We will engage with Canadians with disabilities as we move forward to ensure their needs are reflected in our approach. We will ensure no Canadian who needs a plastic straw for accessibility or medical reasons will go without. We will always protect our environment and advance the rights of people with disabilities.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are hardships at the Canada-U.S. border due to buck-passing by the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Health.

One example is when Darren tried to cross to the United States to visit his brother. He was turned around by U.S. customs, yet still required to quarantine for 14 days. What followed was buck-passing from public safety to health, only to learn, too late to help Darren, that appeals are to be made to PHAC.

To the Minister of Public Safety, how is it that U.S. billionaire executives clear the border, while regular Canadians like Darren face nothing but chaos?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise the member that we took very strong action to protect the health and safety of Canadians by imposing very significant restrictions at the Canada-U.S. border that accomplished a number of things. They allowed for the facilitation of the passage of trade goods and essential workers at that border, and at the same time, we placed severe restrictions on non-essential travel.

We have been working to resolve issues where individual Canadians have been impacted by those measures. Those measures are important and it is also important we work with local health authorities and our provincial and municipal partners to ensure the health and safety of Canadians. That is what we have been doing from the outset and we will continue that work.

* * *

● (1150)

HEALTH

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, one week ago the new PMPRB regulations and guidelines were announced. These changes have been expected for quite some time by patients and patient groups. These groups warn that, without serious revisions to the draft guidelines, new life-saving drugs like Trikafta will not be released here in Canada. Unfortunately, the proposed changes do not reflect the concerns communicated to the government.

Why is the Liberal government letting down patients and families once again?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada has among the highest patented medicine prices in the world and these high prices negatively affect the ability of patients to access new medicines.

In August 2019, we announced the final amendments to the patented medicine regulations. This is the first substantive update to the regulations in more than 20 years and the member knows that new guidelines were just released about a week ago. These amendments will give the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board new tools to protect Canadians from excessive prices of patented medicines.

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was talking to an Edmonton travel agent named Matthew. He is worried. His business has been devastated by the pandemic. He is desperate for help. I asked him what one thing he would like to see the government do for his industry. He told me that we need to have rapid testing for COVID, widely available in Canada. It is already widely available in other countries. It will save the travel industry.

I am asking this for Matthew: When will Canada catch up to other countries on rapid testing?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to tell the member that just since October 21, there have been 1.5 million rapid tests shipped around the country: Ontario, 531,924 units; Quebec, 577,896 shipped this week; in B.C., 18,576; and Alberta. The list goes on and on. The orders are arriving and they are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the A to A railway is a \$22-billion project. It would open up markets for Alberta and Yukon. We need these jobs, not government handouts. However, these days the Liberals seem only interested in green-lighting projects for their friends. The A to A project should not have to subcontract Baylis Medical to get this Prime Minister's support. Will the Prime Minister affirm his support for this project; and on what day will we see that happening?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that in Canada it is time to build up, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank is an important part of that plan. Our plan is creating a million jobs and building strong communities through investments in infrastructure like public transit, clean energy, broadband and affordable housing for indigenous peoples and northern communities alike. Our government knows that investing in infrastructure for communities for growth for Canadians is important. Unlike our Conservative friends, whose leader in the previous government campaigned on a promise to cut \$18 billion from the infrastructure program—

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

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, week after week, I rise in the House to call for farmers to get the compensation that Ottawa promised after betraying them in free trade agreements. Week after week, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tells me that it is coming. The weeks have now become two years.

When will the government deliver the compensation it promised dairy farmers for the next few years? When will it reach an agreement with poultry and egg farmers and with processors? Why force them to wait for years for the money it promised?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure you that our commitment to supply-managed producers and processors remains strong.

Oral Questions

We are committed to proceeding with the second compensation payment for dairy farmers by the end of the year. We will also be announcing the type and scale of the compensation package for poultry and egg farmers for the first two agreements with Europe and the trans-Pacific region.

• (1155)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, we keep getting the same answers.

Agricultural co-operatives had a good program, the deferred tax program, which helped them access capital to reinvest in their businesses. This program expires at the end of the year, and the government refuses to tell the Standing Committee on Finance whether it plans to renew it. The co-operative movement plays a critical role in Quebec's agriculture and our food sovereignty.

Will the government confirm today that the program will be renewed and that it will not abandon agricultural co-operatives?

People are worried.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that we recognize the importance of the agricultural sector to our economy in all its forms.

We have made it very clear that producers and processors will be a major part of our recovery plan. I can say that this tax provision for agricultural co-operatives is currently being studied.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government continues to leave Canadians behind. Dairy farmers in North Okanagan—Shuswap and across Canada need certainty to continue to make valuable contributions to our economy and food security.

In 2019, dairy producers were promised compensation for concessions the Liberals made in trade agreements. First-year payments were made, but no certainty has been provided for the remaining seven years, nor were any details on concessions made in the CUSMA trade agreement.

Why has the minister failed to deliver certainty of support for Canadian dairy farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again I want reassure my colleague, all farmers under supply management and the processors that we still stand strongly behind our commitment to full and fair compensation for all of them.

We announced \$1.75 billion for dairy farmers. The first payment was made less than 12 months ago, and we will proceed with the second compensation payment this year. We will also make an announcement around compensation for poultry and egg producers.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I often say, Beauce is a launch pad for SMEs. I want to talk specifically about one local business, and that is Garage Robert Carrier in Saint-Hénédine.

Despite its sincere desire to keep its head above water during the pandemic, this small business faces one major obstacle. It is located in a rural area where Internet access is unreliable. Dozens of other SMEs in my region are in the same predicament. This business cannot grow the way it would like to.

Will the government wake up and come up with a real plan to get rural areas connected? When will that happen?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

Obviously, every household in Quebec and across Canada needs to be connected to the Internet, including those in Beauce, a region that we are very fond of.

My colleague, the Minister of Rural Economic Development, is very much aware of this issue. What is more, this morning, I had the opportunity to talk to the Quebec minister of the economy. Of course we want to collaborate with the Government of Quebec on the issue of high-speed Internet access.

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government promised to connect rural Canadians. Earlier this year I sent out a survey to analyze cellular service in my constituency. An alarming 92% of households stated that they are dissatisfied with cellular service. Clearly the plan is not working.

Can the minister inform the 92% of my constituents how to contact emergency services if they cannot make a phone call?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too understand the importance of connectivity. We understand that Canada's economic recovery depends on broadband connectivity in every household and every business across the country.

Federally funded projects are supporting connections of a million households across 900 communities, including 190 indigenous communities. It is interesting, though, that the Conservatives and the NDP voted against budget 2019, which included our connectivity program.

I look forward to working with the member opposite and all members of the House to get all Canadians connected.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

There have been long-standing reports of a lack of support for the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces when they have had to face issues in the workplace, such as harassment. The minister was mandated to work to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have a workplace characterized by professionalism, inclusion and a value for diversity. As part of that commitment, he was to work with the senior leaders of the Canadian Armed Forces and defence team to establish and maintain a workplace free from harassment and discrimination.

Could the minister share with us the work that the Canadian Armed Forces is doing to establish a harassment-free environment?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government takes allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously. No one should feel unsafe at work, especially in the Canadian Armed Forces, but we know that we still have a lot more work to do to eliminate these types of behaviours. That is why we launched the path to dignity and respect, a strategy for long-term culture change to eliminate sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

We will not stop until all members are able to perform their duties in an environment free from harassment and discrimination.

* * *

● (1200)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, many Royal Canadian Legions across my riding have expressed financial concerns since the outbreak of COVID. The legions continually support veterans in these difficult times. Branch No. 8 in Rocky Mountain House contacted the Minister of Veterans Affairs and was told that an aid package was in the works, but that was over a month ago.

Legions are in need of financial assistance. When will the government help legions and our veterans?

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the well-being of our veterans and their families is a top priority. We fully understand the vital role that legions play in supporting veterans and their families in all communities. That is why I am proud to share with the House that Bill C-4 was passed in the House a few weeks ago. It includes \$20 million to support organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion and other partners.

Our response to the pandemic is ongoing, and we will ensure that our partners who support veterans will continue to have what they need to continue to do their great work.

HOUSING

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, Edmonton's token funding allocation for rapid housing shows how little the Liberal government knows about the realities on the ground. Alberta is experiencing an economic downturn like it has never seen before. Homelessness is on the rise, with camps forming in multiple locations; drug-related fatalities are soaring; and there is a growing mental health crisis. The situation is going to get worse with the onset of winter.

Given the incredibly difficult circumstances, can the minister explain why Edmonton received only 3.4% of funds, a disproportionately low share?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very proud to work with Mayor Iveson on delivering these critical dollars, and with Susan McGee from Homeward Trust, one of the most effective programs across this country in combatting chronic homelessness.

This funding is divided into two streams. Both streams are accessible to Edmonton, but Edmonton was given block funding to deal with the immediate crisis of homelessness through the COVID crisis. It can also apply to the other stream. I will remind members that this is the first installment of many installments to come on this file.

I would be happy to work with the member opposite to find out what properties are available for acquisition and deployment toward any chronic homelessness. I am very proud of the \$1 billion we have put on the table.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, there have been 414 reported shootings just in Toronto this year. On Monday, a young man was gunned down outside a Scarborough LCBO. Five years of Liberal soft-on-crime policies have delivered these results, but the government refuses to take responsibility.

How many GTA residents need to be shot for the Liberals to admit that their plans are not working?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is a very important question.

In the last Parliament, we made significant investments, \$51 million, to enhance CBSA's ability to enhance its screening detection and training around firearm smuggling. We also invested \$34 million in the RCMP's integrated criminal firearms initiative, which the member voted against.

Law enforcement and our border service officers are doing their job, but they need more help. That is why we committed in the throne speech to bring forward legislation that would give us new authority to keep guns out of the hands of criminals by stopping the illegal smuggling of firearms at the border into Canada, as well as the trafficking of firearms through diversion and—

Oral Questions

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

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including in my riding of Surrey Centre, are rightfully excited about emerging opportunities afforded by exciting innovations in clean tech. Investments in clean tech are a win-win-win, allowing us to help the oil and gas sector grow, create good-paying jobs and middle-class jobs, and greatly reduce our greenhouse emissions.

Could the parliamentary secretary of innovation kindly update the House on how the government plans to invest and support this crucial industry?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Surrey Centre for his continued hard work.

Last week, we announced a \$100-million investment in the clean resource innovation network to accelerate the development and adoption of innovative technologies that will lower environmental impacts. Just yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources launched the \$750-million emissions reduction fund to reduce methane and GHG emissions through greener technologies. The investments—

● (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, new evidence shows Wescam sensors, manufactured since April and exemptions to the Turkish embargo, ended up in Nagorno-Karabakh, used by Azerbaijani forces. Last month, Global Affairs suspended arms exports to Turkey while investigating allegations that Canadian sensors were diverted to Azerbaijan, but now the evidence is clear: The arms trade treaty requires Canada to prevent, detect and stop brokering of military goods to users other than intended customers and to stop exports used against civilians.

Will the minister release detailed results of his own investigation and cancel all arms exports to Turkey?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the weeks, we all know that there were allegations made regarding Canadian technology being used in the military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. As soon as those allegations were heard by the minister, he immediately directed his officials to investigate these claims, and that investigation is ongoing. In line with Canada's robust export control regime, and due to the hostilities that are ongoing, he immediately suspended exports to Turkey that were relevant in this issue to allow us to assess the situation.

It gives me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

* * *

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, this spring, a freighter dragged its anchor and collided with another ship in Plumper Sound. Two weeks ago another freighter dragged its anchor and almost ended up on a beach in Ladysmith.

Communities are fed up with the excessive noise, lights and exhaust from these freighters, and are concerned about the environmental damage they are causing.

Will the government mandate improvements at the port of Vancouver, ban the export of U.S. thermal coal and the use of a 200-mile limit to control freighter traffic and end the use of Southern Gulf Islands as a parking lot for freighters?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member is probably aware, the new interim protocol for anchorage was developed in partnership with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the Pacific Pilotage Authority and local communities, and was instituted to respond to the immediate concerns of coastal communities.

The government's long-term strategy is aimed at improving the management of anchorages outside public ports with a view of ensuring long-term, efficient and reliability of the supply chain as well as mitigating environmental and social impacts.

I want to thank the member for his advocacy on the file and assure him that the well-being of coastal communities is of utmost importance for our government.

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POINTS OF ORDER**DECORUM**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will note that there is another point of order as well, which you might not know about through Zoom.

I want to raise the issue that it is very difficult when our Standing Orders are ignored on the Zoom channel. I think all members know that interrupting and heckling another member during question period is against our Standing Orders.

Initially, I had hoped that moving virtually would have improved this because we would be able to turn off a microphone. Unfortunately, on Zoom, when someone seizes the moment to interrupt another member, it is only the voice of the person heckling that we hear. Because of the electronic nature of our virtual gatherings, we cannot hear the person asking the question and answering it. This happened numerous times today.

Perhaps, Madam Speaker, your office should consider going the direction of the U.S. presidential debates, taking control of the mikes and being able to ensure that members cannot open their mike, disrupt proceedings and violate our rules.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the member for pointing this out. We will definitely take it under advisement and see what can be technically done.

The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

[Translation]

Mr. René Arseneault: Madam Speaker, I am rising on the exact same point of order as my colleague.

We can see our opposition colleagues, the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and, in particular, our colleague from Edmonton Manning deliberately turning off their mute function so that they can interrupt the sound in the House.

I invite—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): As I told the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, we will see what can be technically done to address the situation.

I thank the members for raising this issue.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1210)

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS**NOTICE OF MOTION**

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table, on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, a notice of ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2) I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to subsection 94(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2020 Annual report to Parliament on Immigration.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House of Commons, with amendments.

* * *

PETITIONS

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present today a petition from constituents concerned with the plight of international students during this time of COVID-19. As we all know, the industry the petitioners cite, of foreign students to Canada, is a significant contribution to our economy, over \$21 billion a year.

These students are particularly suffering during COVID-19. It is very difficult for them to manage to keep a roof over their heads and pay their grocery bills.

The petitioners ask for Parliament and the government to consider that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship extend access to work permits for international graduate students who need the work experience but have been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to table e-petition 2797 with signatures from across Canada.

The petitioners note that Correctional Service of Canada is establishing for-profit prison farms involving beef, dairy and intensive animal agriculture and selling products to the private sector and possible export markets. They note that prisoners will be paid under \$1 an hour and that associating underpaid prison labour with the private sector is a human rights violation under the International Labour Organization's standards.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to cancel this prison agribusiness, prevent for-profit use of prison labour for the private sector and transition federally funded prison farms to a plant-based non-profit model, feeding food banks and food insecure communities, as proposed by Evolve Our Prison Farms.

Routine Proceedings

• (1215)

HUMAN RIGHTS

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

The first petition is calling on the government to recognize the genocide happening against the Uighurs in China. The petitioners also call on the government to use the Magnitsky act to bring to justice some of the people who have been involved with that.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition today is signed by hundreds of Canadians from across Canada. The petitioners are calling on Canada to ensure Canadians have access to high-quality palliative care and to ensure the government establishes a national strategy on palliative care.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I have today is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about gendercide. They are concerned that infants are being aborted before they are born because of their gender, and petitioners are calling upon the government to enact a law. They are specially calling for the bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Yorkton—Melville, to be passed.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I have is from Canadians from across the country who are calling for the conscience rights of Canadians and Canadian institutions to be protected. They note that the Canadian Medical Association has confirmed that conscience rights do not interfere with access to health care.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today, one of which calls for an end to the abhorrent practice of the international trafficking of human organs. Specifically it calls for a legal prohibition on Canadians travelling abroad to acquire such organs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I would like to enter into the record formally calls upon Canada to recognize the Uighur genocide that is going on in China and also to use the Magnitsky act to bring the officials responsible to account.

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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.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

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

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill C-5 to amend certain acts to add a new holiday, namely national day for truth and reconciliation.

Bill C-5 addresses a very important issue that every member of the House takes very seriously. The residential school system is a national tragedy, a stain of colonialism upheld by systemic racism. It is important to never forget this tragic part of our history and the legacy of residential schools. For that we must acknowledge the past and tell Canadians about the experiences indigenous children had in these schools.

[English]

As part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission documented the experience of survivors, families, communities and those personally affected by residential schools. The commission presented a final report in 2015 with 94 calls to action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation.

I want to read call to action 80. It states, “We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.”

Although Bill C-5 seeks to address call to action 80, the Government of Canada remains committed to fully implementing the 76 calls to action that fall under federal responsibility.

[Translation]

As part of that commitment, the Government of Canada took an important step toward responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 80 by introducing a bill to create a national day for truth and reconciliation that, for federally regulated workers, will be observed as a statutory holiday on September 30.

September 30 was chosen because it is also Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day is about commemorating the legacy of residential schools and promoting reconciliation.

• (1220)

[English]

When it comes to such an important issue, creating a day for truth and reconciliation seems like a small gesture, but I would sug-

gest it is an important one. It is important because there are too many people and too many communities in this country that continue to suffer from the injustice and stigma of racism.

During the current pandemic, we have seen the disproportionate impact of this crisis on racialized people, indigenous people, immigrant communities and other vulnerable Canadians.

Recently, we have seen racial injustice right before our eyes across the border. The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by police shocked many of us. We also saw the killing of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, Daniel Prude in Rochester, and we cannot forget what happened a few years ago to Eric Garner in New York. Those brutal killings of Black people by police have shocked our consciousness.

Canadians cannot say that everything is fine in Canada. In my own province of Quebec in the Joliette hospital, we saw the death of Joyce Echaquan, an indigenous woman who livestreamed racist slurs, neglect and abuse while she was in the care of nurses and the staff of the hospital. This was in my own province.

This is a tragic example of the racism and intolerance indigenous peoples continue to face in Canada. It was heartbreaking and beyond unconscionable. If anyone dares to say that systemic racism does not exist in Canada, they should be ashamed.

[Translation]

How can we create a climate of trust, respect and mutual understanding?

[English]

We need to take time to acknowledge the oppression and discrimination that indigenous peoples experienced in Canada for centuries and to reflect on the challenges faced by indigenous communities.

The national day for truth and reconciliation will provide federally regulated workers with the opportunity to reflect on this issue and participate in educational and commemorative activities.

In 2018-19, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage studied private member's Bill C-369, by our former colleague, Georgina Jolibois, which sought to make a national indigenous peoples statutory holiday. Witnesses from indigenous organizations were in favour of the creation of a statutory holiday to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools.

Now let me address the legislation itself, which would amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and part 3 of the Canada Labour Code. Part 3 of the Canada Labour Code would be amended to establish the national day for truth and reconciliation as a holiday. It would provide federally regulated private sector employees with a paid holiday. It is on this portion of the bill that I focus.

Part 3 of the code covers approximately 955,000 employees and 18,500 employers. It contains provisions setting out minimum labour standards for workplaces in the federally regulated private sector and in most federal crown corporations. It includes important industries such as interprovincial and international transportation, banking, telecommunications and broadcasting, as well as some government activities on first nation reserves.

Part 3 does not apply to the federal public service, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or parliamentary employees, but due to existing provisions in all federal public service collective agreements, as well as past practices to extend similar terms of employment to the RCMP and the Canadian Armed Forces, employees in the federal public sector would also be entitled to the new federal holiday.

Of course, as we all know, the Government of Canada does not have the constitutional authority to impose a statutory holiday for those employees who fall within the authority of provincial governments. That said, I would like to say a few words about the implementation of this new holiday.

[Translation]

A national day for truth and reconciliation would give over 955,000 federally regulated private sector employees an opportunity to participate in educational and commemorative activities related to residential schools and reconciliation. The day would also focus on the experiences of first nations, Inuit and Métis men and women, including those who work in federally regulated private sector organizations and in the federal public service.

The Government of Canada remains committed to reconciliation and to fully implementing the 76 calls to action that fall under federal responsibility.

• (1225)

[English]

Reconciliation remains a priority for us and the introduction of Bill C-5 is a step forward in the healing process for survivors who were harmed under the federally operated residential school system. Let us work together toward a renewed partnership built on respect, dialogue and recognition of rights.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation and an important part of the calls to action to implement. It is number 80. I would like to ask about call to action number 1, which is about child welfare. The number one reason first nation children are apprehended in the child welfare system is poverty. There are more of them in the child welfare system now than at the height of the residential school system.

Government Orders

I hear from urban indigenous organizations that there is not adequate housing and there is too much poverty in these communities. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry said that we should have a guaranteed livable income, and we need urban housing, reserve housing and a rapid housing program to ensure that children are not apprehended because there would be adequate housing and eliminated poverty.

Would the hon. member let me know when the government is going to move on these things because I think these are very important calls to action?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the very thoughtful contributions of my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The government is committed to advancing all 76 of the recommendations in the report. When it comes to the issue of the disproportionate number of indigenous Canadians and racialized Canadians that are found in the child foster care system, we know that throughout history there has been systemic discrimination, where parents of racialized communities have disproportionately had their kids taken away. That is not acceptable and each and every one of those recommendations are priorities for this government.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I particularly appreciated the comment that those who do not recognize systemic racism should be ashamed of themselves. However, we have a situation where the police commissioner has made a number of missteps in this regard. I wonder whether the member would agree it is time for the police commissioner to take full responsibility for those kinds of comments and take action.

Also, does he think there should be a replacement with someone who completely accepts the fact there is systemic racism happening against Canada's first people, the indigenous people of Canada?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I believe there have been a number of statements made recently in Nova Scotia by a spokesperson for the RCMP, and a recent statement by the commissioner, that were not well stated whatsoever; rather, they were incredibly poorly stated. I am confident the Minister of Public Safety will be having conversations with those individuals. We all must take responsibility for those who report to us and for systemic racism in our ranks, especially those in leadership positions. I was made to feel very uncomfortable by those statements as well.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I understand that many things have to be put in place to ensure that we have true reconciliation, especially funding for housing and drinking water and the public education component.

Government Orders

However, I would like my colleague to comment on measures of empowerment that could be taken. I am thinking in particular of the Gladue report, which would allow for mixed courts for better representation of indigenous law. The rate of incarceration for people from indigenous communities could eventually be lower.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent question. I completely agree with her.

One issue that should be made a priority is the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples, Black people and certain communities in the justice system. The percentage of people who are arrested and incarcerated is far too high. The Gladue report is absolutely essential in that regard.

We must ensure that these people are well represented by the justice system and that it recognizes the differences between communities.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Joliette.

Today, I want to begin my speech by extending heartfelt greetings to the Innu and Naskapi communities in Nitassinan on the North shore, which is in my riding.

Essipit, Pessamit, Uashat Mak Mani-utenam, Ekuanitshit, Nutashkuan, Unamen Shipu, Pakua Shipi, Matimekossh, Kawawashikamach: It is for them and for all indigenous communities that I rise today in the House to talk about Orange Shirt Day and Bill C-5, which would create a holiday of commemoration and celebration of indigenous first nations and their culture.

I would like to speak to them in their language, Innu.

[Member spoke in Innu]

When we think about the residential schools, it is impossible to really understand or experience what these first nations peoples went through and, I would add, what they are still going through.

