



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

### CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

**The Speaker:** It is my duty to lay before the House, pursuant to subsection 94(2) of the Access to Information Act and subsection 72(2) of the Privacy Act, the reports of the Chief Electoral Officer on the administration of these acts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition from Canadians concerned about the future of our forest industry and the rural communities it supports.

Petitioners note that forestry has long been a source of good jobs, but, in recent years, it has faced major challenges, from wildfires and infestations to the ongoing softwood lumber dispute. The petitioners highlight that U.S. trade policies continue to threaten Canadian producers while Canada's failure to act on biomass incentives has left their sector at a competitive disadvantage compared to the United States. The petitioners point out that forest biomass has the potential to provide a sustainable source of energy for Canada's electrical grids while creating good jobs in rural communities.

They therefore call on the government to expand federal market programs for Canada wood products and to establish a timely biomass tax credit to support forestry jobs, something that was in the fall economic statement of 2023.

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise to present to this House a petition by Canadians concerned with what has become of the MAID system in Canada. There is a grave concern, which these petitioners express, that allowing medical assistance in dying for people who are not already dying devalues their lives; it endorses the notion that life with a disability is optional and, by extension, dispensable. These petitioners are very alarmed that when MAID is offered because of a lack of available service or treatment, it is not actually a real choice.

What the petitioners are seeking is that we protect all Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable by not having MAID available for those who do not have a natural death coming within the next six months. I present this petition for the House for due consideration by members and the Government of Canada.

NATURAL RESOURCES

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have this opportunity to present a number of petitions to the House today.

The first petition is on a subject that is very important to my constituents, on the issue of pipelines. The petitioners are no doubt sick of the incessant teasing but failure to deliver from the members opposite. They say that the government continues to import foreign oil even though oil and gas companies are struggling in Canada, that Canada extracts and refines the most ethically sourced oil in the world and that the importation of foreign oil is worse for the environment and undermines our economy and our strategic interests.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to put in place a plan for an east-west corridor to replace foreign oil so that Canada's source of oil and gas remains Canadian and helps to stimulate our economy, provide for greater environmental protection and advance our strategic interests.

These are pro-pipeline petitioners, and I am pleased to table this on their behalf.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1005)

## FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition highlights a private member's bill that I tabled in the last Parliament. It is Bill C-257 from the previous Parliament. This petition is in support of that bill, a bill that would add political belief or activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. The petitioners note that being free from political discrimination is a fundamental right here in Canada but that people do face political discrimination in certain situations.

The petitioners want to see the House support the previous bill, Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity. They also want to see Parliament act to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political perspectives.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling deals with the issue of euthanasia. I have tabled petitions on this topic before, but this is a different petition that highlights, in particular, concerns about recommendation 21 from the 2023 report by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Recommendation 21 deals with the issue of so-called advance requests. The petitioners note that persons who have made an advance request might no longer be able to confirm their wishes at the time of their death, especially if those wishes have changed. The petitioners express concern that advance requests rely on written documents describing a person's future suffering condition. Doctors and families might interpret the request differently from what the patient wanted. The petitioners also note concern that advance requests could lead to coercion or undue pressure for older adults living with disabilities, and they highlight ethical concerns about how an old request would be handled. They note that it is difficult for a person to predict their experience in a situation that they have not yet experienced or do not have the context to predict. As well, the petitioners say that Canada should increase funding for palliative care, hospice care and suicide prevention. They say that offering euthanasia rather than providing support services devalues those living with chronic conditions.

Therefore, the petitioners ask the government not to support any legislation related to the expansion of euthanasia, particularly along the lines of recommendation 21, the inclusion of advance requests. They want to see the House support an increase in government focus on advancing compassionate, life-affirming palliative and hospice care.

## ERITREA

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the human rights abuses in Eritrea and calls for a stronger response from the government and the House.

The petitioners note that Eritrea has been ruled by a brutal authoritarian dictator under a totalitarian system for 30 years, with no constitution, no elections, no parliament, no freedom of the press, and no freedom of movement and association. They highlight that

Eritreans flee indefinite military conscription, religious persecution and political repression, seeking asylum in other parts of the world. The petitioners also note that the government of Eritrea continues to try to perpetrate human rights abuses against people of Eritrean origin living outside the country and that Eritrean embassies have been sources of foreign interference. They highlight a number of instances of foreign interference being perpetrated by the Government of Eritrea. Finally, in terms of human rights abuses and international peace and security, the petitioners want to draw the attention of the House to the Eritrean dictator's alignment with Vladimir Putin and how that creates security challenges for the wider region by facilitating Russian interference in African states.

The petitioners want to see the government engage Eritrean political and human rights activists and pro-democracy groups and take a leadership role among western allies to challenge the malicious conspiracy between the Eritrean dictator and Vladimir Putin, which is contributing to Russian efforts to expand influence in Africa. They want to see an investigation of foreign interference by Eritrea in Canada and the enforcement of Canada's asylum laws to ensure that those affiliated with the regime are not able to come to Canada. They also want to see Canada take action to support imprisoned journalists and parliamentarians. I have read the names before; I will not do so again, but the petitioners highlight 11 imprisoned Eritrean parliamentarians, as well as Swedish Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak, who I believe is the journalist to be held in prison the longest anywhere in the world. The petitioners also want to see strength in sanctions against human rights abusers in Eritrea.

● (1010)

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition also deals with the issue of euthanasia. In particular, it highlights concerns from the disability community that proposals for the expansion of euthanasia and the existing track 2 system really undermine the experience of people with disabilities when they access the health care system and that offering medical assistance in dying as a solution for disability or chronic illness reduces incentives to improve treatment and care for people with those conditions.

The petitioners want to see the House protect all Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable by prohibiting medical assistance in dying for those whose prognosis for natural death is more than six months.

## HAZARAS

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition I will table highlights the severe challenges faced by the Hazara people in Afghanistan. The Hazaras have faced multiple genocides and waves of persecution as an often religious and certainly ethnic minority in Afghanistan. Their condition is very threatened under the Taliban at present.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the sacrifice and investment of Canadians in building up Afghanistan and the collaborations that existed, during Canada's presence there, with many people from the Hazara community. The petitioners want to see the Government of Canada recognize past acts of genocide against the Hazara people and to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day.

## GUARANTEED BASIC INCOME

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for sharing his time.

I am honoured to rise today to present a petition. Many parliamentarians here will know that Coalition Canada Basic Income is meeting with many of us today. It is my honour to present on behalf of my constituents a petition that points out the need for a guaranteed livable monthly income so that no Canadian falls below the poverty line. The petitioners point out that the current patchwork of federal and provincial income assistance programs is transaction-heavy, has a lot of paperwork and bureaucratic costs, and could be replaced by a simple, straightforward guaranteed livable income.

The petitioners call for a financial safety net for all Canadians, looking particularly at the threat to our working life posed by artificial intelligence. They call on the government to implement a guaranteed livable income for all Canadians.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today highlighting the concerns of petitioners regarding euthanasia in Canada. The petitioners point out that choosing to end one's life because of a lack of available services or treatments is not a real choice. They also point out that allowing those with a disability or chronic illness who are not dying to choose to end their life devalues their life and tacitly endorses the notion that life with a disability is optional and, by extension, dispensable. Offering medical assistance in dying as a solution to a disability or chronic illness reduces incentives to improve treatment or care for people living with those conditions.

The petitioners note that Canada does not want to be an ableist society. They also point out that people with disabilities have expressed opposition to allowing MAID for people with disabilities, or track 2, as it is sometimes known. They are calling on the government to protect all Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable by prohibiting medical assistance in dying to those whose prognosis for natural death is more than six months.

● (1015)

## ELECTORAL REFORM

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table e-petition 6579. It is a non-partisan petition.

*Government Orders*

This petition is in regard to the longest ballot, which I strongly feel disrupts the democratic process. It disrupts the election process for some Canadians, like seniors, the elderly and people who speak English as a second language. It confuses the process. We have to make a streamlined process that allows all Canadians to find the simplest path forward to vote for whoever they want to vote for. The longest ballot weaponizes democracy.

I present this petition to clean that up because I think people on both sides of the aisle have had enough.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition to the government with regard to medical assistance in dying, also known as MAID. Due to a lack of available services or treatments, it is not a real choice. Allowing medical assistance in dying for those with disabilities or a chronic illness who are not dying devalues their lives.

The petitioners call upon the government to protect all Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable by prohibiting medical assistance in dying for those whose prognosis for natural death is more than six months.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY  
IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

**Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

*Government Orders*

I am honoured to rise and speak today as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to begin debate on my first bill, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. With the support and guidance of modern treaty and self-governing partners, I am introducing this important bill because it would lead to a stronger, more prosperous future for modern treaty partners and everyone in Canada.

Modern treaty partners across the country have been strong advocates for this legislation. Since I became minister, it has been consistently raised with me as something they want passed quickly. I want to thank and acknowledge the modern treaty and self-governing partners across the country who have guided the development of this bill. Their vision is embedded in its foundation. By working together, we are making significant strides on our shared path of reconciliation.

A representative for the Tsawwassen First Nation said that the commissioner for modern treaty implementation would help guarantee that governments are consistently held accountable, not just in words but in action.

[Translation]

This vision of a better Canada will help us be better treaty partners. The work that has been done is significant, and with this support, we are transforming our society for future generations.

[English]

*Masi cho* to the Land Claims Agreements Coalition co-chairs, Nisga'a Nation president Eva Clayton and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated president Jeremy Tunraluk, for their support. We are especially grateful for the guidance they provided while we engaged with the Tłı̨chǫ Government, the Tla'amin Nation, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, the Maa-nulth treaty council and the Grand Council of the Crees. I look forward to their continued support as we work to advance this bill through to royal assent.

For over 20 years, modern treaty partners have been advocating for an independent oversight mechanism to hold the federal government accountable to its modern treaty commitments.

• (1020)

[Translation]

This bill is about accountability, trust and following through on our promises as a government. Today, we have an opportunity to respond to these calls and create a strong foundation for the ongoing work we will be doing together to overcome the challenges that modern treaty partners face across Canada.

[English]

Modern treaties have been fundamental to advancing reconciliation and shared economic prosperity with indigenous peoples for half a century. My perspective as a minister is shaped by my experience coming from the Northwest Territories. I know first-hand that progress is possible when there is real partnership and honest efforts. That depends on a solid foundation of respect and reliability. Earning and holding the confidence of indigenous peoples take ongoing work. They are things we must continue to do every day.

Over the past few years, we have made significant progress in codeveloping tools to improve the implementation of modern treaties in a way that reflects the essence of our partnership.

In 2023, we launched Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy. We codeveloped this policy with modern treaty partners to support the full, effective and timely implementation of all modern treaties in Canada.

[Translation]

We co-developed the important bill that is before us today. Bill C-10 will enable the appointment of an independent agent of Parliament tasked with holding the government accountable regarding its commitments, obligations and relationships arising from modern treaties.

[English]

We have seen the powerful results that modern treaties can deliver. The Nisga'a Nation, B.C.'s first modern treaty partner, holds its own elections in accordance with the nation's own constitution. Their community is seeing booming economic development and, just recently, is a partner on a major project under consideration of the Building Canada Act.

[Translation]

When they are implemented effectively, modern treaties are drivers of economic prosperity that can help to build a strong Canada. They support decision-making and land management and promote closer co-operation between the Crown and indigenous peoples on economic development projects.

[English]

In my home territory, the Tłı̨chǫ Government has invested in an all-season highway that connects remote communities. This infrastructure development is helping community members access health services and education, and promotes the growth of local businesses.

We see yet another example with the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board. This board promotes sustainable use of land and resources while preserving traditional practices. It plays a leadership role so that the fish, forests and wildlife in the Gwich'in area remain healthy and sustainable. Its mandate is to work in the public interest, representing all the parties to their modern treaty.

I see hope and promise in this legislation, but I know the road to negotiating a modern treaty is not easy. In fact, in many cases, the process can take decades to complete. In Nisga'a Nation's case, it took more than a century of advocacy and nearly 20 years of formal negotiations with the Crown. This was a significant investment of time and effort that reinforces how important it is to follow through on Canada's modern treaty commitments.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

In Canada, modern treaties are constantly evolving as laws and policies change. Clearly, they have real potential to promote social, cultural and economic progress for both indigenous partners and Canadians.

As I mentioned, I have seen how much progress can be made when we develop real partnerships and make honest efforts, and I believe that this is also true for economic development.

*[English]*

We are living in increasingly uncertain times, amid economic upheaval and rising global instability. Strong relationships with modern treaty partners are going to be essential to building Canada strong. Modern treaties cover more than 40% of Canada's land mass, including 80% of the north. This means that much of Canada's resource wealth lies on or under lands governed by modern treaty partners.

*[Translation]*

The only way that we can move forward with projects and development on these lands is to do so in co-operation with modern treaty partners and in accordance with our constitutional obligations. Indigenous partners have shown that they are willing and able to work with and guide Canada in stimulating economic development.

- (1025)

*[English]*

We want to build Canada strong. That means upholding our commitments and obligations agreed to in modern treaties. We need an economy that includes indigenous leadership and benefits everyone. Effective modern treaty implementation is a key part of this, and one that the commissioner would support. Improved implementation of modern treaties would go a long way to ensuring that indigenous communities can take part in economic growth. It would also help to ensure that indigenous partners in the north are well placed to contribute to Arctic security as we look to bolster our national defence capabilities in today's evolving landscapes.

The government is committed to fulfilling the spirit and intent of modern treaties. This means honouring our commitments and responsibilities, and advancing our common objectives. This bill embodies the importance of our unique modern treaty relationships.

*[Translation]*

The appointment of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation will ensure that this and future governments are held to account for the implementation of modern treaties. That is in keeping with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the action plan that our government committed to implementing in partnership with indigenous peoples.

*[English]*

I would like to take a moment to share a bit about what modern treaties are and the work the government is doing to support indigenous peoples on the path.

Beginning in 1975, Canada signed what are called “modern treaties” with first nations, Inuit and Métis rights holders. These agreements also often include provinces and territories. They articulate the relationship, objectives, specific obligations and responsibilities their signatories must achieve and fulfill. They can include rights and benefits relating to ownership of lands, self-government or employment, to name just a few examples.

*[Translation]*

The era of modern treaties began after the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its decision on the Nisga'a Nation's Calder case, acknowledging the existence of aboriginal title for the first time. This historic decision paved the way for modern treaties, recognizing indigenous peoples' inherent right to their lands.

*[English]*

At the same time in Quebec, another group was challenging the actions of the Crown. This was where the first modern treaty was negotiated, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, signed in 1975. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement marked a turning point in Crown-indigenous relations, laying the groundwork for many modern treaties that followed.

*[Translation]*

We know that modern treaties can bring many economic benefits to communities and encourage indigenous participation in the Canadian economy. Treaties can also advance indigenous peoples' social, cultural and political autonomy and well-being.

*[English]*

Studies have shown that indigenous communities that sign modern treaties see improved socio-economic outcomes, including increased average annual incomes, reduced income inequality and higher educational attainment.

Today, there are 27 modern treaties in Canada covering more than 90 communities. As a modern treaty partner, Canada has made progress in upholding its commitments, but we recognize that more work needs to be done.

For over 20 years, modern treaty partners have been calling for greater oversight to hold the federal government accountable to its modern treaty obligations. This includes calls to develop a federal implementation policy. One of the main reasons for this policy is to address a general lack of awareness, understanding and action regarding modern treaty relationships, objectives and obligations on the part of the federal government. That is why, in February 2023, the Government of Canada took a step forward by launching Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

The policy guides federal departments in fulfilling their modern treaty obligations, advancing treaty objectives and strengthening intergovernmental relationships. It promotes action, awareness and understanding to address the legacy of colonialism and transform federal culture and procedures.

- (1030)

*[English]*

As part of the policy, the intergovernmental leaders' forum was established in 2023, creating an opportunity for the Prime Minister, federal ministers and modern treaty and self-government leadership to come together and collaborate on shared priorities. Shortly after the collaborative modern treaty implementation policy came into effect, the government and modern treaty partners began taking steps to create the oversight mechanism. We achieved that goal by proposing the creation of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

*[Translation]*

One of this bill's key accomplishments is that it was developed with the indigenous partners who stand to be most affected by its passage.

*[English]*

Now that I have outlined how this bill was codeveloped, I would like to take the opportunity to discuss the broader role the commissioner would play as an agent of Parliament.

*[Translation]*

Agents of Parliament are independent of the government. They report directly to the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament and are the fundamental pillars of our democracy.

Right now, there is no agent of Parliament to promote and sustain our relations with indigenous peoples, who form the foundation of Canada.

*[English]*

As an agent of Parliament, the commissioner would provide us with a unique opportunity to establish a new parliamentary institution focused solely on modern treaties. They would help make Canada a better partner by shining a light on areas where we can do more to address persistent and structural issues related to modern treaty implementation. This agent of Parliament role would represent a major step forward, toward a future where indigenous partners can trust that Canada will follow through on its modern treaty commitments.

*[Translation]*

This is particularly important when we consider the strategic locations of our treaty partners, Canada's objective of building a stronger nation and the vital role that strong relationships play in our mutual success.

Modern treaty partners are truly our partners in Confederation.

*[English]*

Some of the commissioner's key roles and responsibilities would include providing independent and expert oversight of any activity carried out by the government relating to the implementation of modern treaties. They would seek to ensure the timely and effective implementation of modern treaties. They would report to Parliament to hold the government accountable to its modern treaty obligations. They would be independent, objective and impartial in the execution of their mandate and would have expert knowledge of modern treaties. They would have the authority to require departments to provide the information necessary to carry out their mandates. Finally, they would commit to upholding the spirit and intent of the agreements.

*[Translation]*

In short, the commissioner must ensure that the government honours its commitments under modern treaties and, most importantly, in the nation-to-nation, Crown-to-Inuit, and government-to-government relationships that they support.

*[English]*

I will close my remarks today with a few final thoughts on what this legislation means for the broader goal of advancing reconciliation.

Successive governments have continued to enter into modern treaties with first nations, Inuit and Métis to guide our relationships and protect and promote their culture, identity and future prosperity. We are on a shared journey of reconciliation.

*[Translation]*

We understand that reducing uncertainty and establishing strong partnerships with indigenous peoples can help build a stronger, fairer and more prosperous Canada.

We understand that Canada needs modern treaties in order to grow.

*[English]*

In these uncertain times, we need partners we can rely on. We know we can rely on our modern treaty partners, and we need them to be able to rely on us. Modern treaty partners are already driving innovation, investment and development on a scale that benefits not just their communities, but all of Canada. They are doing this despite the fact that Canada has not always made it easy for them and has not always lived up to its promises.

If this kind of success can happen despite persistent issues and inefficiencies in treaty implementation, I ask my colleagues in the House to imagine what we could accomplish together if we were able to solve these challenges. What could we accomplish together if these treaties were implemented effectively and in full? It is time for us to take action and find out. That means living up to our commitments to respect the inherent rights of indigenous people, it means living up to our commitments to advance reconciliation and it means passing the legislation before us today.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Once again, I would like to thank the modern treaty partners who stood up for their rights and worked tirelessly to co-develop this legislation.

[*English*]

The journey we embarked on together shows what is possible when trust, credibility, creativity, innovation and collaboration guide the codevelopment process. We are listening and working to fulfill all of our modern treaty obligations in the spirit of reconciliation and a brighter future for us all.

Let us pass the bill without delay.

*Marsi. Meegwetch. Mahsi cho.*

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we support modern treaties, the path to self-government and the path to economic reconciliation, and we wish to work with communities that want to see that happen. We support those initiatives.

However, the fact that the minister has to table a piece of legislation dealing with the modern treaty shows the failure of the government. In six years, Stephen Harper signed five modern treaties. The government has signed zero in 10 years. It has signed two self-government agreements, but it has signed zero modern treaties. Not only that, but we also have numerous Auditor General reports talking about treaties and the government's relationship with implementing those treaties.

The minister said, in her own words, that indigenous leaders are calling for more oversight, which we support, and that the government has not been living up to its promises. It has been decades. Why not hold the minister's department accountable instead of creating new bureaucracy?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the parties opposite are looking forward to supporting reconciliation and modern treaty partners.

What is important in this bill is the implementation. It takes a while to negotiate land claims, self-government agreements and modern treaties, but implementation is a day in, day out, forever process. What is important in this legislation is holding the government, as well as future governments, accountable for living up to those modern treaty obligations.

The bill is really about increasing transparency for all Canadians. Instead of having only a minister being responsible, the commissioner would be accountable to Parliament, both to the House and to the Senate. It is a really important opportunity to ensure that we are focused on implementation.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for introducing this important bill this morning. I should emphasize that this bill was co-developed, which is real progress. At the end of her speech, the minister reached out to us all when she used the word “together”. Let us allow that to inspire us in our work.

### *Government Orders*

There is one issue that is important to me, though. She said in her speech that modern treaties are good for communities in terms of economic development and household income. This creates an inequality between first nations that have access to modern treaties and those that do not.

In my opinion, the minister should prioritize implementing new modern treaties. What has her department been doing in that regard? The commissioner position is important, but I gather people have been calling for it for 20 years. Why did it take so long? Why are more modern treaties not being signed?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, the legislation is important for modern treaty partners, but it is also important that the focus of our government is not just on modern treaties. This is one part of our journey of reconciliation. Another is working with all first nations, Métis and Inuit rights holders across the country to address priorities and concerns. We hear regularly in meetings from chiefs about the need for improvements to our additions to the reserve process. I am working with my colleague at ISC to improve the process.

The bill is about modern treaties and their implementation, but we are continuing to work with all first nation, Métis and Inuit partners across the country to address their priorities and concerns.

• (1040)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for this really important work.

The member opposite just talked about how the Conservatives fully agree. That is a good thing. This is what Canadians want. Canadians elected us to pass legislation such as this in a quick and effective manner so that we can continue to serve Canadians. Conservatives have often voted against and even delayed bills that pertained to indigenous communities.

Can the minister talk about why it is important for the entire House to work together to pass this bill in a quick and effective manner?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent work.

Joining us today in the gallery are many of the leaders of the modern treaty partners. In discussions I had with them this morning, they mentioned the importance of passing this bill quickly so that we have the opportunity to set up the commissioner's office as soon as we can. We are aiming to get this bill through Parliament as quickly as possible so that we can stand up the office and continue this work.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we continue, I want to remind everyone that members in the chamber cannot recognize members in the gallery; only the Speaker or presiding officers of the Speaker's chair can do so.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is very important legislation. I have heard from members of the Maanulth nations, who have signed a treaty, including Chief Anne Mack from Toquaht and Chief Wilfred Cootes from Uchucklesaht. They said this an essential oversight mechanism to help ensure the effective and timely implementation of modern-day treaties in terms of nation-to-nation, government-to-government and indigenous-to-Crown relations.

The NDP is wondering how we can move with all parties in this House to fast-track this legislation. Can the minister identify the conversations she is having with all parties so that we can move this legislation forward immediately?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize for breaching the rules.

We have been having discussions with all parties, and our partners have been in discussions with parties. We hope to get unanimous consent to move this bill forward.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, treaties have evolved. Foundationally, defining aboriginal rights and title is a main part of treaty negotiation, versus extinguishing them. Given that the Liberal government is going to appeal the Cowichan court ruling, is there a reason aboriginal rights and title are not mentioned in Bill C-10?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, the bill is about addressing the commissioner for modern treaties. It is about the responsibilities of oversight and holding the government accountable. The focus is on the commissioner ensuring transparency and accountability from the government on modern treaties.

The modern treaties speak to different issues, and the commissioner would be reporting on those issues, but there is no need to identify everything in the modern treaties. The commissioner would ensure they are being implemented.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to enable the appointment of a commissioner, who will obviously keep an eye on what is happening in all branches of the federal government.

However, modern treaties also concern relations with the provinces. Giving first nations autonomy to develop on their territory has an impact on the role of the provinces.

Can the minister reassure us that the commissioner will have no ties to the provinces and will respect provincial autonomy, given the current Liberal government's drive toward centralization?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, this bill concerns the federal government and its obligations. It is about accountability before the House of Commons and the Senate. It is between the federal government and its modern treaty partners.

[*English*]

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Speaker, can the minister expand on who was involved in the codevelopment of this bill and why it was important to involve those people?

• (1045)

**Hon. Rebecca Alty:** Mr. Speaker, it involved all modern treaty partners. What is important is that they have first-hand experience so they can outline the challenges and successes that are occurring in the relationships between the federal government and modern treaty partners. It was important to involve modern treaty partners.

Of course, with respect to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we wanted to ensure that this was co-created. We developed this modern treaty legislation, and we continue to work together on many other policies and legislation.

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a matter that goes beyond the very foundation of this country: the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples. That relationship is defined not only by our history, but by our honour. It is tested not by words or new offices, but by actions. It is measured not by the number of new bureaucracies we create, but by the commitments we fulfill and the promises we keep.

For decades, governments have spoken of reconciliation, yet reconciliation without accountability remains a broken promise. The Liberal government's proposed Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, simply provides cover for its decade-long history of broken promises to indigenous peoples. The new office of the treaty commissioner would tell us nothing that the Office of the Auditor General and many indigenous leaders have already told us: that the government continues to fail.

I want to speak plainly about where we are in implementing modern treaties in Canada, what progress has been made, where failures persist and how we can fix the system without creating another costly bureaucracy at a time when taxpayers can ill afford it. However, before we discuss implementation, it is important to define what we mean by modern treaties and self-government treaties.

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A modern treaty is a comprehensive land claims agreement negotiated between a first nation, Inuit or Métis group and the Crown, which means the federal government and sometimes provincial governments, that settles outstanding aboriginal rights and land claims. The purpose of a modern treaty is to resolve long-standing disputes over land ownership, resource rights and governance in a defined territory. The scope of a modern treaty can include land, resources, financial compensation and governance rights, and it often incorporates self-government provisions. However, not all modern treaties are full self-government agreements. Once implemented, modern treaties are enforceable by federal law and generally replace or clarify rights under historic treaties.

A self-government treaty is an agreement, often part of a modern treaty, that specifically recognizes and establishes an indigenous government with the authority to make certain laws in areas similar to a provincial or municipal government. Its purpose is to grant indigenous groups the right to govern themselves, which includes control over education, health care, culture and local services. The scope focuses on political authority and administrative powers rather than on only land and resources. Legally, self-government provisions are binding and implemented under federal law. They can exist as part of a modern treaty or as a stand-alone self-government agreement.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial. Implementation is not about creating new offices or new bureaucracy; it is about ensuring the Crown and its departments respect the legal authority already established in those agreements. I should note that the recent Whitecap Dakota's self-government agreement, which passed with Conservative support in 2023, is not a full modern treaty. There remain outstanding issues, which I understand the government continues to negotiate on.

I wonder exactly how a future commissioner of modern treaty implementation would be able to magically motivate the government to get this done. Naming and shaming is one way, yes, but the ministers can do that themselves. The ministers of each and every department can hold their departments accountable for failures rather than creating another new bureaucracy.

We know it can get done. In fact, the Conservatives, under Prime Minister Harper, signed five modern treaties in a span of six years. In over a decade, the Liberals have negotiated none. The five modern treaties include the Tlicho first nation's land claims and self-government agreement that happened in 2006, the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement in 2009, the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement in 2009, the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Governance Agreement in 2013 and the Déline Final Self-Government Agreement in 2015.

Make no mistake. I have said it once; I will say it again. The Conservatives support modern treaties. We support indigenous communities that want to get off the paternalistic and archaic Indian Act. What we do not support is the mistaken assumption that spending more taxpayer dollars compensates for the lack of accountability within government bureaucracy.

Who has been fired? Has anyone been fired for not living up to what the government signed? Have any departments done some re-

organization because of the failures of the government to live up to its treaties? I have not heard that today in a speech.

● (1050)

How has the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations managed this internally? I know she is new. I get that she was elected just a few months ago, but this question still remains: How is a report from the new commissioner's office going to change things when dozens of Auditor General's reports on the failures of government have resulted in nothing moving forward?

The Office of the Auditor General conducts regular audits of treaty negotiations, modern treaties, self-government agreements, the implementation of them, and treaty land entitlements. Some of the audits include the 2005 report on the federal government meeting treaty land entitlement obligations, the 2006 report "Federal Participation in the British Columbia Treaty Process—Indian and Northern Affairs Canada", the comprehensive "Audit of the Implementation of Modern Treaty Obligations" from 2013, and the 2016 report "Implementing the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement". This does not even include the 14 Auditor General reports produced since 2015 on related issues facing first nations, Inuit and Métis.

Where are those reports? Has every government department been addressing the concerns tabled by the Auditor General? This is why indigenous leaders are calling for this legislation. Yes, they want to see more oversight, absolutely, but we think the failure is on the government. We think the government itself, within the bureaucracies, and the ministers themselves have not been pushing departments hard enough to live up to these modern treaties.

While governments continue to ignore the reports and audits from the Auditor General and continue to ignore treaty partners, there is still no collaborative modern treaty implementation policy, which happened in 2023. What would be a positive step forward considering the Liberal government is currently bogged down with 70 treaty negotiations, and two years later, it has not implemented anything?

Here is another crucial point. Implementation is not about new policies, new offices or new dollars going into bureaucracies. It is a question of whether current officials are doing their jobs, whether existing departments are held accountable and whether existing laws and commitments are enforced.

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However, here we are today talking about a new office, a commissioner for modern treaty implementation, a multi-million dollar bureaucracy intended to monitor, oversee and report on implementation, an office that would not be entirely accountable to Parliament. The commissioner, government and treaty partners would decide when audits are conducted and how, not Parliament. Reports would be tabled by the minister a few weeks after they receive them, but Parliament would not have the power to initiate audits of the government's handling of modern treaty implementation.

With respect, that is the wrong approach. We do not need more bureaucrats. In fact, the Liberals really ought to learn from their past mistakes. Between 2015 and 2017, several new federal offices and initiatives were created to work on land claim implementation issues: the modern treaties implementation office, the assessment of modern treaty implications office, the performance management framework, the modern treaty management environment, the deputy ministers' oversight committee, and the reconciliation secretariat.

Since the creation of these offices, as I have said before, no modern treaties have been established by the government. There are six entities specifically designed to monitor, support and ensure the implementation of these treaties, and now we are supposed to believe that finally we have the magic bullet that will solve it all.

Again, maybe the answer is to start firing those who are not doing their jobs, who are not living up to the commitments the government signed and is obliged to do. There are reports creating dust on shelves. Why are we not just doing what those reports have outlined? We need ministers and officials to take responsibility for obligations we already have, whether in modern treaties, self-government provisions or historic agreements.

● (1055)

Since the 1970s, Canada has sought to move beyond the numbered treaties through the negotiation of modern treaties, which are comprehensive land claim agreements that establish self-government, define rights and confirm jurisdictional authority. Today, there are over two dozen modern treaties in force across Canada, from the Yukon and Nunavut to British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. These agreements represent some of the most advanced models of indigenous government anywhere in the world, yet today, the situation remains uneven.

Some treaty nations have made substantial progress in self-government and economic development. Others remain entangled in administrative barriers, forced to negotiate or litigate and litigate again for the very rights they thought they had already secured. For many indigenous governments, the experience of treaty implementation has been one of delay and paternalism. Departments interpret treaty commitments inconsistently, and fiscal transfers are too often designed to preserve federal control rather than encourage and enable indigenous autonomy. This results in what leaders have called "the illusion of implementation": the appearance of progress without the substance of change. A treaty signed is celebrated. A treaty implemented is where the government drags its feet.

Across Canada, indigenous and treaty partners continue to wait for commitments signed decades ago to be fulfilled. Implementation remains chaotic and delayed. Fiscal transfers are late or incom-

plete. Departments pass down responsibilities back and forth like a file that nobody wants to own. In 2024, the Auditor General reported again that the federal system remains fragmented, bureaucratic and unaccountable. One of the greatest challenges is that no single department or body holds full responsibility for ensuring Canada's compliance with its treaty obligations. Responsibilities are fragmented across Indigenous Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Justice Canada and the Treasury Board, just to name a few.

This bureaucratic mess means that when commitments go unfulfilled, no one is held accountable, not politically, not financially and not morally. Instead of holding those responsible accountable, the government proposes spending millions on a new office to supervise what should already be happening. How many offices do we need to tell the government that it is failing? Adding one commissioner does not change culture or performance. Only enforcement, accountability and clear expectations can. A lot of this, as I have mentioned many times in my speech, has been outlined in various reports already tabled in this House over decades.

The Supreme Court's 2024 ruling in *Restoule v. Canada* was a stark reminder of what is at stake. For nearly 170 years, the Crown failed to honour the Robinson Huron Treaty, failing to adjust annuities as promised. The court called this a violation of the honour of the Crown, not an oversight but a breach of trust, yet instead of ensuring that departments and ministers simply fulfill their obligations, now we hear talk of creating another bureaucracy to monitor implementation. The honour of the Crown is not measured by bureaucratic reports or new offices but by results on the ground: homes being built, clean water and indigenous policing being named an essential service, something that was promised years ago by former prime minister Trudeau, which still has not happened. Infrastructure is crumbling. Governance and economic opportunity are what indigenous leaders are calling for, and it is Canada that has failed to live up to those obligations.

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We have built a system that celebrates the signing of those treaties, but nothing is happening to ensure that they are being upheld, despite the reports, despite the information, despite the studies and despite the conversations that we have on the ground with indigenous leaders themselves who are calling for this. What should change is ministers and departmental officials being held responsible for their legally binding obligations. That will change when we start firing people who are not doing their jobs. If a treaty commitment is delayed or ignored, someone must be held accountable, not an office on Wellington Street but the department itself, the minister and the leadership who signed those agreements.

• (1100)

Safety and basic services remain uneven. As I mentioned before, indigenous policing is underfunded, housing is substandard and climate-related disasters disproportionately impact indigenous communities. The Auditor General has talked about all of this. The Auditor General has also outlined ways to fix it. The commissioner would not build houses. The commissioner would not hire police officers. A commissioner would not ensure clean water.

What is required is executive responsibility and operational diligence. Departments must prioritize, budgets must be executed properly, and ministers must ensure that existing laws are followed. That is how results are delivered, not by another layer of bureaucracy.

Federal programs designed to support indigenous communities are often mismanaged. Hundreds of non-indigenous firms have falsely claimed indigenous status to win contracts. Oversight came way too late. Do not forget ArriveCAN. A commissioner would not prevent fraud; proper departmental controls, accountability and enforcement would.

Similarly, free, prior and informed consent is often ignored in practice. Consultation without power is meaningless. A commissioner cannot give departments the political will to respect indigenous sovereignty; only leadership and accountability can.

Therefore the solution is clear: Departments need to do their jobs. The authority, the responsibility and the obligation already exist; we simply need to enforce them. Ministers must be held accountable. If an obligation is unfulfilled, it is not a bureaucratic problem; it is a leadership failure. Parliament must ensure consequences.

Indigenous governments must be partners in oversight. They should hold departments accountable directly, without requiring another costly office. Performance must be measurable. Tracking, reporting and enforcement can be done with existing systems, and I have already named a bunch, if officials are mandated to act rather than to report on not acting.

Reconciliation is measured in results: homes built, clean water delivered, indigenous policing, economic opportunity and the integrity of our nation-to-nation agreements. We do not need another commissioner. We do not need more bureaucracy. We do not need another office to spend millions of taxpayer dollars when we are already running massive deficits. We need ministers, departments and public service officials to simply do what they are legally required to do. If we honour our treaties, if we enforce accountability and if

we expect results, then reconciliation is not just possible; it is inevitable.

Let us act here in the House with integrity, with resolve and with honour. Let us ensure that every promise is kept, not with more bureaucracy but with the discipline to actually do our jobs.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised by the approach the Conservatives have decided to take on the legislation, but I am somewhat disappointed in their approach with respect to having an agent of Parliament report to Parliament with a certain level of expertise that is understood clearly by indigenous communities and indigenous leaders across this nation, who recognize how valuable an individual of this stature could be. It is unfortunate that the Conservatives do not recognize that.

Could the member provide his thoughts as to whether he believes that the Auditor General would have the same background knowledge to bring to the table?

• (1105)

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, the Auditor General has done many reports, and I would say the expertise was accepted at the time as an expert dive into the issues Canada is or is not living up to with modern treaty implementation, or with existing treaties and the lack of the implementation of those treaties.

I mentioned reports from 2005, 2006, 2013 and 2016, plus 14 more, that talked about where the government is failing when it pertains to first nations, Inuit and Métis. There is plenty of information out there. There are plenty of reports. Why has the government not acted on the recommendations?

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my special thanks to the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes for his very thorough speech.

In this context, I find it particularly interesting that the member refers to the five modern treaties that his government was able to conclude during the Conservative years under Mr. Harper. That is one treaty less than the six social housing units built at the time by the current leader of the Conservative Party.

That said, people have been calling for the creation of a modern treaty implementation commissioner for over 20 years. This bill was co-developed with more than 130 groups that were consulted. This period of more than 20 years obviously covers the 10 years of the Liberal government, during which nothing was done with respect to modern treaties, but it also covers the years under the Conservative government.

Why are the Conservatives opposed to the swift creation of the commissioner position and the passage of the bill?

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**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work with my Bloc colleague on the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

I understand why indigenous leaders are calling for the office of a modern treaty commissioner, because the government has been failing to implement existing treaties for decades. The government fails to implement its word on modern treaties. However, I will say again that the Auditor General has already produced a slew of reports as to how we can fix the problems. The government just continues to ignore the results and the reports. As I asked in my speech, who has been fired in departments? Who has been held accountable in departments to finally see some action?

I do not blame indigenous leaders who want to see the office created. I do not blame them for their frustrations with the government at all, but I question where the accountability is on the government side.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was a negotiator for my small native band, as well as a chief councillor, so I understand the frustration of the leaders. However, it seems to me that the first nations leaders are saying that the government-to-government relationship is not working because the government is not listening and not implementing a treaty. The government's response is, "Let's create a treaty commissioner."

Is there any chance of a commissioner's getting treaty implementation done, versus a leader's having gone directly to government for the last 10 years at least to try to solve that exact issue?

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, my friend for Skeena—Bulkley Valley raises a good point. It is exactly a fear that I share with the member, which is that if the office is created and there is another report, and another report after that a few years later, about where the government is failing on modern treaty implementation, will the government actually pay attention to that? Will the departments actually fix what has been broken?

The problem I keep raising, and I think what my friend is getting to as well, is that the failures have been outlined for decades. Would a new office fix this? My fear is that it would not.

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think my friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes and I have had an across-the-aisle exchange yet. I congratulate him on his re-election.

I would ask the member to please reconsider. There are a lot of reasons that those nations in this country, the indigenous nations that form the 26 modern treaties that have been signed and negotiated, have waited too long.

The bill before us was originally Bill C-77, which was introduced almost a year ago. It was allowed to die on the Order Paper. There is no point in going back over which parties are to blame for that, but now we must come together and get the bill passed. Can the member agree?

• (1110)

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I do support the fact that the government needs to live up to its modern treaty obligations. As I mentioned, the Harper government signed five in six years.

I would also point out to the member opposite that between 2015 and 2017, on top of the Auditor General's reports, which I have mentioned a million times, several new federal offices and initiatives were created to work on land claim implementation issues: the modern treaty implementation office, the assessment of modern treaty implications, the performance management framework, the modern treaty management environment and the deputy minister's oversight committee, as well as the reconciliation secretariat. How many more do we need before the government actually does its job?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that recognizing the nation-to-nation relationship between indigenous people and the Crown is of critical importance. There is legislation before us today that would ultimately enable an agent of Parliament who would report to Parliament, as opposed to just to the government or the opposition, and the Conservatives are making it very clear today that they oppose that.

Is it the Conservative Party's position that it will not support the bill's going to committee?

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the new office, as it is written, would report to Parliament. It would report to the Senate and to Parliament, but it would report to the government first, and the minister would then decide when the report would get to the Speaker and then be released to Parliament. Parliament would not have the opportunity to dictate where the audits go and what needs to be studied or examined. That is the problem the Conservatives have with it.

*[Translation]*

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague once again for his thoroughness and for the additional explanations he has provided during this question and comment period.

However, it is a bit contradictory to say that the role of commissioner is unnecessary but that he will support the bill anyway.

The Liberal government has absolutely nothing in its legislative agenda right now. We do not even know what we will be working on by the end of the week. Why is the member trying to save the Liberal government? Why not pass this bill quickly so it can be sent to committee where amendments can be proposed? Why not get it through the House as quickly as possible?

I would like my colleague to clarify that. Why is he so determined to defend this bill?

[English]

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, yes, the bill will get to committee. We will study it, and I am pretty sure there will be amendments proposed. We will see what gets passed and what does not. We look forward to that process.

At the same time, however, we are in the chamber to debate, and the bill has been tabled. This is the first day it has been debated, so there are Conservatives members who want to speak to it.

**Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I especially appreciate the emphasis my colleague has put on Conservative support for the reconciliation process with first nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and also the emphasis he put on the expense of creating another costly bureaucracy when families are struggling so hard to make ends meet.

The Auditor General's office is an independent institution that audits federal government operations to ensure accountability, transparency and the effective use of public funds. The proposed commissioner appears to do the same thing, without the concern of effective use of public funds.

Can the hon. member elaborate on the duplication?

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, yes, that is something I outlined in my speech: how Parliament would not have the oversight it should. We will look at that in committee and hopefully get some amendments.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that the government is taking an important step toward reconciliation with first nations today.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to the late Jim Aldridge, a distinguished lawyer, tireless advocate for modern treaty rights and friend to the Bloc Québécois. Throughout his career, Mr. Aldridge helped shape our legal and political understanding of modern treaties, particularly through his work with the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, or the modern treaty coalition. His commitment to establishing a fair and respectful framework for treaty holders continues to inspire this debate and sheds light on the very meaning of the bill that we are discussing today. His approach was based on the simple but profound idea that a treaty is not a memory of the past, but a living promise that will shape the future.

Jim Aldridge firmly believed that treaty implementation should be guided by transparency, accountability and institutional co-operation, the same principles that underpin Bill C-10, which is before us today. His intellectual and legal endeavours helped pave the way for what we are discussing here: an independent commissioner to monitor Canada's commitments and to report to both Parliament and indigenous peoples.

This debate bears the mark of his legacy. The concept of modern treaties is a path forward that will bring considerable benefits if we follow it. This type of agreement has enabled many indigenous communities to grow and to come up with new ways of seeing relationships between the first nations, Inuit, Métis and governments.

I want to talk about the first modern treaty, the groundbreaking one from Quebec. I am referring to the James Bay and Northern

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Quebec Agreement, which was signed in 1975 in response to the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Calder*, when the court recognized the concept of aboriginal title to land for the first time in Canadian law. It was the first time the ancestral rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people were recognized.

Many people consider the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement to be the first modern treaty. Getting this treaty signed was not easy, but it helped advance the cause of first nations and Inuit people in Quebec. This modern treaty has been enhanced many times over the years as a result of various agreements and other legislation. The last major enhancement was the peace of the braves agreement signed in 2002 by the late Bernard Landry and his counterpart Ted Moses, the grand chief of the Grand Council of the Crees.

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement created a framework for land management between the Quebec, Cree and Inuit governments to enable indigenous communities within the territory to participate in the development of their land while preserving important traditional cultural activities, including hunting, gathering, fishing and trapping grounds. The agreement also provides a framework for education.

The James Bay Native Development Corporation was also created in partnership with Quebec to promote economic development and to give indigenous communities a say in the region's future development while being mindful of the environment. It also gave first nations and Inuit a voice in the administration of justice and social services. In short, the scope of this agreement broke new ground and served as a model for other treaties across Canada. Once again, Quebec was ahead of the curve. We were the first to start down that road.

For the Bloc Québécois, reconciliation has always been at the heart of our commitment to indigenous people. We feel it is crucial to make things fairer between us. Modern treaties like the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement are an incredible example of what we can accomplish when we take the time to talk and reach out to one another and when we swap the nation-to-nation or government-to-government negotiations for lasting partnerships in order to jointly build an open, free and informed dialogue where we understand one another and do things together.

● (1115)

That is also why the creation of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation is a policy that will move us forward and that we support. It is an example of co-creation and co-development, the result of engagement with more than 130 groups, including indigenous modern treaty partners, indigenous groups negotiating modern treaties, sectoral agreement holders, national indigenous organizations, and provincial and territorial governments.

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Since Quebec first set out on this path, Canada has followed suit. Today, 26 modern treaties have been signed, with 18 of them containing self-government provisions. The treaties touch on numerous matters of particular concern for first nations, Inuit and Métis people. First, they strengthen indigenous governance by recognizing it and by working in partnership with it in various sectors. This acknowledges the jurisdiction and wishes of first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

In addition, the treaties help improve first nations, Inuit and Métis management of land and resources, by recognizing their rights and by empowering them to implement policies for better managing wildlife and resources while respecting the environment and the ancestral cultures and traditions of indigenous peoples. They support indigenous culture, language and heritage. This point really resonates with me as a Quebecker, because the preservation of our language and our culture is important to us. It is just as important to first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It is important to revitalize indigenous languages, help first nations, Inuit and Métis people preserve their traditional knowledge, and help them express their identity and tell their stories. Cultural exchanges are vital to our society. There is something special about going to see the Rouyn-Noranda hockey team play and having the game start with a drumming performance, for example. It makes a real impact and creates a magical experience.

Modern treaties also create more economic development opportunities for indigenous people. This helps them develop the tools they need to support their businesses and contribute to the Quebec, Canadian and international economies. It also leads to improved social development, especially in health and education, allowing first nations, Inuit and Métis communities to ensure that all of their residents can receive the care they need.

Lastly, modern treaties help communities play a role in protecting the environment. Caring for the Earth and protecting it is central to their culture. The concept of thinking seven generations ahead is about ensuring that we leave something tangible for those who come after us. These treaties touch on numerous points and help redefine our relationships.

As the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, I have also observed the impacts of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the peace of the braves agreement. The development of the Cree communities of northern Quebec has been significant. These communities have been able to further their economic development and meet the needs of their residents for everything from education to sports facilities, and this has improved the situation immensely. This partnership between Quebec, the Cree, the Inuit and the Naskapi has propelled these communities forward. That is why my dream is to see a modern treaty signed with the Anishinabe communities in my region. This would finally ensure the long-term development of the communities in my region by giving them the necessary power to develop the land, in partnership with local non-indigenous residents. I hope this message will be heard. I believe our reconciliation lies along that path.

Let us now turn back to Bill C-10, which was introduced by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. Generally speaking, this bill will create the office of commissioner for modern treaty implementation, whose role will be to oversee the implementation of

treaties and act as a watchdog for first nations. This is a commendable step. It represents major progress for many indigenous peoples. However, it does not relieve Ottawa of its responsibilities towards first nations that are not covered by modern or numbered treaties. The primary purpose of this role is to ensure that the government fulfills its own obligations, that it honours its own commitments, particularly those around the nation-to-nation and government-to-government relationships embodied in these treaties. This reflects a will to change the culture of governance.

For too long, treaty implementation has suffered from a lack of follow-up, a lack of consistency across departments, and a lack of mechanisms for measuring actual progress. The result is that even decades after the signing of some modern treaties, indigenous partners still have to fight to get what they were promised. Bill C-10 seeks to break that cycle.

● (1120)

It seeks to establish a framework where promises made are promises kept, where accountability becomes an institutional requirement rather than a favour. The goal is to make treaty implementation predictable, measurable and public, so that citizens, governments and signatories can track progress together.

This position will therefore ensure greater transparency and accountability. However, the fact that this position is needed in the first place demonstrates that the government needs oversight in order to successfully carry out its reconciliation efforts. We saw this with Bill C-5, where first nations were consulted hastily without obtaining their free, prior and informed consent. Failures such as this demonstrate that, despite the government's fine speeches, it continues to fail to provide high-quality services to the indigenous communities under its responsibility.

Even now, in 2025, many communities are still under boil water advisories, if they even have access to running water at all. The same thing applies to the housing shortages affecting so many communities, if their land base is even recognized. Although these situations may seem far removed from us, they are affecting indigenous communities in my riding. However, the arrival of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation will not lead to any improvements in this regard for the Anishinabe people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue because, as I mentioned earlier, they have no modern treaties. This once again shows how important it is that action be taken to improve this situation.

One key aspect of this bill is the commissioner's independence. I applaud that important fact. The person appointed to this position will serve a seven-year term, renewable only once. In this way, the commissioner will be able to act without necessarily fearing repercussions. The same process exists for other independent roles, such as the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Privacy Commissioner and other similar positions.

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However, I would like to stress that the appointment must be made after leaders of the various political parties in the House have been consulted. The intention is good, but it would be useful to look at what Quebec is doing in terms of appointments to similar positions. For example, in appointing the French language commissioner, the National Assembly of Quebec must hold a vote and two-thirds of its members must approve. This is also important for the Auditor General. In my opinion, it ensures that the persons appointed have the absolute confidence of the House. It might also be worthwhile for appointments to positions such as this to have the support of at least one other recognized party in the House. This would demonstrate the independent nature of the position.

The other thing that we should consider is access to information. I think it is crucial that the commissioner have access to all of the information they need to accomplish their mission. That is something that I would like to work on during the study of the bill. At the very least, I would like to ensure that the wording gives the commissioner the power to request and receive documents. It would not be good if departments were able to circumvent this power by citing an out-of-court agreement or by claiming that a document cannot be disclosed for various reasons. In my opinion, we must ensure that the wording of the bill does not prevent the commissioner from fully performing their role.

Another issue that I would like to look at during the study of this bill is its impact on provincial jurisdictions. As I explained, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed by the Government of Quebec and first nations and Inuit. Thus, if the commissioner is to fulfill their role, they must focus solely on federal responsibilities. They cannot infringe on provincial areas of jurisdiction. I look forward to hearing from the various witnesses on the issue to ensure that everyone's jurisdictions are respected in this bill.

As my remarks will show, the Bloc Québécois agrees with the principle of the bill. We are simply pointing out elements that we want to reflect on with all stakeholders in order to improve it. However, I still have concerns about the role the government wants to play. The last budget, which was a very long time ago, provided \$10.6 million over four years to establish the commissioner's office and functions. However, with the cutbacks the various departments are being asked to make, we have to wonder how much will really be earmarked for the commissioner. The commissioner must have the money they need to do their work. The November 4 budget must therefore confirm these amounts. