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Chair: Mr. Bob Bratina



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order with the acknowledgement that in Ottawa we are meeting on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people. Here in Hamilton, we have the Anishinabe and Haudenosaunee. It's often said that we are also on the territory of the Neutrals. That's an incorrect term, as is Attawandaron. It's a descriptive term for the way they speak their language. The name of that nation was Chonnonton.

Having said that, the committee is meeting to consider the supplementary estimates (A), 2021-22.

To ensure an orderly meeting, participants, please make sure that you have the language selected via the interpretation globe at the bottom of your screen. You can change languages back and forth when speaking, but select one to hear the translation.

With us today, virtually, for the first hour are the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Carolyn Bennett; and the Minister of Northern Affairs, Dan Vandal. They're accompanied by the following senior officials: Paula Isaak, associate deputy minister; Serge Beaudoin, assistant deputy minister; Martin Reiher, assistant deputy minister; Chantal Marin-Comeau, director general; and Annie Boudreau, chief of finances, and also the results and delivery officer.

Is that the whole list? That's quite a long group. I think so, though we're awaiting Deputy Minister Quan-Watson.

With that, let me welcome everybody.

I open up the floor, Minister Bennett, for your opening remarks.

[Translation]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations): *Kwe kwe, Unnusakkut, Tansi*, hello.

I am speaking to you today from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. I also wish to honour the waters they paddled and their moccasins which walked these lands.

I am joining you along with my colleague, the Minister of Northern Affairs, and we are supported by our deputy minister, Daniel Watson, and his team.

While I am appearing today on my department's 2021-2022 supplementary estimates (A), it is also at a difficult time for indigenous communities, and all Canadians.

[English]

We are all deeply heartbroken at the discovery of the unmarked remains of children at the former Kamloops residential school. This has shocked and disturbed the nation. For indigenous people across the country, these findings are deeply painful and traumatizing, but for them not as surprising, as this was forecast. These have been the stories and the “knowings” for a very long time. For six years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission heard these hard truths, along with many others, during their national and regional reconciliation gatherings. These revelations have reopened many wounds and renewed a necessary conversation on the role of residential schools, those responsible, and how as a country we can move forward together.

We are working with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation and our partners, such as the B.C. First Nations Health Authority, to provide the resources and the supports needed, as determined by the community. I have spoken with Kúkpí7 Casimir, most recently on Monday night, and her leadership and strength have been exemplary. We have offered support for healing, mental health supports, security and whatever she needs to support her community now, as well as support for research, archaeological expertise and commemoration going forward.

In memory of all of the children who went missing, and in support of their grieving families and communities, we provided \$33.8 million through budget 2019 to implement TRC calls to action 72 to 76.

To support implementing calls to action 72 and 73, we have funded the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to develop and maintain the national residential school student death register and establish an online registry of residential school cemeteries.

In keeping with the principles laid out in call to action 76, after the passage of budget 2019 we engaged with communities to ensure that any program to deliver the funds to support calls to action 74 and 75 was designed in a way to meet their needs, be flexible enough to support community-led approaches and respect community protocols.

Based on what we heard, we are currently providing funding, on an urgent basis, to support indigenous-led, community-based, survivor-centric and culturally sensitive investigations of these burial sites. We are actively reaching out to indigenous communities to work with them on how they can access the \$27 million of funding being delivered to support them in finding their lost children. Communities know what they need. Our government will be there to support their way forward.

In discussing the supplementary estimates (A), we know that the money is there to heal past wrongs, support self-determination and advance reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and Métis people. They reflect a net increase of \$997 million, which includes the \$136.4 million in new funding and \$868.2 million in re-profiled funding. The re-profiled funding in these estimates will preserve funding for the ongoing implementation of the Federal Indian Day Schools Settlement Agreement and the sixties scoop settlement. As of May 31, 2021, of more than 113,000 claims received under the Federal Indian Day Schools Settlement Agreement, over 75,000 survivors have received payment of individual compensation. While COVID-19 has delayed the implementation of the Sixties Scoop Settlement Agreement, approximately 15,000 interim payments of \$21,000 have been paid. These supplementary estimates will preserve the funding to complete the individual compensation, which should be determined later in the fiscal year.

These supplementary estimates also include funding to support Inuit housing, Tšilhqot'in community priorities through their pathway agreement, implementation of the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement and many other important measures to support reconciliation.

We have provided you with a comprehensive deck on the supplementary estimates (A). I look forward to providing further details through your questions.

Meegwetch. Nakurmiik. Marsi. Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thanks very much, Minister.

We go on now to Mr. Vandal.

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Tansi. Boozhoo. Good morning and hello.

First I want to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from my office here in Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, in the city of Winnipeg, the homeland of the Métis nation and Treaty 1 territory.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

This committee meeting comes at a time when our nation is grieving. The remains of the 215 children buried at the Kamloops Indian residential school sent shockwaves through our country. It has reignited a very important conversation and brought it back to the national consciousness.

I want to be very clear, reconciliation and the lives and well-being of indigenous peoples never stray from my mind. This is my focus and motivation as a minister and member of Parliament.

I am a proud citizen of the Métis Nation. I am honoured to live in and represent the constituency of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital. Louis Riel, who was born in Saint-Boniface and was laid to rest there, was never granted the same privilege that I am being granted. Louis Riel was democratically elected as a member of Parliament for the constituency of Provencher, not on one or two occasions but on three occasions, yet he was never allowed to rightfully take his seat in the House.

[*English*]

The opportunities that I have been granted are some that my ancestors would never have believed possible. I work every day with this knowledge; it drives and motivates my work.

As Minister of Northern Affairs, I strive to listen to northerners to ensure that their needs and priorities drive my department's work. A year and a half ago, when I was appointed minister, I stated that decisions for the north would no longer be made in Ottawa boardrooms. My team and I remain committed to that vision. We work for the north and with the north. That's why the Arctic and northern policy framework is so important to our combined work together.

The investments my department is seeking through supplementary estimates (A) are driven by this approach, focusing on the responses to COVID-19, as well as housing and infrastructure needs. The pandemic has highlighted what people have known for far too long, which is that indigenous peoples and northern communities have been underserved. Further, we have recently been reminded of the consequences of colonialism for indigenous peoples and communities.

We know that in Canada's north, food prices can be significantly higher than in the rest of Canada. Additional factors, such as geographic isolation, make northerners particularly at risk for food insecurity. This vulnerability has only been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, our government provided an additional \$25 million to Nutrition North Canada to increase subsidy rates on nutritious food and essential hygiene items. Our government also introduced the harvesters support grant, which was co-developed with Inuit partners to help with costs related to hunting and harvesting, and to create greater access to traditional country foods. Building on this, and to address the ongoing concerns, the estimates in front of you provide \$20 million in funding to maintain Nutrition North Canada measures introduced in April 2020.

These supplementary estimates also provide \$50 million in 2021-22 for the Governments of Northwest Territories and Nunavut. There is \$25 million each to respond to their short-term critical housing needs. I view these as down payments on the housing situation in the north. The need is clear and we are committed to closing the unacceptable gap that exists in the north. These amounts are intended to address immediate and pressing housing needs this year.

We recognize that more investment is required. From budget 2021, northerners will also benefit from the \$2.5 billion in new funding through the national housing strategy, delivered by CMHC across Canada, and the \$4.3 billion in new funding in distinctions-based indigenous infrastructure, which can include housing.

Mr. Chair, as I stated before, reconciliation is always at the forefront of my mind as minister. I'm working toward a renewed relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples, including through the Inuit-Crown partnership committee, that respects constitutionally guaranteed rights and is based on collaboration and co-operation.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to meet with you virtually today.

I welcome your questions.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

• (1120)

The Chair: Thanks so much, both ministers.

Mr. Clerk, I believe Mr. Quan-Watson is here.

Sir, could you recite the first soliloquy of *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, just for a sound check?

Mr. Daniel Quan-Watson (Deputy Minister, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): I could, but you would probably prefer that I didn't, so perhaps this will suffice: "Once more unto the breach" is maybe the closest I could get to responding positively to your request.

The Chair: That's a thumbs-up. Thanks so much.

We're going to our questions now, and we're tight for the hour ahead of us.

I don't have the first Conservative speaker.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): That would be me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Schmale, please go ahead.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Thank you very much.

Good morning, Ministers. It's great to see you both again.

I'll start with Minister Bennett, if I could. Minister, talking about the \$27 million that was released last week, that was previously announced funding to uncover what are believed to be thousands of indigenous children buried in unmarked graves at residential schools across the country.

Minister, why did it take two years to release that money?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: What we had been told, obviously, was that we needed to get money to the NCTR to be able to work on the registries, but our advice was that we needed to go to communities and experts to make sure that the design of the program would be respectful and meet the needs of communities. In that engagement over the last year, we were able to determine that it had to be indigenous led, community based, survivor centric, as well as culturally sensitive. They wanted the flexibility to know that whatever the community needed would be funded in a way that would indeed meet the needs of that community—things like gatherings and commemoration, research or archeological expertise. The program that was launched last Wednesday will be very flexible.

We really want communities to know that we'll be there to support them in their way forward.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: What was the delay, the fact that it was announced two years ago and that this previously announced funding all of a sudden was made ready? Was it just a coincidence that it's just all of a sudden made, or what happened?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: What happens is that you need to design the program. Then you need to go to Treasury Board, and all of that has been taking place since I met with the NCTR and with former Commissioner Marie Wilson in November of last year. We then designed the program based on the very best advice we had, and it was able to be released last week.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: You understand where I'm coming from here. It was previously announced two years ago and just got finalized, released and ready to go, but it almost seemed like it took that tragedy, that discovery, for the government to finally release the cash.

I'll move on because I do have a number of other questions.

As you know, our leader, Erin O'Toole, wrote to the Prime Minister asking a number of things, four points specifically. The one I want to ask about is the plan to address the TRC calls to action 71 through 76 and to develop a concrete action plan by July 1. Is that something the government is able to commit to?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Jamie, call 71 is a provincial one that deals with the coroners. That is not under federal purview, and on 72 to 76, as I explained, we're well on our way. It is the money that has gone to the National Centre on Truth and Reconciliation for it to be able to develop the death registries. There is also more money going forward to them as they do their important work as well as the money to go to communities that was in this recent announcement. When we look at calls 72 to 76, we really do believe that we have a plan to be able to honour what was in those calls to action.

• (1125)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Can you commit to that action plan—releasing it to the public and to us—that as of July 1 of this year you will have a concrete road map on how you're going to get there?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Absolutely, Jamie. We have a plan for every one of the calls to action that is a federal responsibility or shared responsibility and, as you know, we're either completed or are well under way with 80% of them.

Obviously, with what's happened just now, with Bill C-5 and Bill C-8, as well as Bill C-15, we are making tremendous progress on the calls to action, and we really do believe that calls to action 72 to 76 are well under way.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Well, Minister, prior to the announcement of the \$27 million, that previously announced funding of two years ago—sorry to bounce back to that—how much funding has already gone out to communities to assist in investigating unmarked graves across Canada outside of that \$27 million?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: As we understand it, and as you know, the Tk'emlúps community did receive \$40,000 from Heritage Canada in the pathway to healing. There have been many different avenues, but this money in budget 2019 is dedicated exactly to calls to action 72 to 76.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Minister, as you know, the Tk'emlúps first nation is paying for security and commemorations and other costs associated with the discovery of those graves. They've asked for short-term funding from the government, as I'm sure you know, to assist them with that. Is that something the government is investigating? If yes, has money been provided? If no, is there a timeline on when they might see that?

The Chair: We're over the time, so can we have a quick answer, please?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Sure.

Minister Miller and his department are providing whatever Tk'emlúps needs by way of security and mental health supports, and we will work with Kúkpi7 Casimir on anything around gatherings or the kind of commemoration they are planning.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Powlowski, you have six minutes.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): My questions are for Minister Bennett—or perhaps Mr. Quan-Watson can answer.

Murray Sinclair, former senator, in a recent statement relating to the bodies that were found in Kamloops, suggested that churches have documents related to missing and dead children that they haven't disclosed. I've also heard the suggestion that perhaps even the Vatican has such documents. Do we believe that there are such documents out there? What have we done to try to secure those documents?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: As the Prime Minister has stated—he reached out to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and spoke with them on Monday—I think we've been very clear that we expect the church to release all relevant documents. I understand that the diocese in Vancouver is open to that. We are hearing from the bishops in the north on their willingness. I do believe that we need these documents from the church. The Canadian government has handed over all relevant documents and it is really time, in order to do the work of identifying these lost children, that the records the churches hold must be handed over, and we will continue to pursue that.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Do we have the legal power now to require the churches to release such documents? If we don't have the legal power, I would suggest that certainly in Parliament we have the ability to give ourselves the legal power to require the churches to hand over those documents. Are there any such plans, or do you think the laws already exist?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Well, my understanding is that our legal options to compel documents are pretty limited, but I think maybe the officials could explain if there are any pathways open to us.

Mr. Daniel Quan-Watson: Perhaps I could ask Monsieur Reiher, who has followed this file closely for a long time, to jump in.

• (1130)

Mr. Martin Reiher (Assistant Deputy Minister, Resolution and Partnerships, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): Thank you, Deputy Minister.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I would add to the answer that churches had obligations to disclose documents in the context of the litigation that led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Under that agreement, and with the legal power the government would have at this time to compel the Catholic Church to produce documents, would be to file a request for direction with the supervising court to compel the production of documents. If documents were located outside of Canada, of course, that becomes much more complicated in terms of jurisdiction.

Thank you.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Just to clarify that: You say that on the previous litigation there was a requirement to disclose documents, and those documents can still be accessed now through that previous litigation? I'm just not sure what the response meant.

Mr. Martin Reiher: Thank you.

The documents that were disclosed as part of the litigation were gathered, and under the settlement agreement, a lot of research was done both by the federal government and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Over five million documents were gathered and transferred to the NCTR. There is already a lot of historical information that is available. This is the document collection that I was referring to. There are other documents that exist that were not disclosed. Maybe the legal power that we would have would be to go through the court, through the processes under the settlement agreement, to compel additional disclosure.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: You think the power already exists through the previous agreement to require the churches to disclose...?

Mr. Martin Reiher: That is the power that we would have at this time under this settlement agreement, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Documents relating to Indian residential schools had to be disclosed, and if not all have been disclosed, that is the recourse that we would have.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Minister, we have set aside \$27 million for further investigations to see if there are—and, certainly, there will be—other graveyards or bodies found. Can you tell us...? It hasn't been that long since the bodies were discovered in Kamloops, but so far, have other indigenous groups come forward to ask for funding to look for further sites?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Yes, unfortunately, Marcus, in Kamloops there had been that “knowing” for over 20 years, and they had begun that work. I think that we are already seeing requests coming from Saskatchewan and from Six Nations, and that this is, unfortunately, very prevalent. As we go across the country and see even the marked graves with the small crosses there in the cemeteries adjacent to where the schools were, it is heartbreaking, but as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said, there are just thousands, probably, of unmarked graves and remains that have yet to be discovered.

The Chair: That brings us to time.

We go now to Madame Bérubé for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Algonquin, Anishinaabe and Cree peoples. I am in Val-d'Or, in my riding.

We are all upset by the distressing discovery of these 215 children. In their memory, we must know the truth and help the communities and, most importantly, listen to them.

My question is for Ms. Bennett.

The members of the Kitcisakik community still have no running water or electricity, because they are merely squatting on the land where they live, in the eyes of white society. That is ridiculous, of course, since it is their own land.

Why is the situation not progressing in the Kitcisakik community?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: I thank the member for her excellent question.

The question of the lack of services like drinking water and other determinants of health is very important, and is, in fact, a priority. As it is for Mr. Miller and Mr. Vandal, this is a crucial question for me, and I hope to find a precise answer for this community.

I promise to get the answer for you.

• (1135)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Minister.

This is important, you know. The Kitcisakik community is invisible to governments. This is often a direct consequence of the appalling living conditions they are currently experiencing. Government support is very important to resolve this situation.

I want to thank you all for being here today.

Last year, I raised the issue of the outdated comprehensive land claims policy. You said that you agreed with me on that subject.

What has your department accomplished to update that policy since March 2020, which is when we had that discussion? Can you answer me?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Can you repeat the question?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: I raised the issue of the outdated comprehensive land claims policy.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: The claims are crucial. We are moving forward with processing claims in numerous communities. I could give you details on the facts and the progress made, if you want.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: I would be very grateful.

My next question is for Mr. Vandal.

Earlier, you talked about Louis Riel. As a Quebecker, I can only reiterate the historic close relationship between Quebec and the Métis Nation. Ottawa has never exonerated Louis Riel after he was unjustly executed.

Do you think it is time for the federal government to finally apologize and exonerate Louis Riel?

Hon. Dan Vandal: Thank you for that excellent question.

I can tell you that neither the elected Métis governments nor the direct descendants of Louis Riel want a pardon. Our government respects the indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and self-government. I know this is a major issue. Important discussions are underway in the communities.

I would say that it is up to the Métis communities to offer us guidance from their perspective.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: My next question is for Ms. Bennett.

Bill C-15 is currently being considered in the Senate. Time is running out, and I have two questions on that subject.

First, are you hopeful that this bill will receive royal assent by the end of the parliamentary session?

Second, will there be a commitment that royal assent will be granted for Bill C-15 by a governor general who would be the first indigenous person to hold that office?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, members of the committee.

Madame Bérubé, I'm so sorry.

The bells are ringing. I'll give Ms. Bennett just half a minute to try to respond, and we will continue until approximately five minutes before the actual vote. We're at around 27 minutes, and there's the half-hour bell, so that will certainly give Ms. Qaqqaq the opportunity to ask her questions.

Once again, Ms. Bennett, did you pick up Madame Bérubé's question?

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you for your question.

I believe that Mr. Leblanc said last Saturday that there was an indigenous person among the potential candidates for the office of governor general. We are awaiting the outcome of that process.

To answer your question concerning comprehensive claims, first, there is a grant for the Assembly of First Nations so that they can participate. Second, there will be revisions to our federal policy.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Clerk, do we need a motion, since the bells are ringing? I just want to make sure we're proceeding....

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Naaman Sugrue): If members are in agreement to proceed as you suggest, then that's absolutely acceptable.

The Chair: Is anyone objecting? I don't see an objection.

Ms. Qaqqaq, please go ahead, for six minutes.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ministers, for being here and for your speeches and answers.

The Prime Minister has stated that your government has the tools and processes to force the Catholic Church to disclose the residential school documents that remain. The Prime Minister has also said that he would only use these tools when it is necessary.

Minister Bennett, why don't you view this as necessary now, when indigenous children have been found dead?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: We are asking the Catholic Church to release the documents, if there are any documents that have not been, as Martin said, released already as part of the settlement agreement class action. We need to know what might be there to be able to proceed. This will be essential in being able to identify the lost children.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: I'm specifically asking why your government isn't viewing it as "necessary". As an indigenous person, Minister Bennett, it's really insulting that you are deciding what is necessary when indigenous people across the nation and I are telling you that this is necessary.

Do you believe that family member records are the family members' property? These documents are not the church's, nor the government's. These are ours—indigenous peoples'. Why are you, as a non-indigenous person, deciding what is necessary in terms of our documentation?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: I agree with you totally. As a physician, I know that records belong to the patient. That is hugely important. Now some of the churches are voluntarily giving over documents, and if there's anything left that hadn't been given previously, we are hoping they will do that. However, I believe that families and survivors expect everything to be there for the examination to be able to do the extraordinarily important work of identifying the children.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Last week, Minister Bennett, you said that the government had already earmarked \$33 million in 2019 to, as the CBC notes, "implement the TRC's burial-related recommendations". However, that \$27 million has not yet been spent. Why hasn't this money been spent since the 2019 budget?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Some of the money has been earmarked for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for their ability to keep comprehensive records of deaths and burials in cemeteries

that families can access. The advice given to us was that we must design a program that would meet the needs of all of the possible communities and survivors' families, and that is the work we did. It has resulted in a very flexible program that communities will be able to apply to for research, gatherings and commemoration—whatever the community needs. We now have a program that will be able to meet those needs and help them unlock the healing and move forward.

● (1145)

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Let's also be extremely clear that finding the remains of these children was not an initiative set out by the federal government. It was an initiative funded by the provincial government. How much longer would we have been waiting if that didn't happen? This didn't happen because the federal institution cares. This happened because a provincial government cares. This was brought to light because of a provincial government, not because of the federal government.

Why is it suddenly such an urgent matter to distribute this money? Why was this not a priority of your department? It took the B.C. government's funding to uncover the mass grave in Kamloops. Do you think it is the federal government's responsibility to fund these searches?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: It most certainly is the federal government's responsibility to fund these searches, and that is why in budget 2019 we put that money aside for that purpose.

I think in the case of Tk'emlúps, they've been working on this for 20 years. They were able to secure, from the federal government, money from Heritage Canada in the pathways to healing, and we will move forward with all other communities to take responsibility, for us to support communities in their way forward.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Now, not only does it sound like the federal institution didn't fund this, but it sounds like they've known about these kinds of initiatives for the last 20 years. They know that these kinds of things have been needing to happen over the last two decades and just haven't put in the time, effort or funds.

Minister Bennett, you have used phrases like working at the speed of indigenous communities until there's a political opportunity like we have seen in the recent weeks. As an indigenous person and a member of an indigenous community, the constant use of that phrase is insulting. We're ready for action now, not when the next tragedy occurs. You need to get to action.

Thanks for the time, Chair.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

I think what we'll be able to do, given the time left before the vote, is to include each of the parties in the next round—the two five-minute turns, and Ms. Qaqqaq and Madame Bérubé for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Melillo, can you go ahead for five minutes, please?

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the ministers for joining us.

Today I will direct my questions to Minister Vandal. Minister, it's nice to see you again, and I hope you're doing well.

You spoke about quite a few topics in your remarks. I hope to get to them all. One of the big ones we've been talking and seeing a lot about in recent reports is housing in the north. We know there are housing shortages and housing issues with mould, disrepair and overcrowding across the territories and northern Canada. In particular, Nunavut especially has many challenges, and I do know that the government has allocated funding towards this. You spoke about that in your remarks.

Closing the gap is also something you say a lot, and the gap still remains quite large, even with this funding. It seems to me that a lot of the bureaucracies that have been created are not really getting the funds they need to go to build these units in some cases. As well, your government's anti-development approach to many projects, I believe, has also made no real incentives for developers to do their work and build new units.

I'm wondering if you can comment on that. Given that your government has spent so much money, as you like to talk about all the time, the results for people across the north...the job is just not getting done right now.

• (1150)

Hon. Dan Vandal: Thank you for that very important question on housing in the north and in Nunavut.

You're absolutely right. The gap is huge, and the gap was made even larger when, before 2015, 10 years of complete non-funding by the previous government only exacerbated an already bad situation—

Mr. Eric Melillo: With respect, you have been in government for six years.

Hon. Dan Vandal: Since being elected in 2015, through our \$70-billion national housing strategy, our government has helped over 9,000 northern families on housing issues, including finding homes for thousands of them. We've signed 10-year housing agreements with all three territorial governments—agreements that were non-existent before—who will invest close to \$800 million over those 10 years.

We've signed a \$400-million housing agreement with Inuit rights holders, who will invest in housing in Inuit Nunangat. In the last budget, 2021, we're—

Mr. Eric Melillo: Excuse me, Minister.

Hon. Dan Vandal: —allocating an extra \$1.5 billion for rapid housing in the north.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Do you know how many units have been built in the territories?

Hon. Dan Vandal: Since 2015, we've helped 9,000 northern families on issues concerning housing, including several thousand new units.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Okay, would that be 9,000 housing units that were built?

Hon. Dan Vandal: We've helped 9,000 families on important housing issues with at least several thousand homes in the north.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Okay. By your estimates from the department's work, how many units would you say are still needed?

Hon. Dan Vandal: Listen, the gap in northern housing is huge due to chronic underfunding by previous governments, and I'll be fair—

Mr. Eric Melillo: That's under your government as well.

Hon. Dan Vandal: —that is including some of our previous Liberal governments, but mostly there was zero funding under the previous tenure of the Harper government, but I will admit—

Mr. Eric Melillo: Minister, your government has been in power for six years.

Hon. Dan Vandal: I will admit that we need to do a better job of breaking down barriers not only in Nunavut but also in Northwest Territories and Yukon. In NWT, we put together, with the government of NWT, a high-level tiger team with senior deputy ministers from both governments to really take those barriers down.

The funding is there. Why it's not flowing in at as adequate a pace as it should be needs to be addressed, and we're committed to working with all three territorial governments and indigenous governments to do just that.

Mr. Eric Melillo: I'm happy you mentioned that and that you acknowledged that, Minister, that the funding isn't flowing down to where it needs to go. I think that's very important because you do cite a lot of figures.

As I mentioned, you're always talking about the funding that's going out the door, but we need these units to be built. That's the bottom line.

Hon. Dan Vandal: That is always possible. That's my philosophy, that we can always do better. Any government can do better.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Yours certainly has to.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Zann, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Bennett, I have a number of questions I'd like to ask you in a short amount of time.

First of all, I want to say thank you for all of your hard work. I know it's not easy to change everything that has happened overnight.

Here in Nova Scotia, the Sipekne'katik First Nation community has already started to search with an archeological team on the grounds of the former residential school there. We are hoping that no bodies are found, but they believe there were 16 children who died, and they had already started looking last weekend.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has listed these names, and the search will be led by archeologists of St. Mary's and the Mi'kmaq cultural heritage curator, Roger Lewis, who is also a member of Sipekne'katik First Nation. These are the types of things that obviously need to be done in order to find truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples across Canada.

Given the possibility of police investigations that involve criminal behaviour in some of these situations, what impact do you think police investigations will have on the current and future community-led investigations?

• (1155)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you so much for the question.

I think even the way you've asked the question is very important, because what was very clear in call to action 76 was that these processes must be community-led and that the police investigation needs to actually take guidance from the community.

It is important that the protocols be followed and that even if the police have opened a file, it's very clear that any future or further actions need to be taken in consultation with the community. The protocols are very different coast to coast to coast, and it will be important to work with the knowledge keepers and the elders in each community to make sure that this is done in a good way and with respect and with the spirit of those children in mind.

Ms. Lenore Zann: I totally agree, and I think the sad part is that many of the stories are anecdotal, people remembering things, people remembering when somebody ran away and then was beaten or disappeared.

It's heartbreaking, and I'm sure you have been going through a lot yourself with all of this latest news. Truth and reconciliation has unearthed so much information and there is just so much more to be addressed, and it is very disturbing for residential school survivors and their families to be retraumatized with all of this news.

Minister, you've said that the \$27 million in funding to support communities is flexible, so can you explain exactly what kinds of activities or initiatives would be eligible under this program?

The Chair: We have a minute. Go ahead.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you for the question.

I did want to share with the committee about this amazing meeting we had last evening with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and Dr. Kona Williams, who is inspiring. She's the only indigenous forensic pathologist in Canada. She really has a lot to share with communities on making sure that everything is done with respect to the communities.

I think the funding is truly flexible, such that it can be for research, engagement, knowledge-gathering, memorialization, commemoration and bringing children home. Some of the children might be at a distance and communities want to bring their children

home. The funding will be truly flexible such that communities are able to do what they know they need in order to unlock the healing.

The Chair: Thanks so much, Minister.

Madame Bérubé, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Bennett.

Could you provide us with the answer we received after our discussion about the Kitcisakik community in writing, given that the people there have no water and no electricity? You said earlier that you could perhaps see what you are able to do on that subject.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you for that question.

[*English*]

Perhaps the deputy minister, Daniel Quan-Watson, can explain the process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Quan-Watson: We will be very happy to send you that information in writing. We may share the work with the Department of Indigenous Services, which was also fully involved in this matter. Between the two of us, we will be able to provide you with the information in writing. We undertake to do that.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you.

Minister, in Winneway, Chief Steeve Mathias has been negotiating with the federal government for several years to have his community recognized as a reserve within the meaning of the Indian Act. Even though no one here likes that act and it is kind of a perfect example of systematic discrimination, it has to be admitted that such recognition could allow the community to get better funding and to get public utilities. In this case, the problem revolves around the Oblate lands.

Can you tell us where the negotiations with this community are, whether about creating a new reserve or signing an agreement that would allow them to take back their territory?

• (1200)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you very much.

It is very important for us, as a government, to speed up the progress toward self-determination. This is very important, and I think that after this meeting, I would like to discuss this community specifically and the facts relating to it.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Qaqqaq, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Thank you, Chair. I'm wondering if we should just pause for you to let us know what the next little bit is going to look like with the upcoming vote. I know we're about five minutes from that.

The Chair: We'll suspend. We'll wait until the vote is conducted and then I think we'll be releasing our witnesses from this panel and going to Minister Miller for the next panel, following the vote.

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq: Can I do the two and a half minutes and then [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] we'll do?

The Chair: You can ask your question now of the ministers here, and then we'll start all over again after the vote.

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq: Okay, great. I'll just start now if that's fine. Thank you, Chair.

I have one question for Minister Vandal. It's a yes or no.

As soon as it's safe to travel and when you are fully vaccinated, do you commit to visiting the Land Guardians in Mittimatalik or Pond Inlet to see the conditions of Baffinland's Mary River Mine?

Yes or no, please.

Hon. Dan Vandal: Absolutely, yes. I am fully vaccinated as of eight days ago.

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq: Great, that's fantastic to hear. Thank you, Minister.

Back to Minister Bennett, last week you said that explicit details on the action plan in response to the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry are still to come. The action plan finally came out and had no tangible action, funding or timelines, and now we are supposed to wait for an implementation plan. Indigenous women and girls are dying while we wait for another plan from you.

I want to touch on and just confirm some of the things that have happened over the last while. In June 2019, the Liberal government gave themselves a timeline of a year to develop a plan of action, so in the minds of Canadians at that time, it would mean an implementation plan was being developed with key stakeholders. I brought this up last summer, and we confirmed that even though there was the 12-month timeline, it still took five months for stakeholders to even get funding to start the work. Once we saw, of course, June 2020, there was an excuse with the COVID delays, so we weren't going to see any movement on the delay that this government had already given itself. Here we are in June 2021, and we still haven't seen action and things come to fruition.

Is that basically what's happened over the last two years or so, Minister Bennett?

The Chair: You're completely out of time, but I'll give you a shot at trying to answer that.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Thank you.

From the day we took office, we began the work to launch the national inquiry and then to be able to put in place things that would really matter, like the family liaison units. We have been working very hard. We always said we wouldn't wait for the national action plan to be able to make those investments and, as you know, in the fall economic update, there was money for shelters. In this budget, there is \$2.2 billion—which has informed the federal strategy, and that federal action plan or implementation plan will be ready this year, but already the money will be flowing.

In terms of the national action plan, there are over 100 indigenous women and two-spirit people leading that process. It has been the first ever of this magnitude, and we're very proud of the work that the National Family and Survivors Circle has done with us. They will lead this process with an excellent data strategy that will make sure that we're making progress, with regular updates. We are going to end this tragedy.

• (1205)

The Chair: We have to end this session in suspension.

Madame Bérubé, do you have a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Yes, I want to ask a question about the vote.

Are we going to come back to committee once we have voted or should we wait for the results of the vote first?

Just for clarification, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Come right back. If there are any problems, we can get them resolved.

Thank you, Ministers.

We now suspend until after the vote.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: Once again, welcome back to the meeting of our committee. We're continuing our consideration of the supplementary estimates (A), 2021-22.

With us now by video conference in the second hour, we have the Minister of Indigenous Services, Marc Miller, who is accompanied by his senior officials: Christiane Fox, deputy minister; Joanne Wilkinson, senior assistant deputy minister; Kelley Blanchette, assistant deputy minister; Philippe Thompson, chief of finances, and results and delivery officer; and Dr. Tom Wong, chief medical officer of public health, first nations and Inuit health branch.

Welcome, everyone.

Mr. Miller, please go ahead with your opening remarks.

• (1225)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I begin, I understand that you will not be renewing your term next round, as well as MP Qaqqaq, so I do want to extend all of my greetings to you. Good luck in your future endeavours, and thank you for your service to the House of Commons, Canada and your people.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Marc Miller: *Kwe kwe. Unnusakkt. Tansi.* Hello.

[*Translation*]

Hello.

[*English*]

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that in Ottawa, I'm on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

First and foremost, I do want to say a few words for the communities, families and friends impacted by the tragic news of the children whose remains were recently found at the former Kamloops residential school located on the traditional territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc people.

I'd like to thank the members for their continued advocacy and echoing indigenous voices here in Parliament.

While this discovery has shocked and disturbed the nation, for indigenous peoples across the country, these findings are deeply painful, traumatizing and triggering, although they are not surprising, particularly for the indigenous peoples who have known this truth for far too long.

Our thoughts remain with the families and communities impacted not only by this discovery but by the residential school system. It is essential that we respect and continue to respect the privacy, space and mourning period of those communities that are collecting their thoughts and putting together their protocols as to how to honour these children.

[*Translation*]

We recognize that there is a continuing need for psychological wellness services associated with childhood and intergenerational trauma. We will continue to work with our partners and the communities, first and foremost to ensure adequate access to appropriate services.

The survivors and the families affected by the indigenous residential schools system have access, among other things, to the national Indian residential schools crisis line if they need it. The Indian residential schools resolution health support program also offers access to elders, to traditional healers and to other appropriate forms of cultural and emotional support, as well as to professional mental health counselling.

In addition, all indigenous peoples can access the hope for wellness help line, online or by phone, to get help. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are offering additional support so that indigenous communities can adapt and broaden mental health services.

We also recently announced \$597.6 million over three years for a mental health and wellness strategy based, of course, on the distinct characteristics of the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis Nation. The strategy includes continuing support for former residential schools students and their families. It will be based on existing competencies and will help to fill gaps and respond to the existing, emerging and future needs of indigenous communities.

[*English*]

I'm here today to answer your questions on the supplementary estimates (A) for 2021-22 and to provide you with an update on

continuing efforts to confront the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. I will also answer any other questions that the committee chooses.

For this year, the total authority will be \$18.9 billion, which reflects a net increase of \$5.4 billion. This includes support for initiatives such as funding for COVID-19 responses, including, notably, \$760.7 million for the indigenous community support fund that has been so welcomed, \$64 million for the continuation of public health responses in indigenous communities and \$332.8 million for indigenous communities affected by disruptions to their revenue due to COVID-19, which we announced, made official and launched yesterday.

The net increase for the supplementary estimates (A) also includes \$1.2 billion for out-of-court settlements to advance Canada's overall commitment to reconciliation by paving the way to a more respectful and constructive relationship with indigenous peoples.

It also includes \$1.1 billion for child and family services to support a proactive agreement on a non-compliance motion before the CHRT. The funding is crucial. Since the CHRT issued its first order for Canada to cease its discriminatory practices in 2016, we have been working with first nations leaders and partners to implement the tribunal's orders, and we are in compliance. The \$1.1 billion will go to communities that are engaged in activities that prevent the apprehension of kids and contribute to the transformation of the system that has been so broken.

Let me be clear once again. We share the same goal: First nations children historically harmed by the child welfare system will receive fair, just and equitable compensation. The government is not questioning or challenging the notion that compensation should be awarded to first nations children who were harmed by the historical discrimination and underfunding of the child welfare system. The question is not whether we compensate; it is a question of doing so in a way that is fair, equitable and inclusive of those directly impacted.

To this end, we have already consented to certification of the consolidated class action filed in the Federal Court by the Assembly of First Nations and Councillor Xavier Moushoom regarding the same children who were harmed by the system, as contemplated by the CHRT. Furthermore, we are currently in mediation with the partners, but as is set out in the mediation agreement, those discussions will remain confidential out of respect.

We remain committed to providing first nations children access to the necessary supports and services in partnership with indigenous peoples. To that effect, it's important to note that 820,000 claims under Jordan's principle have been processed since 2016, which represents close to \$2 billion in funding.

Most notably, in January 2020, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into force. It is key to this conversation in transforming the relationship, responding to the calls to action and setting a new way forward. Indigenous governments and communities have always had the inherent right to decide things that people like me take for granted; that is, what is best for their children, their families and their communities. The act provides a path for them to fully exercise and lift up that jurisdiction.

As a result of this work led by indigenous communities, two indigenous laws have now come into force under the federal law, the Wabaseemoong Independent Nations law in Ontario and the Cowessess First Nation Miyo Pimatisowin Act in Saskatchewan. In each of these communities, children will have greater opportunity to grow up and thrive immersed in their culture and surrounded by loved ones.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

I will now move on to an update on COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, and still today, Indigenous Services Canada has been aware of the particular vulnerability of indigenous communities to the virus.

From the outset, we knew that immediate, decisive measures were necessary to protect the communities as best we could. Our absolute priority was the safety, health and well-being of the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis.

However, without the dedication and determination of all of the leaders of those communities, none of that would have been possible. I want to thank them for their continuous work over the last year, in particular in encouraging the members of their communities to get vaccinated.

With respect to vaccine roll-out, as of June 7, 687 indigenous communities had campaigns underway. In total, that corresponds to 540,581 doses administered, including first and second doses.

This means that 41% of eligible people aged 12 and over in the communities or living in the territories have received two doses of the vaccine. This is crucial in the communities where the population is predominantly young.

In addition, 80% of people have received a first dose, and if we consider those aged 12 and over, we are talking about 72%. So this is tremendous progress.

With respect to the number of cases, as of June 9, in First Nations communities, we are aware of 761 active cases, which is, fortunately, a decline from the previous week. That brings us now to just about 30,568 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Of those, 29,459 people have recovered, and, tragically, 348 others have died.

[*English*]

I see that perhaps that you're flagging me, Bob, or do I have a couple of minutes?

The Chair: Minister, are you wrapping up? Yes?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, in two seconds.

Lastly, I want to discuss an issue that's essential to first nations communities—water. Ensuring that first nations communities have reliable access to clean water is a key goal for us. As of June 9, first nations, with support from Indigenous Services Canada, have lifted 107 long-term water advisories since 2015, at which date there were 105 in effect. In 2019, we've increased that support funding for operations and maintenance, which is a key demand of first nations—

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq: I'm sorry, Chair. Can we just check the interpretation? It went really weird there for a second. I have it on English, and it went to French for me.

The Chair: Yes, the same thing is happening here.

Mr. Clerk, the translation seems to be jumping back and forth, whatever one selects.

The Clerk: It should be resolved now, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right.

Can you conclude briefly, Marc?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Hon. Marc Miller: Thanks, Chair.

In 2019 and 2020, we increased funding to support the operations and maintenance of wastewater systems. With these increases, by 2025-26, over \$400 million per year in permanent funding will be provided, which is four times what's been allocated since 2016. That will be key and transformative to their maintaining the lifespan of these key infrastructure assets in communities and securing clean water for everyone. These added funds will have that tangible effect that I've mentioned and will contribute to safe water and safe and healthy communities.

I want to thank all of you again for this community. Now I am quite happy to take any and all questions.

Meegwetch. Nakurmiik. Mahsi cho. Thank you.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Vidal, it's your first start, for six minutes.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today. As you know, we always appreciate your time.

Minister, you know that I'm all about talking about about outcomes and results and some of those kinds of things. We've had this conversation before.

I have a couple of quick questions up front. I will ask you to be brief in your answers so that I can get to the substance of another couple of questions after that.

You department has committed \$43.7 million over five years “to co-develop a legislative framework” for first nations policing that recognizes first nations policing as “an essential service”. We recently completed a study on exactly that. When we had officials from four different departments at committee, not a single one of those people could actually define what “policing as an essential service” was. Would it frustrate you that nobody from the department actually had a definition of what we're aiming for?

Hon. Marc Miller: I think, MP Vidal, that it's frustrating to indigenous communities who have been.... Again, when I spoke about things that we take for granted, certainly people who look like me take policing for granted.

There's an element in here that's important to highlight. My department deals with a sort of companion aspect of policing as an essential service, as a relationship partner with Public Safety. The bulk of that will be led by Minister Bill Blair, firstly as he continues to fund the first nations policing program, but then to expand it and do the consultation work necessary to define and reflect the needs of communities, whether it's the treaty areas or anywhere across Canada that where that service is needed for the health and safety of communities, and foremost for women and children as a key response to the MMIW calls for justice and the TRC report.

Yes, absolutely, it's frustrating, but there is also an aspect of this where we need that input from communities, to keep working with communities and putting forth a piece of legislation that will recognize that essential service.

The part that I'm responsible for, to be clear and—

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Minister. I want to keep going. I'm going to run out of time. Sorry.

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, I know. I just wanted to emphasize what I do.

Mr. Gary Vidal: I'm sorry. I have so much that I want to do here quickly.

You spoke about child and family services. I think you referenced a couple of first nations that have completed that journey or are moving down that journey of taking over their responsibilities. I've asked you this question before, and maybe that is a simple answer.

Are there so far just two first nations that have indicated their desire to do that? Just where are we at in that process? Based on some of the events of the last few weeks here, I think it's so very important that we deal with some of the current issues as well, and having first nations control of some of their child and family services is important. I'm just wondering how fast that is happening.

If you could briefly respond, I want to get into one more detailed question, if I could.

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, and I'll be quite frank: It's slow. Certainly, the pandemic, where people have focused on their health and safety of the communities has resulted in a slowdown. This is a revolutionary piece of legislation that lifts up inherent rights of indigenous peoples. We have dozens and dozens of communities across Canada that have expressed interest. There was about \$500 million or more in the fall economic statement that was dedicated to working on capacity, to putting those laws forward and entrenching them.

We want to make sure that we have proper coordination agreements in place with provinces that hold the bulk of that responsibility. There's a relationship aspect there with the provinces, including your home province, that we can't discount in all of this, but there are many more.... There are some that have lifted up their own legislation and have said, "We're not necessarily interested in Bill C-92, but this is how we're going to protect our children." That has some validity as well.

We're very cautious in those estimates, but I would say for the benefit of this committee that there are dozens and dozens that have

done good work along the way. There are some difficult challenges ahead in and around capacity, so I won't hide that from you, but it is a long road, and it is part and parcel of everything we've seen in the last week.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you.

I have probably one final question. COVID-19 magnified the realities of some of the jurisdictional quagmires around indigenous people in urban settings. You and I have had the conversation many times about friendship centres and the funding. It took some time to kind of make it through the community support funding process for the urban indigenous folks. Friendship centres offer a variety of services that are as diverse as the communities they serve. I know that friendship centres are looking for a longer-term commitment so that they can plan for their future, invest in infrastructure, make sure they have commitments to programs that are ongoing, and make good, efficient decisions.

Is there anything going on with any of the budget work or the estimate work that would provide that long-term commitment for friendship centres that serve urban indigenous people?

• (1240)

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, certainly, MP Vidal, in budget 2021 there is a large pot of funding for infrastructure that we are currently parsing out, working with community members to see how that would fold out based on need and based on shovel-ready projects. There is a lot of light and hope at the end of the tunnel.

Certainly, the amounts that we've announced through the indigenous community support fund through COVID, for which there will be four or five waves—the latest one went out last week—has a rubric, an envelope, that is dedicated to the work the friendship centres are doing, serving indigenous communities off reserve, and also with room for tribal councils serving their people who live outside their communities. That's an important element and aspect to it. What we—

Mr. Gary Vidal: Sorry: Is that beyond COVID-19, Minister? Is that longer-term or ongoing funding beyond COVID?

Hon. Marc Miller: Well, yes, I guess what I was trying to say was that there has been some immense work done under COVID that has been transformative in the work we will be doing going forward in highlighting that relationship. It is a different one from a nation-to-nation relationship, obviously, with friendship centres that have a different form of governance and others that serve community members. It's one that we want to work toward. Knowing the number of indigenous folks who live outside their home communities, it is so key. In budget 2021, although it was not specifically earmarked, there will be some funding for urban indigenous initiatives.

The Chair: That's the time there. Thank you very much.

Adam van Koeverden, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will have two questions for the minister. I would start by asking him to answer the first one, and to leave enough time to answer the second.

[*English*]

First, in January 2020, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into effect to affirm the jurisdiction of indigenous communities over child and family services. How will this act support the well-being of indigenous children and families and provide culturally relevant care to children? Could you please provide an update on the implementation of this act?

Hon. Marc Miller: What we've seen throughout, and particularly what has become quite poignant and top of mind over the last week, is that Canada and the provinces have been administering a broken system for some time. We can talk about compensation, which is very important. When we talk about transformation, that's when we have to talk about the legislation that was passed just before the prior election. It's shifting, in the spirit of self-determination, a system that was focused on prevention, and not culturally appropriate, to one that is...or rather, from intervention to prevention. When it's embodied and enshrined in the language of self-determination, it is an effort to lift up communities in how they protect their own—again, something we've taken for granted.

It is long work. It requires an intense amount of consultation. There was about \$500 million in the fall economic statement dedicated to building capacity. That's something that will be deployed over five years. Additional investments will be required as communities bring home their children and pass their legislation to lift it up.

When I said to Gary that it was slow, an important principle was embodied when the law came into force—the minimum standard of the child. It is a signal to all of Canada and to courts that they can no longer sanction practices that removed disproportionately indigenous children from their families based on such issues as poverty. That is still the challenge for every single government in the future, to keep combatting a poverty discrimination that is the legacy of our colonial past.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I thank the minister, Mr. Chair.

On June 2, the coroner's inquest into the death of Joyce Echaquan ended. Throughout the inquest, Canadians across the country learned new details about the mistreatment that Joyce Echaquan suffered shortly before her death.

What plans have been put in place to combat anti-indigenous racism in the health care system? What could the government do to ensure that the indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women, have equitable access to health care?

Hon. Marc Miller: I presume that this is the question that all of the people in the rest of Canada who were able to attend the coroner's hearings or hear the reporting on those painful moments are asking themselves. This is what is experienced by many if not all indigenous people, who are apprehensive about a health care system that I consider to be first class, myself, but that has often treated them as second class or even third class persons.

During the coroner's inquest, we once again heard things about the reality of daily life for indigenous people who use the health care system, at a time when they are most vulnerable. I have been in almost daily contact with Joyce Echaquan's husband Carol Dubé, who is going through a very difficult time that he is facing with courage and strength. He and his family are still having some very hard times. As I said before, this is the reality experienced by some indigenous people who use the Canadian health care system, which is a jurisdiction jealously guarded by all provinces. That is the case everywhere in Canada.

My mandate is to put in place a law based on the distinctions, to combat anti-indigenous racism in the indigenous health care systems, in particular, but also to transform the system. Some elements have to operate at the same time. Obviously, this reform will be a lengthy and very difficult process, given the jurisdictional disputes that have existed in the past.

One thing that we announced in the budget was a \$100 million fund in honour of Joyce Echaquan to combat racism in the health care system directly. I want to stress that this racism exists everywhere in Canada.

● (1245)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chair, I will yield my remaining time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Van Koeverden. I'm sure that will be much appreciated by Madame Bérubé and others.

Sylvie, please go ahead for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am speaking from my office in Val-d'Or, which is on the traditional territory of the Algonquin, Cree and Anishinaabe peoples.

I thank the minister and all the witnesses for being here today.

My question is for Mr. Miller.

In the 2019 budget, the government had announced a figure of \$33.8 million over three years to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action 72 to 78. The Prime Minister and yourself have reiterated that the government has invested that money.

Do you agree with me that a budget statement is worthless if Parliament does not authorize the proposed spending, yes or no?

Hon. Marc Miller: I agree with you on one thing: I am making no excuses for the late deployment of those funds. As you know, supporting communities in their grief and when searches are necessary is a hugely delicate process. It is very intrusive and traumatizing, and it is understandable that it can take time to get answers.

The indigenous peoples want answers, and the message I have for them today is this: in addition to the \$27 million that was approved by Treasury Board, Canada will be here for all communities that want to conduct searches. They are the ones who will set the tone. We cannot do it without their completely informed consent, given the sensitive nature of the process.

Protocols have to be established and I don't think the communities have pre-established protocols for this kind of atrocity, and that is why we have to give them space and time. However, that must not be interpreted as an excuse for not spending this money. If the communities need additional support or the expertise of the Government of Canada, we will be here for them.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Yesterday, in response to a journalist who asked you about the \$27 million, you replied:

The money was announced in the 2019 budget, and, if I am not mistaken, it passed Treasury Board very recently, so the money is available. Regarding the appropriation ..., I could do the research for you, but I assure you that it is available.

So can you tell me whether that money actually appears, in whole or in part, in the supplementary estimates (A) that we are examining today?

Hon. Marc Miller: I will let one of my experts who are here today answer that question, because I do not yet have the answer to the question asked by Boris Proulx.

Mr. Philippe Thompson (Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer, Department of Indigenous Services): From what I understand, the \$27 million is in the supplementary estimates (A) of our colleagues at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. That money is therefore not part of the supplementary estimates (A) that are under consideration today.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: When we examine the public accounts of Canada for 2019 to 2020 and the main estimates for the three years after the 2019 budget, we see that this money was not included in the budget, except for the \$3.2 million that appeared in the 2020-2021 supplementary estimates (B).

Can you explain what became of the rest of the \$33.8 million?

• (1250)

Hon. Marc Miller: That falls under Ms. Bennett's mandate, in particular.

I may be corrected on the precise amounts, but it is money that was paid to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I may be wrong and that may have to be corrected afterward. Mr. Thompson may want to correct me.

Mr. Philippe Thompson: That is also what I understand, that these funds are not part of the department's reference level. Unfortunately, I can't offer you any more information about that money.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Do you agree with me that, in reality, the money announced in the 2019 budget was essentially never spent by Parliament, that it was not authorized in the form of appropriations?

Can you explain that for me, please?

Mr. Philippe Thompson: If the money was not paid to the department, we could not spend it. Unfortunately, I am not able to

speak to the amounts that were approved in the budget but that were not part of the Department of Indigenous Services' reference levels.

It is hard for me to give a more detailed answer.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Was it blocked by Treasury Board, do you think?

Mr. Philippe Thompson: I can't tell you that exactly.

As I said, if the money was intended for the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, it is that department's budget process that was involved and we have no role to play in it. My colleagues at the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs might be able to give you more details about how that money was used, and whether or not it was spent.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: In December, I received the answer to one of my written questions concerning the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action 81 and 82.

In its answer, the government told us that only 0.5% full-time equivalent position was assigned to implementing call to action 82, which, we will recall, involves building a monument to the memory of the victims of indigenous residential schools, in Ottawa.

I will ask the question again that I asked the other day. Do you not think that this is insufficient for implementing that call to action?

[English]

The Chair: Be very brief.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Miller: Once again, that falls within the mandate of the Department of Canadian Heritage or the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

Obviously, we all want things to go faster, given the events of recent weeks.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Qaqqaq, please go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Thank you, Chair.

The budget allocates \$25 million to Nunavut for housing construction. This would result in the construction of only 100 new homes across the massive territory. The Government of Nunavut has said that the territory needs 3,000 new houses immediately. In about 30 seconds, can you give me the rationale for this low figure?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, and thanks, MP Qaqqaq. I want to thank you for your advocacy for your people.

I think we are currently in discussions with ITK regarding their infrastructure needs. Housing will be a huge amount of that. That's part of the \$6 billion that was announced in budget 2021, so that number you quoted is only a small part of the discussion that's ongoing, and I believe there will be positive news in the near future, as there needs to be, absolutely.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: As you and I saw on my housing tour, the reality of housing in the north is horrifying. Unsafe, overcrowded and mouldy homes are the norm. I was surprised to see that the supplementary estimates added an extra \$40 million for Inuit-specific housing. Can you tell me why this extra funding was included? Again, if you could do that in about 30 seconds, it would be great.

Hon. Marc Miller: I don't have an answer on that particular line item, but perhaps Philippe does.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Do you have any idea then how this money might be distributed or whom it might be funnelled through?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, as you know, we announced \$400 million in housing in partnership with the territory. Those are the monies we have dedicated throughout our governmental budgets, but as for that particular line item, I don't have an answer for you.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: NTI, or Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, requested \$500 million in the budget to fund housing development for Inuit housing in Nunavut, and yet this government offered a measly \$40 million for Inuit across Canada. NTI said that Inuit needs for housing are as great as all Inuit Nunangat combined.

The \$500 million was a short-term emergency ask. It's a bare minimum ask, and even though you included more money for Inuit housing, it would still be less than a fifth of what was requested. That's like needing five dollars and getting a quarter. That's an outrage. Why didn't this government at least budget the requested \$500 million for housing in Nunavut?

• (1255)

Hon. Marc Miller: I want to highlight the work that NTI and ITK have done towards putting a number in the ask. They've done amazing work in trying to quantify that housing need, and infrastructure needs generally. We are currently working with them to work on allocations in the context of the \$6 billion that was announced for infrastructure as part of budget 2021. That is transformative, but we will continue those talks with them. I hope to have some good news in the coming months.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: That still doesn't really explain the rationale behind the less than a fifth of the funding that's needed. It's an emergency ask. It really doesn't capture the true nature of what is really needed in the territory. It's a band-aid solution for what's needed even right now, and so even \$500 million, you could say, is too low within Nunavut, and then this government decided to ball-park it even lower.

Have you read the housing report that I put out from last year?

Hon. Marc Miller: I only read the highlights of ITK's proposal on how they would like to deal with housing. I'm sure my team has, but I would just add the qualification to the numbers you were citing that it's a very small part of the picture of what we will be announcing for the north. That said, I will acknowledge that in terms

of the 10-year plan, the amounts in the budget are not sufficient to close that gap, and that is work we will have to be relentless in investing in over the future.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: I guess, then, you wouldn't be able to tell me what the title was or what communities were involved, or I guess anything that stood out particularly, because I travelled for three weeks and did a lot in that time. Would you be able to recall anything like that from the report?

Hon. Marc Miller: What I did watch, in particular, was your social media in and around your tour, and some of what you highlighted. Certainly I've read the reports that the partners have put together as to the dire housing needs, and I will readily acknowledge those. From anything I've heard from our COVID deployment and the contacts that I've had, all of that rings true. Unfortunately, I have not had the chance to visit when I would like to.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Since you followed and may have looked at things briefly, you might remember some quotes from it. One unit had 14 people living in it with only four bedrooms. A child was so frequently sick due to mould that they were placed in foster care.

Minister, how would you tell me to respond if instead of Naujaat or Kugluktuk my report had referred to, say, Nuns' Island or Griffintown? If I were the minister in charge and told you to keep waiting, how would you respond to that? What would you tell me to do? How would you take that?

Hon. Marc Miller: With great respect, MP Qaqqaq, I know what you're asking me, but I would never try to place myself in your shoes. I think your words speak for themselves.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: That's not what I'm asking, but thanks for avoiding the clear relation I'm trying to make.

I think that's my time, Chair.

The Chair: It is. Thanks very much, Ms. Qaqqaq.

Now, to complete the round of questioning, we'll have each of the parties speak. We'll have Mr. Viersen, Mr. Battiste, Sylvie and Mumilaaq once more, and that will take us to the time.

Arnold Viersen, you have five minutes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Miller, I have just been looking over the TRC report once again, and it strikes me, driving around my own riding, that the amount of money spent on residential schools was not the problem. Some of these structures are the most imposing on our landscape in northern Canada. It's not a matter of the money; it's a matter of the outcome.

Your government continually touts the amount of money that it spends and yet what we see is very much a lack of outcomes. Are you still committed to implementing the TRC report recommendations?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Are you satisfied with the nine recommendations that you've achieved so far in the last six years?

• (1300)

Hon. Marc Miller: I won't be satisfied till they're fully complete.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: What has been the holdup?

Hon. Marc Miller: I would qualify your earlier question. There are a great number that are under way currently. The legislation under Bill C-91 and Bill C-92, the immigration notes, currently the movement on the national recognition date, as well as UNDRIP, which your party opposed, are all key to transforming the relationship.

I think one of them is trust. Certainly you mentioned money, but you put forward a false dichotomy. Obviously, we want to see progress from the money, but we have to be relentless in our investments. This is about closing socio-economic gaps. The record shows that has moved. It's about closing the financial gap in education and in all the other investments in infrastructure and housing investments. These are all things that have happened and we want to continue on those.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Actions 71 through 76 were actionable five years ago. Why are we not working on it till today?

Hon. Marc Miller: These are all items that we have started the work on. Clearly when we talk about recognizing and doing something that is immensely sensitive—which is going over burial sites that are crime scenes and perhaps considered sacred at the same time—this is something where communities have to lead.

Obviously, over the last weeks—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: The first nations are the barrier.

Hon. Marc Miller: That's absolutely not what I said.

First nations lead. They make the decisions and the federal government will be there. This isn't equivocation. This is how the relationship is built.

Obviously, the last two weeks have focused people's minds on this, but this is something that indigenous communities have known for decades. In the case of Kamloops, they've been working on it, as Minister Bennett said, for over two decades.

We'll continue with communities. Some communities have reached out, MP Viersen, and they want to accelerate their searches. Other communities have said they are not ready. At the same time, they're always worried about being left behind and not having a financial commitment.

If ever you have the honour of your party coming into power, I hope you will undertake to fund those adequately, as well as you, yourself, complete the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action as they regard the federal government. This is something that all stripes and parties need to be dedicated to.

Despite the great actions of some of your members who are sitting on this committee today, I haven't seen that as a group in your party.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I would remind you that Stephen Harper was the one who apologized for big government's actions and also kick-started the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—

Hon. Marc Miller: Then he cut funding the next day.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: The boil water advisories continue to be a challenge for the federal government. Your government promised they would be dealt with a year ago. We are seeing more communities come onto boiled water advisories again.

On what day will we be out of the bush on that?

Hon. Marc Miller: I encourage you to look at the revamped website. We had some assistance from a great indigenous organization so that every Canadian could see the progress of those.

Let's recall that in 2015, there were 105 long-term water advisories in effect. We've lifted 107. This is an immense amount of progress. Work remains to be done. A lot of the communities, despite having lost the construction year due to COVID, have pushed through. We've announced additional funding.

When we've put out a date, a lot of communities have asked us where we will be after that date because the trust that I mentioned earlier is so thin vis-à-vis the federal government. It's why in November, we announced additional operations and maintenance money and acceleration funds for those communities where the cost has gone up, looking beyond lifting a long-term water advisory, which, I will remind the committee, is done by the nation themselves.

While it may seem easy to lift an advisory, the community will sometimes hesitate legitimately. If you've been on it for 25 years, you can legitimately think you're going to take your time before making that decision because it's about the health of the community.

These things do take time. We have a commitment to communities that we will be there for them.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: How many of the current 28 drinking water advisories that are short term do you expect to turn into long term?

Hon. Marc Miller: I don't know if I can give you an answer today. I expect none of them turn to long term, but it's a community-by-community analysis.

You hit the nail on the head on that one. We've lifted 100-plus.... For 182 short-term water advisories, we've made the investment sufficient so they don't turn to long term ones. That means the safety of water in communities.

We need to take a look at water safety from a perspective that is greater than simply building the building, lifting the long-term water advisory and walking away from this. This is about partnership and making sure that asset has a long-term lifespan, is at the height of its technology and works for the community. That means training people at the grass roots, in the spirit of self-determination with the funds of the federal government to support it, so they are what they are, which is the pride of their community, getting water to the people.

• (1305)

The Chair: That's our time. Thanks very much.

Jaime Battiste, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you for joining us, Minister.

Sitting here listening to the questions, I can't help but reflect. I've been in first nation advocacy and leadership for 20 years, and I remember a time when all of the issues related to indigenous people were under one minister. Now we have two, and you could add Minister Vandal as a third. I couldn't imagine a time as we progress where the fact that we have two ministers would not, to me, be a great thing and a good thing moving forward in terms of making sure that we have a lot of different people looking at the important issues of indigenous people in Canada.

I also want to thank you for your speech in the House during the debate on how we move forward past the findings out in the Kamloops Indian Residential School, the 215 children's bodies. I thought it was very powerful when you spoke the names. I did some smudging in my house when you were talking about those names, and I really thought that was powerful.

All across the country, we have communities grieving, and we have communities triggered by the findings. In my community, we have a crisis centre, Eskasoni crisis centre, and they've been having a sacred fire outside and helping survivors who need to talk and helping people. It really shows the importance of and reason for continuing to fund mental health.

I want to get a sense from you. Can you speak to the need and some of the supports that we're offering for mental health in first nations communities across Canada?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, and thanks for that comment, MP Battiste. Those names were in the TRC report, but I thought, given the context, they should be read into the record of the House of Commons so that they will always be remembered. I think there are more names to come, and that's, I think, what's gripped the entire country, including your community, and really triggered a number of people. Some of the most poignant testimony I've heard has been from those people who are not prepared to speak about these things. They haven't cried since they were 15. It's a recurring theme that I've heard when communities reach out and say they are not ready for this, but will we be there when they are? The answer is yes, and for those who are ready and who want to accelerate things, we will be there.

What we haven't gauged completely,...although my team that's here today is reaching out to communities to get a sense of what mental health needs are. Obviously, there are the mental health

needs that I highlighted in my introduction, and obviously a phone line, as important as it is, is not sufficient. This is magnified as well by what we've seen through COVID, which is an increased stress on indigenous communities' mental health.

One of the budget items that was announced in budget 2021 was over \$500 million for mental health supports. We don't do very well as a government or as a country in talking about mental health. Some of us who are probably best to speak about it don't, and those who are not so good do, and I'm the latter, but that is my job. I think it is important to recognize that everyone in the country is hurting, and even long after some of the news stories have died down, people will remain hurt and triggered, along with feeling the effects of intergenerational trauma.

For the immediacy of the communities in question, we've deployed additional mental health supports and perimeter security, as you can imagine. We're also working with FNHA. As you know, it's first in class in B.C. and is doing some great work with health resources in communities.

The mental health support is yet to be fully understood and engaged as it relates to the particular events that have happened in the last two weeks, but we're getting a sense of that, and it is very important and again, magnified by COVID.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Minister, I don't have a lot of time, so I'll try to be brief with this question. The Eskasoni crisis centre in my community has been looking for funding. I'm not asking for funding, but do you feel the best approaches towards mental health in communities are the ones that are community-based and culturally relevant and that promote the languages in the various first nations across Canada?

Please answer in 30 seconds. Thank you.

Hon. Marc Miller: Absolutely. I think that, as we've seen, it's been a learning lesson with proof points. I think that's been said to us often and has been advocated and is self-evident for indigenous communities and less self-evident for federal government bodies. What we've seen through COVID are proof points, such as on-the-land learning and on-the-land isolation for physical health and mental health and the proven tangible results. I think there's something to learn from this COVID epidemic in how we can support local knowledge for protecting their own people, particularly as it relates to mental health. Obviously, that is no excuse for the federal government stepping back when there is a need, but it is a further reminder that we should do so in partnership and not with Ottawa in a top-down position.

• (1310)

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Madame Bérubé, you have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is this.

Mr. Miller, you recently unveiled a map on your department's website that identifies the indigenous communities that do not have access to clean drinking water. However, there is one indigenous community that does not appear on that map that also does not have clean drinking water, and that is Kitecisakik, which is in my riding.

Why is Kitecisakik invisible?

Hon. Marc Miller: With respect to Kitecisakik, negotiations are underway with the province about moving the community. Obviously, during these discussions about moving, we will still be here for that community.

In Quebec, there is no boil water advisory, and that is the result of the hard work we have done over the years. For identifying a community that comes under what is called federal jurisdiction, in particular, we count the public drinking water systems that have at least five residential connections.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Is it possible for you to give us a written answer concerning those negotiations, Mr. Miller?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: We were talking earlier about the discovery of the remains of 215 children in Kamloops. We are very well aware that more discoveries may be made in other Canadian provinces.

Do you have an idea of what you can do to help the communities that are grieving and that are having mental health problems right now, as you explained earlier?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, absolutely.

As you said, this is the tip of the iceberg. Unfortunately, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada plainly shows that there could be more than 3,000 or 4,000 persons who have disappeared. It could be considerably more, as Senator Sinclair recently said.

We will be here for the communities.

As I said in English, not all communities are ready. There are elders who have not yet shed tears since they were 15 years old, who are still going through their healing process. There are communities that want to speed things up, and for them, we will be there with financial support, obviously, among other things.

I can't subtract the role of the government of Quebec from the equation. I recently spoke with the minister, Mr. Lafrenière, with whom we have an excellent working relationship to support the communities, but we will not do anything without the consent of the communities. That being said, this statement is not an excuse to take our time. We will be there, with respect and with the informed consent of the community.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Minister.

Ms. Qaqqaq, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The supplementary budget estimates include \$1.2 billion in funding for out-of-court settlements for indigenous legal cases. The le-

gal system has failed indigenous peoples countless times. Where do you expect that money to be used?

Hon. Marc Miller: Thanks, MP Qaqqaq.

I will acknowledge that the legal system in Canada has failed indigenous peoples. One of the present challenges we face as a government and continue to face is that where we are in disagreement in a respectful way.... Obviously, out of court is the preferred way to do so.

I'd ask my team to specify those numbers, because I'm aware of many cases. If they could just break down quickly what those numbers comprise....

We can give you a written response, too.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: I think that out of court is the way that the federal institution has forced this to go. Residential school survivors should be compensated, and they shouldn't have to sue the government to settle out of court to get their money.

Why is the government willing to spend more than a billion dollars on court settlements but not on ensuring that indigenous peoples have access to basic human rights like housing?

• (1315)

Hon. Marc Miller: This touches on a question that I, perhaps, can't answer in the time remaining, but closing those socio-economic gaps, talking about those issues that have driven the inequities and violations of human rights, is key. We don't want to get into a court process, but again, people who have suffered harm need to be compensated.

Transforming the system is a part of that, and as you note by implication, no single court case can transform the system when it comes to child and family care as Bill C-92 can and aspires to, as well as all the transformative pieces of legislation in and around languages and inherent right and that form of reparations that we need to do to transform Canada into what people believe it to be but that, frankly, with the news in the last two weeks, is not.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: It's also really difficult to hear the excuse of indigenous communities not being ready. Indigenous communities have been ready for basic human rights for decades and ready for the right to self-determination and equality for decades.

I'd like you to start walking the walk instead of just talking the talk and go to communities this summer before your government forces an election, Minister Miller. I invite you to go up to communities like Taloyoak and Sanikiluaq to see the conditions of the people who live there. Inuit have always said that they want ministers to come up and experience day-to-day living, so like I said, walk with communities instead of just talking about the importance of them.

Matna.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Qaqqaq.

That brings us to the end of the minister's role today.

Mr. Miller, thanks so much for staying with us for as long as we were able to. It was a very interesting conversation.

Thank you, committee.

Now, committee, in the discussion we've had, I didn't hear any specific challenges with regard to the supplementary estimates specifically. Are we unanimous in consenting to call the vote as a group and adopt them on division?

Is anyone opposed to that? I don't see any opposition, so we'll call the unanimous consent for the supplementary estimates as presented, and so, having adopted—

Mr. Jamie Schmale: I'm sorry, Chair. Just for clarification, do we pass them unanimously, or pass it on division?

The Chair: We can do whatever you want. We can do it on division, if you'd like.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: I think we usually do it on division.

The Chair: Okay, we'll do that on division.

I thought we had unanimity, but we will have it on division.

All in favour? Opposed?

Are you opposed, Madame Bérubé?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: No, I am in favour.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, that's a thumbs-up.

DEPARTMENT OF CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$866,638,152

Vote 5a—Capital expenditures.....\$1,553,000

Vote 10a—Grants and contributions.....\$136,347,028

Vote 25a—Debt forgiveness.....\$1

(Votes 1a, 5a, 10a and 25a agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF INDIGENOUS SERVICES

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$1,370,648,221

Vote 5a—Capital expenditures.....\$31,111,298

Vote 10a—Grants and contributions.....\$3,985,198,423

(Votes 1a, 5a and 10a agreed to on division)

The Chair: They pass on division. Having adopted the supplementary estimates, shall I report the supplementary estimates (A), 2021-22 to the House on division?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thanks so much, everybody. That passes.

We will meet again next on Tuesday with witnesses for our trafficking study.

Could I have a motion to adjourn, please?

Ms. Lenore Zann: I so move.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Zann.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Everyone, have a great day. Thank you for a very interesting committee meeting today.

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