What we can do, and what we should humbly do, is to listen, to try to understand and to work toward reconciliation. I listened with respect, friendship and trust and I felt and still feel sick. I understood and I am still listening to what the first nations have to say and what they want for our common good.

Canada's efforts to wipe out indigenous peoples would not succeed, but the first nations paid dearly for it. Children were abused and kidnapped. Children disappeared to never be seen again. Children were stripped of everything: their language, culture, land, family and future.

We must not mince words. Canada's objective in the past was to eliminate indigenous peoples. Today, in the chamber where members voted on the Indian Act, we are taking the time to speak in an attempt to repair the horrors of the past, the effects of which are still felt to this day.

We must certainly learn from the past, but it is important to put into practice what we have learned about the Indian Act, residential schools and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Orange Shirt Day is a step in the right direction, but everyone agrees that we need to do much more.

It is much easier to understand when we take the time to listen. Today I decided to give a great woman and constituent of mine, Marjolaine Tshernish, an opportunity to speak. She is the executive director of the Institut Tshakapesh, which advocates for Inuit culture and identity. Here is what she has to say:

Let us remember in order to draw closer together. On September 30 of every year, Canadians across the country participate in Orange Shirt Day. The Innu nation in particular, most of whom live on the North Shore, commemorate Orange Shirt Day to show support for every individual whose life was and may still be affected by residential schools.

It is a day to reaffirm to survivors and all those affected by residential schools that they are important and that their experiences are respectfully acknowledged.

Every child counts, even if they are now an adult. We recognize and honour all residential school survivors and all those who never came home.

There are as many stories as there are children who were sent to residential schools, children who were taken away from their families, their communities and their culture, people who are still in search of their lost identity and pride. Imagine, as a parent, having your child taken away from you. Imagine, as a child, being forced to learn a language and live in a culture different from one's own, finding oneself in a whole other world. Imagine if they had resisted.

Some families never saw their children again, do not even know what became of them and cannot find them. They do not know how they died. There is no greater pain than the loss of a child. Imagine.

● (1235)

Need I remind the House that it has been proven that having one or more parent who attended Indian residential school increases one's likelihood of experiencing childhood trauma or spousal abuse?

Intergenerational transmission has also been well documented. Imagine the repercussions: having to reclaim your past; living your present while constantly struggling; having difficulty envisioning your future because everything has been taken away from you; having to defend your own identity; fighting prejudice; being subjected to looks, comments, actions or inactions; suffering violence; and being asked to be content with resilience and patience.

We must remember in order to understand not why it happened, but rather the needs that exist and why there has been so much suffering since. We must remember in order to share the story and the need to become oneself and have a common future that respects everyone. We must remember to respect everyone's desire to live fully and to understand. We must remember to support the right of all children and all individuals to have a dignified and serene life and to look to the future with as much optimism as possible. We must remember to share and to come together. That is the way it should be.

I stand in solidarity with all the families and friends of the Innu nation. I hope we will all have the privilege of remembering, learning and making connections, one day and one opportunity at a time, and especially to add all sorts of colours in our lives.

[Member spoke in Innu]

I wish to thank Ms. Tshernich whose message I am conveying in my own words. I would like to say that, when it comes to respecting first nations and working with them in their best interest, the Bloc Québécois will naturally be an ally.

My Innu and Naskapi friends, I respect and admire you. Know that I will always be by your side to march from history to truth, from truth to reconciliation, and reconciliation to the vitality of first nations. We must never forget. We owe it to our children, to our nations, to humanity.

[Member spoke in Innu]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limouilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I truly want to thank my colleague from Manicouagan for her speech, which really touched my heart, because I also come from the North Shore and have lived with these people.

One person I have had the pleasure of meeting is Marly Fontaine, an artist who literally had her Indian number tattooed on her arm, as a symbol of the Indian Act of 1876 and all that it entailed.

What does my colleague think reconciliation would really look like if that act were amended?

● (1240)

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Beauport—Limouilou for her question.

In my speech I touched a little on what reconciliation would truly look like. We are talking about the Indian Act, but there are so many other things that we would also have to work on across the board, since this affects every aspect of life in the first nations.

I spoke about listening, humility and openness. I do not think it is up to me to decide how the first nations envision the transition from the Indian Act to full autonomy. This is why when I spoke earlier I gave my time to the first nations.

However, I want to assure my colleague that I will always stand next to, behind and with the first nations to help them come into their own as nations.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, since being elected, I have discovered that the standard of living gap between the Atikamekw people and white people in my riding is vast. Unfortunately, although the poverty level throughout my riding is high, I would not hesitate to say that there are two classes of citizens even though the federal government is responsible for providing first nations peoples with a comparable quality of life. Its failure to fulfill that responsibility over the years has been epic.

The residential school saga traumatized the Manawan Atikamekw community, so I applaud this bill as a strong symbol for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We applaud that.

However, much more needs to be done. It is time to revise the Indian Act, an outdated, obsolete and racist piece of legislation. Even its name is racist. Obviously, before beginning that process, the government must provide guarantees to first nations groups and place them at the heart of the process.

Government Orders

We are still reeling from the shock of Joyce Echaquan's tragic death. Our thoughts are with her family and the Atikamekw community. Ms. Echaquan died in conditions that are more than suspicious. The last words she heard were hateful, odious, degrading, unacceptable and racist. Once again, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and all my colleagues in the House, I wish to offer my most sincere condolences to the Dubé Echaquan family and the entire community.

Unfortunately, this was not the first time racist comments and acts were made at the Joliette hospital with respect to the Atikamekw community. The difference in this case is that we have video evidence of the despicable events.

The Viens commission, which released its report one year ago, heard similar testimony when it held hearings in Joliette. People knew, and things have to change. Federal rules require that the people of Manawan receive care at this hospital. If they want to go elsewhere, they must pay out of pocket. Other citizens do not live with such constraints. This must change.

Manawan is facing a range of challenges related to issues such as housing, health care, education, transportation and the economy. Living conditions there are well below our society's standards. For example, there are often more than 10 people living in each housing unit. These are not big units. We are talking about two- or three-bedroom apartments.

I also want to point out that the community and elected officials are working to make changes, and they are succeeding. One such example is the emerging tourism industry. There is a beautiful inn right on the edge of town and a campground on an island in Kempt Lake. I invite all of my colleagues to visit. Efforts are also being made to promote Atikamekw culture and heritage, and the community is investing in partnerships with the forestry and mining industries, for example in Saint-Michel-des-Saints.

Manawan's remote location remains an obstacle to the economic and social development of the Atikamekw of Manawan First Nation. The community is located just over 90 kilometres north of Saint-Michel-des-Saints and has 2,400 residents. Its population is growing rapidly.

The 90-kilometre road that leads to the community is actually a logging road built on unstable terrain. Entire sections of it are frequently closed. It takes first-hand experience to realize what a problem this is. An announcement was made regarding road upgrades, but there have been many delays. This leaves the community more isolated and forces residents to spend most of their budget buying pick-up trucks that end up having an extremely short lifespan, believe me.

Obviously, cellphone coverage in the area is non-existent, and power outages are a common occurrence. That poses a daily challenge, particularly for the Masko-Siwin medical clinic, which nevertheless manages to work real miracles.

Government Orders

The Atikamekw people have to negotiate with Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada for the delivery of services. The process is cumbersome and inflexible and leaves very little room for autonomy, despite the community's desire to assume responsibility for itself.

For example, federal rules forced the community to build a housing development on a wetland. The houses deteriorated quickly, and after just a decade, mould problems set in. There is a housing shortage in the community, but they are being told to go build on a swamp, which causes all kinds of problems.

The elementary school is struggling to accommodate too many children, but it gets proportionally less funding than our schools.

• (1245)

A tour of the school reveals that child care and the library are located in windowless storage spaces in the basement. Social workers' offices are overburdened, which makes it hard for them to do their work. The burgeoning population is making matters worse.

The community's mother tongue is Atikamekw. French-language education is underfunded because French is not recognized as their second language, even though it is.

The community wants to self-govern, but it has to justify every one of its decisions to federal authorities, which can approve or reject the proposal based on arbitrary criteria. For example, Health Canada refused to cover travel expenses for a vehicle used to transport patients to the hospital in Joliette. Transportation by ambulance, which is much more expensive, would have been covered. That is the day-to-day reality for people who are not self-governing and who are subject to arbitrary criteria.

According to available statistics, the community of Manawan is grossly underfunded compared to other communities. Funding rules are based on an historical approach that does not incorporate the baby boom or the remoteness of the community. The community is very hard to access. One of the criteria specifies that the distance must be at least 90 kilometres, so under the federal government's definition, it is not a remote community. That is absurd, and it has to change. The government does not want to reopen the funding agreement and is threatening to cut the current funding envelope if the council ever insists on a review. These methods are completely antiquated or are meant to instill fear.

Despite everything, the community still manages to innovate. As I said earlier, the Centre de santé Masko-Siwin Manawan has established a truly impressive telemedicine system, which allows women to have their pregnancies monitored from home rather than having to go to Joliette.

For seniors with diabetes who require dialysis several times a week, the situation is dire. Power outages mean they have to leave their community to go and live in Joliette, near the hospital. People can probably guess how the tragedy this fall affected the community. After they spend a few months outside their community, Ottawa regards them as no longer living in their community and therefore cuts off all support. This causes an incredible amount of stress.

The fact that they have to depend on Ottawa for services normally provided by the Quebec government creates a host of other such

problems and people in need often find themselves without any support. Governments pass the buck back and forth, and people fall through the cracks and are neglected. It is not right.

Historically, the people of Manawan have experienced a number of traumas as a result of colonial policies. Of course they were not spared the horrors of Indian residential schools, the tragedy of children being removed from their families, some children disappearing forever, and so on.

Not so long ago, the superintendent of the community was generally a retired soldier who created a climate of terror. For example, an Atikamekw man refused to allow an American forestry company to cut down trees on his family land without compensation. The superintendent told him he had tuberculosis and a plane would be available the next day to take him to a sanatorium. If he refused, the superintendent would call the RCMP to force him to go. When he returned to the community two years later, his land had been cleared and he had contracted tuberculosis at the sanatorium. That is the reality. So much trauma leaves scars and continues to breed mistrust to this day.

In closing, I want hon. members to know how dynamic and smart the Atikamekw nation is and what invaluable knowledge and culture they have. It is worth taking the time to meet them and get to know them.

Hopefully the tragedy experienced by Joyce Echaquan, her husband, their seven children and their entire community will raise awareness in order to contribute to changing views and laws and give the Atikamekw and first nations equal opportunities for growth.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing up Joyce Echaquan and the issues around health care within first nations.

Before I became a parliamentarian, I had the honour and privilege as a filmmaker to work on a film for the Hul'qumi'num Health Hub. I worked with elders to create a video that is now used to train people who go into the health care system. It is part of their orientation to understand the culture, the *Snuw'uy'uh*, the way of life and the traditional healing techniques that the Hul'qumi'num people use. It is also to teach the health care professionals about the history of colonialism, the residential school system and the Indian hospitals. We had an Indian hospital in Nanaimo, which was an abhorrent place. Lots of horror stories came out of it.

I would like to ask the hon. member about the need for education for people working in all fields, but particularly in health care, because of the systemic racism that indigenous people face in the health care system. How would he see that improving the situation in his riding?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his comments. I would like him to email me a link to the documentary he mentioned, because I would really like to watch it.

The health care system's approach to first nations must change. The tragedy that has befallen the Atikamekw community is a most eloquent example.

My colleague from the North Shore and I went to Parliament Hill to meet the Atikamekw people who came to hold a vigil there a few nights after the events. Several of them told us that French is not their mother tongue. When they go to the hospital, they do not understand what the doctors are saying. They answer “yes” or “no” as they try to decode the key words they hear. All too often, however, the patient passes away. They wonder if it was their fault, if they misunderstood or misinterpreted what was said.

Things must change. Joliette hospital does have an interpretation service, but it was not even used on the evening of the tragedy. Many changes must be made to ensure that this does not happen again.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe the member and I were elected at the same time, and I have had the pleasure of getting to know him over the years. There is always a language barrier, though he speaks more English than I speak French. I congratulate him on that.

I want to thank him for his speech because he has pointed out that the Liberals love to pat themselves on the back and mention that they have been doing the most amazing work and are going to pass the bill to recognize this particular day. However, as we can see in the community, there have not been great improvements over the last five years. In fact, a lot of things have gone backwards.

I wonder if the member thinks the assessment I have made about the Liberals is correct.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Peace River—Westlock for the question.

After spending a few years here, we francophones do obviously end up learning English, since the majority of the debate takes place in that language. Perhaps that explains our superior understanding of English.

The symbolism of the bill is important, and we applaud that. However, we would like to see this go beyond mere symbolism and actually change living conditions, so that all citizens have equal opportunities. The federal government has a duty to first nations in that regard. There is a huge amount of catching up to do. Living conditions must change.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to be speaking virtually from Toronto, but in the House of Commons, on Bill C-5. This is an important piece of legislation on the path to reconciliation, which I firmly believe will help in shaping a better future.

I want to note, first of all, that when I speak from my riding of Parkdale—High Park, I am located on the traditional territory of the

Government Orders

Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinabe and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. I would also like to say *meegwetch*, which means “thank you” in Algonquin, for giving me the chance to speak before the chamber on this important topic, acknowledging that the parliamentary precinct where you are, Madam Speaker, is on unceded Algonquin territory.

Before beginning, I also want to acknowledge the important work done on this initiative by former NDP member of Parliament, Georgina Jolibois, who presented this bill in the 42nd Parliament. At that time, during debate, she said:

This bill will not solve the housing crisis indigenous people live through and it will not fix the overrepresentation of indigenous children in foster care and it will not close the education gap that leaves indigenous children behind.

However, it will give Canadians the opportunity to fully understand why those problems exist.

That is a very succinct and sound analysis of the situation and also of the importance of the bill. I thank her for her advocacy during the 42nd Parliament.

We have heard during debate on this bill about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the TRC. We know it released its final report in 2015 and that the Liberal government under the Prime Minister accepted the conclusions of the TRC. This in-depth study of Canada's history was mainly looking at the legacy of the residential school system. There were 94 calls to action, of which we have heard about many. Bill C-5 will address, in particular, call to action number 80, which states:

Bill C-5 will address, in particular, call to action number 80, which states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

The relationship with indigenous peoples is a critical one and the implementation of this call to action is one step forward toward that reconciliation. Clearly, there is a long way to go, and we have heard about that from many speakers on this bill today and last week. Canada, indeed, has a poor history and track record when it comes to its relationship with indigenous persons. In a debate like the one we are having today, it is important to acknowledge mistakes from the past in order to build forward better.

We are all now well aware of the atrocities that happened in residential schools and their consequences, and I will touch on the point of education a little later. We are aware generally of the inter-generational impacts on survivors and their families. We are also aware of the consequences of the sixties scoop that took so many indigenous kids away from their families. Finally, we are aware of the ongoing systemic racism and discrimination that is still happening in Canada. We saw the heartbreaking video published by Joyce Echaquan during the last minutes of her life, mentioned by the previous speakers of the Bloc Québécois.

Government Orders

We know about the systemic racism being faced by Mi'kmaq fishers in Nova Scotia as we speak, fishers who dared to exercise their treaty right to fish for a moderate livelihood, as upheld in two Supreme Court decisions in the Marshall case 21 years earlier. The violence we have seen in Nova Scotia is never acceptable, and the systemic racism we have witnessed in Nova Scotia must be eliminated via leadership on the part of all parties, including law enforcement in Nova Scotia. That is why we need to move forward with all of the calls to action from the TRC. However, I want to focus now on call to action 80 and urge my colleagues to support this piece of legislation.

This piece of legislation talks about September 30 and we have heard about this in the context of Orange Shirt Day, the current moniker for September 30. Established in 2013, Orange Shirt Day helps raise awareness about the long-lasting impacts of residential schools and honours the resilience and courage of survivors, while focusing on the experiences of students at residential schools and, indeed, those who did not survive.

This day is based on the heartbreaking story of Phyllis Webstad, which remained, unfortunately, unknown to many Canadians. For those who are not aware of it, Phyllis was sent to the Mission school out west in 1973. Even though her family did not have a lot of money, her grandmother bought her a brand new outfit before she had to leave for her first day of school. Part of that outfit was a shiny new orange shirt. Her joy at attending school at the tender age of six did not last very long. When she arrived at the school, the authorities took away all of her possessions, including her clothes, and that brand new orange shirt was never returned.

I had the opportunity to meet Phyllis Webstad in the government lobby during the last Parliament and she talked to me about her story.

• (1300)

She also provided me with a copy of her book and inscribed it for my children, who at the time were about three and seven. They are now nine and six. What I have done since that time is read my kids that story periodically and educate them about this very basic concept. During this pandemic I can say that the anticipation my children had of returning to school was very high, but the notion of them being prevented from wearing something that I or my wife might have purchased for them really hit home as a visceral example of the injustice and unfairness of the residential school system.

I am glad my kids are learning about this, but the point is not just about Phyllis's book or my children. It is about all children and all of us, as Canadians, learning about this important story. We know that Phyllis, at the age of 27, started a healing journey. Since then she has been able to share her story, but that story needs to be shared widely. We also have to think about the unshared stories of those who did not come out of that Mission school, who never returned from residential school, or who never found their voice or had the courage to tell it the way Phyllis has. That is why this is such an important initiative.

I want to acknowledge that there are those who push the envelope on the part of reconciliation and indigenous awareness all the time. I am proud to call many of those my constituents in Parkdale—High Park. There are many people who are actively engaged

at a local level, community by community, around this country with reconciliation. People speak to me about the pace of reconciliation and how it needs to be hastened. People in my riding speak to me about the legacy of residential schools. I have been heartened by the fact children at a very tender age in my riding are already learning about this in their classrooms. This is critical, because it is not learning I ever received in the 1970s or 1980s as a young student here in Toronto.

I am also heartened by the fact that people are aware of the territory we are on, here in Toronto; of the naming of streets, and how that was occasioned in places in and around High Park; of blanket exercises, and even of such things as the magnificent indigenous murals and art that decorate parts of my riding, including the beautiful mural by Philip Cote at the corner of Roncesvalles Avenue and Garden Avenue. While there are those who are aware in my community, throughout the city and throughout this country, there are still far too many people who are unaware. That is what this bill clearly seeks to address.

Let me talk a bit about education at this point.

[*Translation*]

To move forward on the path to reconciliation, it is imperative that we continue to educate our society on the issues facing first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. As a government, we have a duty to ensure that Canadians are aware of the difficult history of indigenous peoples and the consequences of the trauma they have experienced. Statistics show that around half of Canadians have little to no knowledge of the residential schools and their impact.

That is why it is so important to create a national day for truth and reconciliation. By creating this day, we will help increase general knowledge about the first peoples and their history. These conversations need to take place, at home, among friends and among colleagues, to raise awareness about reconciliation.

• (1305)

[*English*]

I want to talk about my own education. I alluded to my own experience at elementary school as a young boy here in Toronto. I practised law prior to becoming a parliamentarian and did so for 15 years. I practised constitutional law. Obviously, that means I was at law school and then was engaged in practice.

While at law school I learned very little, almost nothing, about the residential school system. During my practice, I did not touch this area of law. It was generally understood at the time that aboriginal law, as it was then known, was quite complicated, complex and usually quite desperate in terms of leaving one feeling despondent that nothing was going to improve.

Upon entering life as a parliamentarian in 2017, I had the occasion of serving as the parliamentary secretary to the then minister of heritage, who at the time was charged with working with first nations, Inuit and Métis individuals to co-develop language protection legislation. She turned to me and asked if I would help her in this work. Originally, I was puzzled as to why the ask was put in and what I could contribute, but that ask has been quite pivotal to my understanding of this issue, my understanding of the broader cause of reconciliation, and my maturation as a parliamentarian.

What I learned as I led those consultations around the country, from coast to coast to coast, meeting with teachers, elders, academics, leaders, pupils and chiefs from first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, is how critical language is as a feature of reconciliation, and how critical it is to work on initiatives like this in a co-development model.

One study resonated with me, and I will repeat it now. We learned in British Columbia that those groups who have knowledge of their mother tongue, their own indigenous language, have a suicide rate six times lower than the provincial average. When the language was removed, it removed people's connection to their people, to their culture and their community. Suicide rates elevated sixfold, far outstripping the provincial average for non-indigenous people. That told me there is a clear link between restoring people's language and people's connection to their culture, their sense of self-esteem, their confidence and, indeed, suicidality rates. It is not far-fetched or hyperbole to say that these are literally life-and-death matters for indigenous people. This bill is more symbolic in nature, but it touches upon the same concept that we need to learn about history in the context of language. Residential schools contributed to erasing that language.

I raise the issue because the question has come up, in the context of this debate, of whether enough work is being done. Clearly, more work needs to be done, but I would say that passing the Indigenous Languages Act, passing child welfare legislation and eliminating over 80 boil water advisories are steps in the right direction.

Does more need to be done? Absolutely: not one of the 338 members of the House would dispute that. However, it is unfair to say that work has not been done since 2015.

I will say that Bill C-5, talks about call to action no. 80. In this bill, we recognize that indigenous people continue to face ongoing discrimination, as I mentioned at the very outset. Systemic racism continues to be a reality. We know that, in the past, indigenous communities have gone out on the streets to express their frustration and their desire for change. I am glad to see now that the rest of society is catching up: slowly, but it is catching up. We see solidarity with indigenous people voicing concerns about the Mi'kmaq and solidarity with indigenous persons voicing concerns about Joyce Echaquan. Non-indigenous people are awakening, and that is a good sign. The fact that parliamentarians are awakening is a critical sign and a necessary one. That solidarity is what this bill endeavours not just to capture but also to promote.

Bill C-5 is in line with some of our government's previous actions, such as an announcement in budget 2019 to provide \$7 million, over two years, to communities across the country to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools. By taking

Government Orders

this step forward, we keep raising awareness across Canada of the trauma indigenous people have undergone and the intergenerational impacts of such trauma.

It is important that we recognize that it is not just about learning this history on one day, on September 30, but each and every day: that we think about it in terms of the practical work that we do as parliamentarians and, indeed, how we live our lives day to day as Canadians.

It is a common responsibility and a duty to remember this dark chapter in Canadian history and to ensure a better future for all people in this country. We owe it to indigenous peoples on this land. We owe it to the survivors of the residential school system. We owe it to those who never returned from the residential school system. We owe it to the parents from whom children were taken. We owe it also to the generations to come.

Having an open conversation about residential schools and the legacy of racism and colonialism, and the hardship and pain and violence that were endured, is difficult. It is painful. It is uncomfortable. However, we recognize that this is nothing compared with the actual experiences lived by indigenous people who went through these schools.

We are committed to doing what is right with respect to Bill C-5, even though that is not an easy path. I hope all members, in a strong spirit of non-partisanship, will support this bill and recognize its importance, so that September 30, 2021, can be the first national day for truth and reconciliation in Canada. Learning our history and moving forward should never be an issue that divides on party lines.

● (1310)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Chair, I think this bill has support all across the House.

I was wondering if the minister could talk a little about some of the other issues that have been raised in this place and the fact that this is a largely symbolic measure. There are still boil water advisories on reserves, even though we are quickly approaching the date by which the government promised these would be gone.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, with respect to that critical point, more than 80 boil water advisories have been lifted to date. Some are long-standing.

Government Orders

With respect to what was required to lift some of these, in 2015-16, extensive investments in the billions of dollars were made on very remote reserves that had literally no infrastructure. As such, we saw very few lifted in those two years, but by 2017, the advisories started to be lifted. A very helpful graphic is available on the website for the Minister of Indigenous Services. It shows the pace of such removals.

We are committed to getting them all done by 2021. The one that has been outstanding for nearly 25 years now is an embarrassment for the nation and for this Parliament. It is one that needs to be remedied immediately. Every Canadian deserves the right to clean water.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It was pointed out to me that I misidentified the previous speaker as a minister. I want to apologize for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Parkdale—High Park for his speech. I felt that there was some openness. Personally, I would like to know what the procedures are.

My colleague talked about his experience at the Department of Canadian Heritage. He also mentioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 81, which calls for the installation of a residential schools monument in Ottawa.

Can he provide more information about that? Has the government looked into acquiring the land? Does it know when the work will start? How many public servants are currently working on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 81?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for the question.

Frankly, I cannot provide him the details he is looking for. Obviously we are responsible. We publicly promised to accept all of the commission's recommendations and that includes call to action no. 81.

However, I cannot provide him details on that, since I do not have them myself. I could talk to him about it later. In the meantime, I invite him to speak with the Minister of Canadian Heritage and his parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we heard the hon. member speak at length and with passion about his constituents in Parkdale—High Park as being defenders of inherent indigenous rights, yet he also spoke about the long road to reconciliation. In fact, it was reported today that near my community, the Haudenosaunee, this road to reconciliation is under construction.

Is the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park willing to join me next Friday to visit the Haudenosaunee land defenders and help them defend their inherent rights against their land extinguishment for the future of their children?

• (1315)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I officially welcome the member for Hamilton Centre to the House. I know it has been about a year now, but this is the first question I have received from him.

I am very familiar with the situation of the Haudenosaunee. Anyone who lives in Ontario is familiar with it and knows about the long-standing dispute.

I share his frustration insofar as the response we repeatedly hear to Haudenosaunee land defenders. What they have received on the part of law enforcement stands in stark contrast to law enforcement reaction when the tables are reversed. The Mi'kmaq were seeking to exercise Constitutional rights and were not receiving the same level of protection they felt was merited.

That disconnect and contradiction must be remedied in Canada, no matter where it rears its head. I fully appreciate the situation and the sensitivities of the situation with the Haudenosaunee and what they are facing with respect to the Six Nations, whom I consulted with extensively on the Indigenous Languages Act.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I too would like to ask the hon. member about the Haldimand tract and treaty, and the Haudenosaunee people.

My sister is indigenous. She spent six years in Caledonia as a front-line officer with the OPP. She now has a degree in indigenous law. There is a treaty in this place, the Haldimand Treaty. The Haudenosaunee people want that treaty respected.

I would like to ask the hon. member what he thinks the role of the federal government is in fixing this situation and meeting those demands.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I think the best thing I can say to the member is that the role of the federal government is to lead by example. When it comes to the issue that is affecting Caledonia and the Haudenosaunee, which was raised also by the member from the NDP, we have to appreciate that the law enforcement responsibilities that are being acted on are those of the Ontario Provincial Police. In my city, we have the Toronto Police Service.

Where we have situations with the RCMP, under contract or otherwise, not acting in a manner that appears to be addressing systemic racism, which is quite visible and marked to all of those who are observing, I think we have to lead by example in terms of ensuring that the training is sufficient, that the leadership understands the nature of the issue and that action is being taken.

I will say with some confidence that I think we are on the right track insofar as very recently, this week, with something that is squarely within federal jurisdiction, that being the judges training bill. When that was before the justice committee, we passed an amendment to expand out the judges training bill so that the training occurs not just on sexual assault law and social context, but by expanding out what social context means, including the terms "systemic racism" and "systemic discrimination", amendments that were suggested by the leaders of the Black caucus and the indigenous caucus in this Parliament.

By ensuring that training is occurring, by ensuring that people are receiving the message loudly and clearly that systemic racism exists and is a phenomenon at all levels of government and in all of our institutions including law enforcement, we can lead by example, which hopefully can trickle down to the law enforcement that is operating currently in Ontario with respect to the Six Nations dispute.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not going to ask a question. I will just let the member carry on because he has so much to offer. I want to say he is one of the most amazing members of Parliament I have ever met and he has done so much for human rights. He is totally right that we did not hear anything about this in the education system. That is why this is so important to me.

I want people watching on TV to think about what if someone came today and took their children? What if they said they were coming and people would not have their children back until next summer? What if the children did not come back or came back damaged?

We cannot imagine the pain and suffering, the effect that would have on people and whether they can survive if someone takes their children away. I think that is enough in itself; why it is absolutely essential that this pass and we give recognition to truth and reconciliation.

Marsi cho. Gunalchéesh.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I know the member for Yukon is a father, as I am. My most visceral understanding of the residential school system came as a South Asian man with a South Asian wife trying inelegantly to teach Hindi to his kids. I thought about how my wife and I were not very successful at this endeavour.

I tried to explain to my kids that the problem that Dene, Sioux or Cree kids have is not that their parents are not good enough at teaching them; it is that they were actually beaten and hurt if they dared to speak their language at a school that was kilometres away from the place they called home. That is something of a completely different order, in terms of the obstacle that was put in place for those children. The impacts of that kind of system continued to be felt. That is what motivated me so much on indigenous languages work and really opened my eyes.

My thanks to the member for Yukon on his compliment about my human rights work, but I will frankly admit that I was quite embarrassed by my lack of human rights understanding about the indigenous experience in this country and the poor nature of indigenous human rights in this country, until the work that I did in the last Parliament. It clearly opened my eyes and it has helped me become a stronger advocate for this critically important cause.

I firmly believe in my core that until we address these issues, we cannot really even begin to address some of the other pernicious issues that affect human rights for Canadians.

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Question.

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

[Translation]

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

[English]

For the sake of clarity, I would invite a member present in the House to rise to indicate if the motion is agreed to on division or to request a recorded division.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the division stands deferred until Monday, November 2, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you might find unanimous consent to call it 1:30 p.m. at this time so we can begin private members' hour.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC) moved that Bill C-204, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (final disposal of plastic waste), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

He said: Madam Speaker, every week, millions of Canadians diligently sort and place their plastic in the blue boxes for municipal curbside collection. We do this to reduce our waste and to ensure that our plastic can be recycled and reused in some other meaningful fashion. However, despite our best intentions, and to the surprise of most, only 9% of plastics Canadians put in their blue boxes ever actually gets recycled domestically. Most of the rest is exported, piled up in a landfill, dumped in the ocean, burned or otherwise discarded into the environment. Because of this, our plastic is ultimately ending up in the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. This is having a considerable impact on our health and the health of the environment. If not addressed, it threatens our future.

The proposed legislation before us today, Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, seeks to address these serious concerns by prohibiting plastic waste intended for final disposal from being exported to foreign countries.

For too long, Canada has been sending its plastic waste for other countries to deal with. Of the 380,000 tonnes of plastic waste collected in Canada in 2018, more than one-quarter was exported to foreign countries for processing. Between 2015 and 2018, almost 400,000 tonnes of plastic waste was sent to Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Hong Kong, China and the United States. Unfortunately, many of these countries lack the capability and regulatory waste management standards to ensure that plastic is properly disposed of. As a result, these plastics are all too often landfilled, illegally dumped or incinerated, allowing them to enter and negatively impact the environment.

In late 2017, China, which had for a long time been the primary market for plastic waste from Canada and other countries, adopted much higher standards for imported recyclables. After handling nearly half of the world's recyclable waste for over 25 years, China effectively banned the practice, resulting in Canada and other western nations turning to developing countries in southeast Asia and elsewhere to handle their plastics. It is common practice for certain businesses in these developing countries to import plastics for the purpose of recycling, only to dump them in a landfill or incinerate them. This is more likely to occur when plastics are poorly sorted, mislabelled or otherwise contaminated, making them more difficult to recycle properly.

The direct and indirect effect this is having on the environment is a serious concern. When plastics are dumped in unmanaged landfills, the waste leaks into the natural environment. The incineration of plastic waste also contributes to a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions and may result in the emission of toxins that threaten both humans and environmental life. Investigations into the export of plastic waste to developing countries have found that this sort of mismanagement is all too common with few controls to ensure that the imported plastic is being handled appropriately.

In September 2019, CBC *Marketplace* highlighted the conditions of the small northern Malaysia village of Ipoh, which had become a primary destination for the processing of Canadian plastic waste. The report describes towering heaps of burning plastic garbage, chemical and microplastic runoff polluting local waterways, and mounds of poorly contained Canadian plastic. The residents of Ipoh were outraged by the invasion of foreign plastic waste and the im-

pact it was having on their health and the local environment. Pleading, they said, "We don't want to be the next cancer village." This is just one example of a situation that is becoming all too common.

Many developing countries are now rejecting plastic imports from abroad, having struggled to properly manage the sheer quantity of plastics coming from around the world since China's ban took effect.

● (1325)

The substantial increase in plastic waste to these developing countries is having a devastating impact on their environment and the population. Most Canadians were alerted to this pressing issue last year when, after prolonged diplomatic dispute, Canada repatriated thousands of tonnes of non-recyclable waste from the Philippines and Malaysia at a significant cost to taxpayers.

Canada's plastic waste is not a problem that can be simply exported away. Many of the countries receiving our plastic are developing nations incapable of managing it to ensure that its impact is reduced and the environment protected. This does not only affect the environment and citizens of these countries. Eventually, the impact of plastic, as it breaks down, also leads to serious ramifications for the health of Canadians and Canada's natural environment.

Canada is an industrialized nation with capabilities far beyond those of the developing world. We must put an end to the practice of exporting plastic waste to foreign countries.

Canada has signed a number of international agreements pertaining to the import and export of waste. The foremost agreement concerning the movement of waste is the Basel Convention. As of last year, the Basel Convention has been updated to specifically include the transboundary movement of plastic waste, which was not part of the original terms of the agreement. This change was made in direct response to the rapidly increasing levels of plastic waste around the world and its known impacts on human health and the environment.

The Basel Convention was also amended in September 2019 to outright ban the export of plastic waste for final disposal from industrialized countries to developing countries. No participating country is beholden to this amendment unless they elect to ratify and accept it. Canada has not. It is unfortunate that under the current Liberal government, Canada has failed to show leadership on the issue of plastic waste.

Private Members' Business

• (1330)

It was not until two days ago that the Liberals finally accepted the amendment to the convention to include plastic waste, a year and a half after the amendment was made and only after 186 other countries had already agreed to it.

While I am pleased to see that Bill C-204 has already made a difference even before it was debated, it is clear that more still needs to be done. It is particularly concerning that the Liberals are still refusing to act to limit the export of plastic waste. In fact, the Liberal government has stated that the practice of exporting waste from Canada to developing countries for final disposal is beneficial. This is an outrageous position to take, given the significant negative impact plastic waste has on developing countries and on the environment.

Last year, even the Liberal dominated Standing Committee on the Environment recommended that Canada prohibit the export of plastic waste to be landfilled in a foreign country. The government did not respond. Clearly Canada needs to step up and that is exactly what Bill C-204 proposes to do.

Bill C-204 would put an end to Canada's practice of exporting plastic waste to other countries through a modest amendment to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. This is achieved by explicitly prohibiting the export of plastic waste to foreign countries for final disposal, something that is still currently permitted under the existing regulation.

The definition of plastic waste outlined in the accompanying schedule is derived straight from the Basel Convention annexes. Likewise, final disposal is a specifically defined term, meaning operations that do not lead to the possibility of resource recovery, recycling, reclamation or alternative reuse. This ensures that legitimate, sustainable and environmentally sound exports of plastic waste are not prohibited.

Finally, Bill C-204 would bring these changes in line with the rest of the regulations in this section of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, giving the minister the ability to add or remove plastics from the prohibited list and applies fines and penalties against those who contravene it. Through these reasonable changes, the export of plastic waste for final disposal from Canada to other countries will finally be prohibited.

While other countries are taking action on the issue of exporting plastic waste, Canada is falling behind. Comparative nations are implementing stricter domestic laws to control the export of plastic waste, just as Bill C-204 proposes.

In Australia, the Recycling and Waste Reduction Bill 2020 has been introduced in parliament by its government, which will phase in the end of the 645,000 tonnes of plastic and other waste that Australia ships overseas each year. The Government of the United Kingdom has made a similar commitment, pledging to ban the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries and impose tighter restrictions on all outgoing waste.

This is in addition to the other 98 countries that have already ratified the Basel ban amendment to prohibit the export of waste to developing countries.

However, even as Canada falls behind while other governments and jurisdictions around the world are taking action, there is hope. Canadian industry and small businesses are stepping up to address the issue of plastic waste.

One of these companies is Cielo Waste Solutions, based out of Aldersyde, Alberta. Cielo uses a unique advanced refining process to take all types of plastic and convert it into renewable diesel fuel. This innovative process significantly reduces Canada's plastic and landfill waste and lowers our country's reliance on imported diesel. The company aims to build over 40 refineries across Canada and would convert over 3,000 tonnes of plastic waste a day into renewable fuel, diverting over one million tonnes of waste from landfills and foreign exports per year.

• (1335)

Another innovative company is Goodwood Plastic, out of Stewiacke, Nova Scotia. Goodwood Plastic takes post-consumer plastic waste, including plastic bags and old fishing line, and turns it into tough, flexible and long-lasting lumber. Their products could replace the wood that we use in posts, in guard rails, even in small craft harbour docks and countless other uses, all while reducing plastic waste.

Both of these companies and many others across Canada want to use their products to make a difference. Instead of Canada exporting its waste to foreign countries, where it will be mismanaged, we should be leveraging this kind of innovation and making a difference right here at home.

It is time for Canada to stop treating the rest of the world as its dumping ground for plastic waste. Canadians from coast to coast to coast expect action on this issue. They overwhelmingly support a ban on exporting plastic waste. The Liberal government can no longer keep justifying this shameful practice, a practice that so many other industrialized countries have already put to an end. Today, developing countries are being inundated with Canada's plastic waste, waste that is being mismanaged with dramatic implications for our environment.

Domestically, Canadian industry is in a position to step up and develop made-in-Canada solutions to manage our plastic waste. Our country needs to get behind them and support their efforts, instead of simply dumping our plastic in someone else's backyard. I urge all members of Parliament to support Bill C-204. Canada must take some responsibility, show leadership on the world stage and ban the export of plastic waste for final disposal to foreign countries. The time is now.

• (1340)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his interest in combatting plastic pollution and his strong advocacy for Lake Simcoe.

Private Members' Business

I do not know if the hon. member heard his colleague from Sarnia—Lambton this morning in her S.O. 31 speak against the government's efforts to reduce, manage and recycle plastic pollution. I wonder how he reconciles that with his motion. Perhaps he should talk to that hon. member.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I will always be pulling for Lake Simcoe. If I have to get in my hip waders again, I will.

As far as the member's question goes, and I appreciate that question, the government is moving the goal posts on single-use plastics. I want to keep my eye on the ball today. My bill, Bill C-204, is banning the export of plastic waste for final disposal. That is the issue we are talking about, and I want everyone to keep their eye on the ball today on that issue.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech from the member for York—Simcoe.

In my province there is a great need to diversify the economy, which has been so heavily damaged by the policies of the current government among—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pat Kelly: It is true.

However, the nascent plastics industry that is developing and trying to take root in my province, to help provide employment opportunities and to take the best, most efficient and most ethical advantage of the resources we have, has been under attack by the government. I would like this member to maybe comment on the notion of plastics being labelled toxic. Plastic is not toxic. There are economic opportunities and benefits around the plastic industry, such as the excellent effort under way with this member's private member's bill that would seek to recycle plastic domestically.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, that was a great question. We have to be driving Canadian industry here at home. I talked about the lumber manufacturer that turns plastic into plastic lumber out in Nova Scotia. These are innovative companies that we have to get behind. They even reached out to the Government of Canada, saying they can redo all small craft harbours with this new innovative solution. The problem is that plastic becomes toxic when we send it overseas to developing nations and they start burning it on the shore of the ocean with no security and safety in mind.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for York—Simcoe for bringing forward this important issue. We should never be offloading our garbage to other countries that cannot deal with it. It is appalling to me that the government fought to continue this terrible practice.

One of the things advocates have flagged as a concern with the bill is that, as it is currently written, it leaves open loopholes that could allow Canada to only apply the ban to non-recyclable plastic waste, when we know the majority of the waste in plastic pollution being shipped overseas is deemed recyclable in Canada, but in reality, is not able to be dealt with by the countries receiving these plastics and electronics. We know that the government, for all its talk, fought against the Basel Convention and would use loopholes to continue this atrocious practice.

Is the member open to amending the bill to ensure it is, in fact, banning exports of all plastic waste, deemed recyclable or not, which is impacting human health and the environment in countries predominately in the global south that often do not have the infrastructure to handle it?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I actually thought when my other hon. colleague got up that we were going to have the full support of all members in the House. I am hopeful this will be sent to committee. I know we will have a constructive conversation there in looking at the bill.

● (1345)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, on the final disposal of plastic waste. Bill C-204 proposes amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to ban the export of plastic waste for final disposal in other countries.

I would like to thank the hon. member, as I did previously, for bringing forward this bill and for his interest in combatting plastic waste.

We all recognize the important role plastics play in our economy due to their low cost, unparalleled functionality and high durability. However, the negative effects of plastic waste and pollution on the environment are undeniable. It is estimated that in 2016, 86% of plastic waste ended up in our landfills, representing \$7.8 billion in lost revenue.

Our government shares the member's concerns about the management of plastic waste and the environmental harm caused by plastic pollution both at home and abroad. We agree plastic waste does not belong in the environment and that action must be taken to reduce and better manage plastic waste.

I would like to begin by discussing our government's comprehensive agenda for achieving zero plastic waste, which will help us transition to a circular economy for plastics. Our agenda takes a multi-faceted approach that includes action domestically and internationally. It is grounded in science and evidence.

The bill before us is about trade in plastic waste. Plastic pollution, as I said, is a problem in Canada. It is estimated that 29,000 tonnes of plastic pollution entered Canada's environment in 2016 alone. This challenge is even greater for countries that lack the capacity to properly manage it. Canada, as part of the international community, has recently taken significant steps to better regulate trade in plastic waste, particularly the waste that is most difficult to recycle.

Many countries, including Canada, trade plastic waste for recycling. The reasons for this trade include a lack of recycling capacity for some types of plastic and excess capacity for others as well as varying regional capacity across Canada. As well, as a traded commodity, plastic waste will end up in the most cost-competitive location. The majority of Canada's trade in plastic waste is with the United States.

Until recently, there were no controls internationally on trade in plastic waste. In countries facing challenges with waste management, this plastic, traded in high volumes, could then contribute to plastic pollution. Canada took a leadership role in the adoption of new international controls on transboundary movements of plastic waste in May 2019. The new controls were adopted under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

These controls aim to tackle environmental issues raised by trade in plastic waste, including marine litter. As a result of the new controls, prior to a transboundary movement of plastic waste, the exporting state will have to seek and obtain the consent of the importing state. These changes will foster trade of clean, sorted and ready for recycling plastic, and will allow countries that import this plastic waste to confirm they are in a position to manage it in an environmentally sound manner.

This approach will allow everyone involved to reap the economic benefits of continued trade in plastics for recycling while addressing associated environmental concerns. Canada strongly supports these new controls and is working very hard to start implementing them as soon as possible.

We have also been taking concrete steps to prevent illegal waste exports from Canada under existing rules. These steps include communicating with waste exporters in Canada to ensure they understand the rules and enforcing the rules when they are not followed. We are working with other government departments, such as Global Affairs Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, to make sure this issue is tackled from all angles.

Our government has also been working closely with provinces and territories through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment on the Canada-wide strategy on zero plastic waste. This strategy takes a circular economy approach. It outlines a vision to keep all plastics in the economy and out of landfills and the environment, and it provides a framework for taking further concrete actions.

• (1350)

One focus is that of increasing the level of recycled content in plastic products. For this, we first need to collect and recycle much more of our plastic waste here in Canada. Second, we need to kick-start the secondary markets that will buy and utilize this recycled plastic in a broad range of products. We are working with standards organizations, the provinces and territories, and industry to identify the means to achieve this and introduce new practices in the marketplace.

In addition, this government is committed to banning harmful single-use plastics where warranted and supported by science.

Private Members' Business

As part of our approach, we released a discussion paper that outlines our approach to reducing plastic waste and preventing pollution. This includes details on actions such as minimum amounts of recycled content in certain products or packaging. This measure in particular will strengthen recycling markets and make it more likely that plastic will be recycled at the end of a product's useful life. We very much look forward to hearing from Canadians, governments, businesses and all stakeholders about these important initiatives.

I would now like to raise a number of considerations with respect to Bill C-204 that it is not clear the Conservative member or his party has contemplated.

They believe the sole focus is on exports of a specific list of plastic waste destined for final disposal and leaves the far more problematic issue of plastics destined for recycling unaddressed. Unlike the government's comprehensive agenda, I am wondering if my Conservative colleague considered that this bill targets many substances that would not commonly be considered plastic and would not reduce volumes of plastic waste exported for recycling to countries that do not have the capacity to effectively recycle highly mixed or contaminated plastic waste.

Has my Conservative colleague considered that, in practical terms, the bill would also prevent exports of municipal solid waste to the United States to the extent that such waste contains plastic that is on the bill's proposed list of plastic waste? Trade in municipal solid waste between Canada and the United States is a long-standing practice with environmental controls. Limiting such exports would put pressure on provincial and territorial landfills. The United States might also object to such a restriction. I would also note that a significant amount of all waste in Ontario, including household, industrial, commercial and institutional, is shipped to the U.S. for process and/or proper disposal.

I urge my Conservative colleague to consult with the provinces, municipalities and companies on this bill and take great care in fully assessing its implications.

I am proud to say that we are working on all fronts, internationally, domestically and in partnership with our provincial and territorial partners, industry and other stakeholders, to change how plastics are used and managed throughout their life cycle in order to increase prosperity and protect the environment.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will start by saying that the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-204, which was introduced by my colleague from York—Simcoe. We welcome this bill because it also gives us a chance to talk about some of the many other things the government should do about plastics.

We have to tell it like it is. We should be alarmed about the plastics situation. Eighty-six per cent of Canadians say they are worried about the impact of plastics on the environment, on pollution levels and, as the member for York—Simcoe pointed out, on health.

Excessive plastic consumption is caused by packaging and excess packaging of consumer goods and food. The industrial use of plastics, inadequate recycling infrastructure and the lack of recycling facilities, as well as lax regulations and Canada's lack of integrity on this issue internationally, must move parliamentarians to act. We feel that supporting this bill is essential because it really is a step in the right direction.

It should be a wake-up call. It should spur us to demand action. Let's remember that in the throne speech the Prime Minister said we needed to take action. Let's take action on this.

We should keep in mind that Canada's plastics economy is linear. Raw materials are extracted and plastics are manufactured, used and disposed of.

According to 2016 data, in Canada, 9% of plastic waste was recycled, 4% was burned for energy, 86% ended up in landfills and 1% was discharged to the environment as litter. Canada uses 4.6 million tonnes of plastic, which represents 1.4% of world consumption, while we represent only 0.5% of the world's population. I would bet the current record is even worse.

Canada has a sorry record in this regard, particularly when it comes to exporting plastic waste to developing countries. That is what Bill C-204 is all about.

Despite the country's full participation in the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, under Conservative rule, Canada violated this convention by authorizing a mass shipment of containers to the Philippines in 2013 and 2014. Canada dragged its feet for six years before finally bringing back the containers, which had been left in Filipino ports at a cost of \$1.1 million. Clearly, urgent action was not taken and the issue was not dealt with quickly. What is more, what is happening with the Basel Convention ban amendment?

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that before even considering exporting its plastic waste, Canada has a duty to rethink how materials circulate in the economy. Canada must do the work here first and take the necessary steps to ensure that materials are managed properly in order to stop the reprehensible act of dumping. There is nothing acceptable, either morally or otherwise, about sending our waste to India, Thailand or Taiwan. I think the government already knows what it needs to do.

I would say it is perhaps deliberately turning a blind eye to the ethical, environmental and regulatory problems caused by its positions on plastics. This should elicit some degree of indignation or at

least a sigh of exasperation. Do we really need yet another reminder that our ecosystems are in critical condition?

Let me turn to some more positive ideas and proposals.

There is the linear economy that I was describing earlier and that underpins the entire way that we consume plastic in Canada, and then there is the circular economy. The hon. member for Winnipeg South talked about this earlier, but we have to do more than just insert a term in this document. We need tangible projects that would create jobs, add value to the material and provide the best tools to protect the environment, achieve a green and fair recovery and ensure respect for international commitments. Those seem like pretty good arguments to me.

Although we recognize the work that needs to be done, Recyc-Québec and its partners have already begun the process of leaving the linear model behind and implementing production, trade and consumer systems based on the circular economy model.

● (1355)

Quebec is on the right track to accelerate this transformation with the Institut de l'environnement, du développement durable et de l'économie circulaire, where researchers and experts from the University of Montreal, HEC Montréal and Polytechnique Montréal are innovating.

Polytechnique Montréal is especially active in this area. It is home to the International Reference Centre for the Life Cycle of Products, Processes and Services, known as CIRAIG. I think that the federal government should consider establishing ties with this Quebec centre of expertise, because CIRAIG already offers consulting services and solutions for this issue to governments and businesses.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie is very knowledgeable about this issue. Unfortunately, he does not seem able to communicate the urgency of the situation to his caucus. He recognized this in June 2019 when he said, "The crisis with China, Malaysia and the Philippines will force us to find solutions and to stop exporting our problems abroad." Our hon. colleague was also fully aware that plastics sent to southeast Asian countries are incinerated to produce energy, with predictable environmental consequences.

At the G7 meeting held in the beautiful Charlevoix region, Canada and four other major economies signed a charter whereby they would commit to reusing, recycling or burning all plastic produced on their soil by 2040.

An action plan for implementing a circular economy is already in place at the European Commission and includes not only the scourge that is plastic, but also textiles, packaging, batteries and electronics. What is Canada doing?

Could the government stop this reprehensible practice of making promises and making commitments to the public and the international community and not following through?

Banning six single-use plastic products was necessary, but it is not the most ambitious move. It is a drop in the bucket of what we should be doing to properly manage plastic waste.

We know that the pandemic has increased the availability of these products, so their projected ban by 2021 seems unrealistic. Are there not other categories of plastic we can tackle, plastic products that are not affected by the pandemic? I have not heard anything about that. Do we have a timeline for phasing out the industrial use of plastics? We have not heard anything about that.

What bothers me is that the Government of Canada, led by the Liberals since 2015, is well aware of the plastic issue, especially since they brought in a renowned environmentalist to their team. The government's refusal to cease the export of plastic waste is irresponsible.

The absence of a planned initiative to progressively reduce our use of plastic is discouraging, but at least with Bill C-204, we will be able to stop sending our garbage to another country and instead deal with it here, which, for one, is much more ethical.

• (1400)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of this bill, which seeks to address the unacceptable practice of exporting waste to countries that do not have the infrastructure to deal with it, and to advocate for amendments at committee that would strengthen the bill.

We should never be sending our garbage to other countries. This bill focuses on plastic waste, which poses a serious threat to our environment and human health, but we must ensure that we stop all waste from being exported, including that which is designated as recyclable here but, in reality, is not able to be dealt with by the countries receiving these plastics and electronics. It is wrong to off-load the dangers of waste and plastic pollution to other countries.

Countries that have marginalized and racialized populations have been particularly hard hit by Canada's lack of leadership on this issue. We are causing so much harm to human health, from the informal waste workers in these countries breathing in the fumes of burning plastics to the children picking through this waste to the communities that experience the effects of toxic pollution, communities that often do not have the capacity to deal with the waste. Also, the impacts on the environment and oceans have been severe.

Banning plastic waste exports is one important step, but we must also ban all waste exports and, most importantly, reduce the amount of plastic waste we produce to begin with by banning single-use plastics, implementing producer accountability and working toward a zero-waste Canada.

The people in my riding of Victoria care deeply about this issue of plastic waste, and so do many Canadians across the country. About 79% of Canadians believe we should manage and dispose of our own waste and recycling, but Canada's record is an embarrassment. In 2018, Canada shipped more than 44,000 tonnes of plastic

waste to other countries. In 2019, Canada spent more than \$1.1 million to bring 69 containers of illegally shipped garbage back from the Philippines, only after the President of the Philippines threatened to declare war on Canada and cut off diplomatic ties if we did not. This year, the Malaysian government has sent 11 shipping containers of plastic garbage back to Canada.

The government has not been transparent about how much garbage is being returned from other nations or the cost of returning it. Since 2016, Canada has been part of an international treaty that requires permits to ship garbage to other countries that consider it a hazardous substance, but not a single permit has been issued since 2016, even though multiple shipments of Canadian garbage have been discovered in foreign ports in countries such as Malaysia and Cambodia.

When it comes to the Basel Convention, which regulates hazardous waste exports, Canada opposed the important Basel ban amendments that would ensure countries do not off-load their waste to countries in the global south. Luckily, it was ratified by enough other countries that showed leadership, but Canada then delayed ratifying and implementing this important amendment.

Why is Canada still shipping so much plastic waste to other countries?

The reality is that like many other wealthy countries, we actually have very limited ability to recycle plastics and have relied on foreign nations for decades. China used to be the world's largest plastic waste importer, but it stopped accepting most imports in 2018 because of high levels of contamination and because the costs had grown to outweigh the benefits. Since then, Canada has had to try to find new places to send recyclables and waste.

There are very few markets here in Canada for the material. Only about a dozen companies recycle or burn plastic waste domestically. Much of the plastic waste has been shifted away from wealthier nations, which account for two-thirds of the global consumption of plastic material, to places like Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand, where governments are now facing a huge amount of both legal and illegal materials and are contemplating or implementing bans of their own. They are demanding that the world's wealthiest nations stop using them as landfills.

Private Members' Business

It is clear that we need to stop exporting our waste, but we also need to stop producing so much waste. Canadians are among the biggest creators of waste in the world, at around two kilograms per person every day. Almost half the plastic waste produced in Canada is from packaging. Poor management of plastics across their life cycle and improper disposal have resulted in large amounts of plastic waste entering the environment as plastic pollution.

● (1405)

By the government's own estimates, of the three million tonnes of plastic waste disposed of by Canadians every year only 9% is recycled. An estimated 29 kilotonnes of plastic waste are discarded outside of the normal waste stream, through direct release into the environment or through dumps or leaks.

Most Canadians are shocked when they learn how little of our plastic waste actually ends up being recycled. We need to ensure we can safely deal with our plastic waste here in Canada. Dealing with our waste does not just mean disposing or recycling it. It should also involve meeting waste reduction targets and working toward a zero-waste Canada. In order to do that, producer accountability when it comes to the production of plastics is crucial. Canada is beginning to make some progress on managing our plastic waste, but there is clearly still so much work to be done.

I would like to take a moment to recognize my NDP colleague from Courtenay—Alberni, who has been a champion on this issue. I also recognize former NDP MPs Murray Rankin, Nathan Cullen and Megan Leslie for their great work to reduce plastic waste and pollution.

It was only after months of pressure from the NDP in 2019 that the Liberals finally agreed to ban single-use plastics by 2021. The government recently released the list of items to be included in that ban: grocery checkout bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, plastic cutlery and food takeout containers made from hard-to-recycle plastics.

While this is a start, it still does not address the large chunk of plastic packaging and other plastic waste. While municipalities with overflowing landfills continue to grow, rather than wait for leadership from the Liberal government, many have moved ahead with their own measures to reduce plastic waste.

The City of Victoria has been a leader on this issue, implementing its own ban on single-use plastic bags. I want to give a shout out to Surfrider, here in my community, an organization that spearheaded the “ban the bag” campaign but who also does important work in our community cleaning up ocean plastics.

Specifically, on the issue of exporting waste, the Liberals have been dragging their feet. They were previously dismissive of the idea of banning plastic waste exports entirely. Only after Australia planned to ban plastic waste exports in 2019, did the Liberals say they would look at what else Canada could do to reduce the amount of Canadian garbage that is ending up overseas.

The Liberals initially, as I mentioned, refused to sign on to the important amendments to the Basel Convention. Parties to the convention agreed by consensus to the amendments in 2019, but Canada continued to fight against these important amendments.

When it was formally notified by the United Nations in March 2020 that Canada's laws would not be in compliance, the government asked for continuous delays.

Environmental scientists and anti-plastic waste advocates have criticized the gap between the government's efforts to present itself as a leader on plastic waste and its actions. Canada has continued to come under fire for continuing to send plastic waste to developing countries.

I support this bill to ban plastic waste exports. It is important, but it needs to be strengthened at committee and it is only one step. We should not be using other countries as landfills for any kind of waste. We need to do more to manage the problem of plastic waste. It poses a serious threat to our environment and our health, not only here in Canada but around the world. That means not just better management of waste, but working to reduce the amount we produce in the first place.

I would like to see stronger legislation on banning single-use plastics and producer accountability. We need federal leadership and a clear plan to get us to a zero-waste Canada.

● (1410)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, over my time in this place, I have developed a great passion for Private Members' Business. In the 41st Parliament, I was successful in having my own private member's bill passed. Even though my bill was passed and supported unanimously, I am also aware of the tremendous amount of time and effort it takes to move a private member's bill forward, even when one has a bill that is supported.

Today, I will be speaking to the bill from my colleague for York—Simcoe, Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, final disposal of plastic waste.

I commend the member for his efforts to introduce a much-needed and practical bill that I believe should be unanimously supported in this place. After all, who could possibly oppose the exportation of Canadian plastic waste to become a dumping ground in other countries?

As many have said about this bill, supporting it would be a no-brainer. After all, we have all watched in recent years as Canada was embarrassed when our waste ended up as garbage piling up in other countries. In one high-profile case, Canadian taxpayers, at great expense, shipped our garbage back to Canada. I do not believe the person or persons responsible, who financially cashed in creating that costly embarrassment to Canadians, were ever held accountable. All too often, that is the problem.

We hear this Liberal government often say that there needs to be a price on pollution, yet in many cases, the people paid to properly dispose of it simply ship it off to dump it in other countries and it becomes their problem. It should not be that way.

It has been reported, “The federal government has previously dismissed calls to introduce a ban on all plastic waste exports, saying shipments since have 2016 required export permits on items considered “hazardous.”” and “Since 2016, no request for export permits for plastic waste were requested or issued.”

We also know that despite these changes, plastic waste continues to be shipped to other countries. How? Through mislabelling. It is not unlike what happens at many local landfills. Some items are free to dispose of, typically items that can be recycled, and others carry costs. Typically general waste costs more to dispose of. The operators of many landfills must literally actively monitor those disposing of waste to ensure that general waste does not end up in recycling piles. They must also ensure that toxic waste does not end up with the general waste. However, when we seek to ship plastic to another country, the Liberal government thinks that everyone is going to apply for a permit, knowing full well that export inspections are few and far between.

The bottom line is that if someone has ill intentions, the current approach from the Liberal government does not have sufficient safeguards to stop profiteering from exporting plastic waste. That is what this is really about. Individuals who are typically well paid to properly dispose of plastic waste seek to increase their profit by shipping that waste to other countries, and it is just not right. Why would we not seek to ban that, precisely as my colleague for York—Simcoe has proposed in his bill?

On a slightly different note, I am going to share a story with this place, because I believe it deserves to be heard. It is from my former riding, the community of Penticton.

A company named Appleton Waste was paid by many citizens of Penticton and area to properly pick up and collect garbage that would be transported and dumped at the local landfill. There was only one problem. The company did not pay its bills to the operator of the landfill, which was another local government, the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, or RDOS as we call it in the region. Because the bills were unpaid, the RDOS had to suspend service to Appleton Waste.

Unfortunately, this did not stop the company from continuing to pick up waste and charge their customers for it. Instead, it made a deal that ultimately resulted in 5,000 tonnes of waste being dumped on lands within the Penticton Indian Band. The arrangement was that this was going to be a transfer station before the waste was hauled off to somewhere else. How did it end? The company disap-

Private Members' Business

peared, but a massive pile of waste became a serious problem for members of the Penticton Indian Band to deal with, and it was not even their own waste. It came from the citizens of the city of Penticton.

● (1415)

I mention this story because we all know the federal government, more specifically Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, is supposed to safeguard the interests of aboriginal communities to prevent these types of situations from occurring. That of course is often the problem in Canada.

When Ottawa fails, others are left behind to clean up its mess. It is no different than when Ottawa fails to stop the exportation of plastic waste, despite having this regime change requirement for an export licence. When garbage profiteers do an end run around the process, it is the other countries left to clean up the mess. It is just not right. We have an opportunity here to send a message.

Let me read the key part of what is being proposed in this legislation, “It is prohibited to export plastic waste to foreign countries for final disposal.” It really does not get much simpler than that.

For the “yes but what if” crowd who would look for reasons to oppose, I would point out that the bill also makes clear:

List of Plastic Waste

(1.73) The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister, by order, amend Schedule 7 by adding or deleting from it any type of plastic.

This gives the minister in charge, through an order in council, and not even a change in legislation, the ability to define what is and what is not plastic waste for the purposes of complying with the bill. Technology can change. Maybe what is plastic waste today may be recycled tomorrow or something else. We can hope. Technology is always changing.

Either way, the bill would fully allow the minister to change the definition in whatever way makes sense given the circumstances. We all know that, sadly, there are those who will not apply for an export permit. Does anyone seriously doubt that, save for a small group of people within the Prime Minister's Office?

Before I close, I will simply add this. There will come a day when each of us will be somewhere in life that is not in this place. However, I expect none of us will ever forget the great honour of the time we have to collectively spend here. When each of us reflects upon that time, will we want to be remembered as members of Parliament who took a stand against exporting plastic waste to other countries or as MPs who were whipped into voting against something that we all knew was the right thing to do?

Private Members' Business

Once again, I want to commend the member for York—Simcoe for introducing a much-needed and well-constructed bill. I will be voting in favour of his program to support banning the export of Canadian plastic waste to other countries.

• (1420)

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 listened to the member across the way as he spoke about a situation. The situation he was referring to was a considerable amount of waste that was shipped to the Philippines. That waste was actually shipped in containers, and the people receiving it in the Philippines honestly thought it was going to be recyclable waste.

That was under the Harper regime, and I can tell by the applause that the members are happy I did not forget that point. It was under that regime that all that waste was shipped over to the Philippines. It became a political hot potato. Even the President of the Philippines got engaged. I am pleased to report to the House that it was our government that cleaned up the mess Stephen Harper put us in when plastic and items, which were supposed to be recyclable but actually turned out to be waste, were shipped.

As the member concluded his remarks, he was talking what he wants us to be remembered for. From the phone calls and the discussions I had with those in the Philippines and here in Canada, whether with the minister's office or the embassy, to resolve that garbage issue, which was established under the Harper regime, I like to think we were able to get it resolved in a positive way.

I must say that ultimately it went to British Columbia. I ask the members not to quote me on whether it went to Surrey or Burnaby, as I am not 100% sure where the garbage actually ended up, but it was properly taken care of. This just demonstrates that we have the technology, and we have the ability here in Canada to be able to do a better job.

That leads me to some additional thoughts. We heard from the parliamentary secretary from Winnipeg South, whom I respect as an individual, who is so keen on our environment. I have known him for decades. Prior to even being a parliamentarian, I knew the member for Winnipeg South. He has always had a passion about our environment. I listened very closely to what he was saying, and I respect the things he mentioned to the sponsor of the bill.

I am sure the sponsor will review some of those comments and take them into consideration, whatever happens with the private member's bill. We do not know what will happen. I understand members of the Bloc, members of the NDP, and I suspect members of the Conservative Party are going to support it. Has the member generated enough support to see it go to committee? Time will tell. When members have had the opportunity to share their thoughts on this legislation, we will see whether it goes to committee.

Let us not give a false impression that as a government we are not moving forward on files as important as plastics and recyclable items. There are many different initiatives the government has undertaken. I am thinking of the budget and the environment. It might be the incentive for people to purchase electric vehicles. We could talk about the issue of banning single-use plastics.

I look forward to being able to continue my comments when the House—

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

[Translation]

It being 2:30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:24 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, October 30, 2020

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Bills of Exchange Act

Bill C-5, Second reading	1469
Mr. Lamoureux	1469
Mr. Viersen	1470
Mr. Desilets	1470
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	1471
Ms. Gazan	1471
Mr. Vaughan	1473
Mr. Lawrence	1474
Mrs. Vignola	1474
Mr. Green	1474
Mr. Manly	1474
Ms. Dabrusin	1475
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	1476

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Financial Literacy Month

Mr. Sorbara	1476
-------------------	------

Okanagan Nation Alliance

Mr. Albas	1476
-----------------	------

Winnipeg North

Mr. Lamoureux	1477
---------------------	------

First Responders

Mr. Johns	1477
-----------------	------

Beatrice Moreira-Laidlow

Mr. Spengemann	1477
----------------------	------

The Economy

Mr. Berthold	1477
--------------------	------

Seniors

Mrs. Bessette	1477
---------------------	------

The Salvation Army

Mr. van Koeverden	1478
-------------------------	------

Government Policies

Ms. Gladu	1478
-----------------	------

Réginald Bélair

Mr. Lefebvre	1478
--------------------	------

The Economy

Mr. Uppal	1478
-----------------	------

COVID-19 Testing

Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	1479
--	------

Fanshawe College's Centre for Research and Innovation

Ms. Mathysen	1479
--------------------	------

Quebec

Ms. Normandin	1479
---------------------	------

Status of Women

Ms. Rempel Garner	1479
-------------------------	------

Movember

Mr. Jowhari	1480
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Chong	1480
Mr. Oliphant	1480
Mr. Chong	1480
Mr. Oliphant	1480

Ukraine International Flight 725

Mr. Chong	1480
Mr. Blair	1480
Mr. Chong	1480
Mr. Blair	1481

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Chong	1481
Mr. Oliphant	1481

Ethics

Mrs. Gill	1481
Mr. Lamoureux	1481
Mrs. Gill	1481
Mr. Lamoureux	1481

Small Business

Ms. Collins	1481
Ms. Dabrusin	1482

Housing

Mr. Davies	1482
Mr. Vaughan	1482

Finance

Mr. Deltell	1482
Mr. Lamoureux	1482
Mr. Deltell	1482
Mr. Fraser	1482

Public Safety

Mrs. Stubbs	1482
Mr. Blair	1483
Mrs. Stubbs	1483
Mr. Blair	1483

Agriculture and Agri-Food

Ms. Rood	1483
Mr. Ehsassi	1483
Ms. Rood	1483
Ms. Bibeau	1483

Office of the Auditor General			
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	1483		Mr. Samson
Mr. Fergus	1484	Housing	
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	1484	Mr. Cumming	1489
Mr. Fergus	1484	Mr. Vaughan	1489
Women and Gender Equality		Public Safety	
Mrs. Vecchio	1484	Mr. Saroya	1489
Ms. Hutchings	1484	Mr. Blair	1489
National Defence		The Environment	
Mrs. Vecchio	1484	Mr. Sarai	1489
Mr. Sajjan	1484	Mr. Ehsassi	1489
Ethics		Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Poilievre	1485	Mr. Harris	1489
Mr. Lamoureux	1485	Mr. Oliphant	1490
Mr. Barrett	1485	Marine Transportation	
Mr. Lamoureux	1485	Mr. Manly	1490
Rail Transportation		Mr. Bittle	1490
Ms. Ashton	1485	Points of Order	
Mr. Bittle	1485	Decorum	
Ms. Ashton	1485	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	1490
Mr. Bittle	1486		
The Environment			
Mr. Long	1486		
Mr. Duguid	1486		
COVID-19 Emergency Response			
Mr. Lewis	1486		
Mr. Blair	1486		
Health			
Mr. d'Entremont	1486		
Mr. Fisher	1486		
Mr. Diotte	1486		
Mr. Fisher	1487		
Infrastructure			
Mr. Viersen	1487		
Mr. Fillmore	1487		
Agriculture and Agri-Food			
Mr. Perron	1487		
Ms. Bibeau	1487		
Mr. Perron	1487		
Ms. Bibeau	1487		
Mr. Arnold	1487		
Ms. Bibeau	1487		
Telecommunications			
Mr. Lehoux	1488		
Ms. Joly	1488		
Mr. Mazier	1488		
Ms. Hutchings	1488		
National Defence			
Mr. Baker	1488		
Mr. Sajjan	1488		
Veterans Affairs			
Mr. Soroka	1488		
		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
		Ways and Means	
		Notice of Motion	
		Ms. Qualtrough	1490
		Immigration	
		Mr. Mendicino	1491
		Committees of the House	
		Justice and Human Rights	
		Ms. Khalid	1491
		Petitions	
		International Students	
		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	1491
		Correctional Service of Canada	
		Mr. Manly	1491
		Human Rights	
		Mr. Viersen	1491
		Palliative Care	
		Mr. Viersen	1491
		Sex Selection	
		Mr. Viersen	1491
		Physician-Assisted Dying	
		Mr. Viersen	1491
		Human Organ Trafficking	
		Mr. Lawrence	1491
		Human Rights	
		Mr. Lawrence	1491

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	1491
---------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Bills of Exchange Act**

Bill C-5. Second reading	1492
Mr. Housefather	1492
Mr. Manly	1493
Ms. Kwan	1493
Ms. Normandin	1493
Mrs. Gill	1494
Mrs. Vignola	1495
Mr. Ste-Marie	1495
Mr. Manly	1496
Mr. Viersen	1497
Mr. Virani	1497
Mr. Viersen	1499
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	1500

Mr. Green	1500
Mr. Manly	1500
Mr. Bagnell	1501
Division on motion deferred	1501

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999**

Mr. Davidson	1501
Bill C-204. Second reading	1501
Mr. Duguid	1503
Mr. Kelly	1504
Ms. Collins	1504
Mr. Duguid	1504
Ms. Pauzé	1506
Ms. Collins	1507
Mr. Albas	1508
Mr. Lamoureux	1510

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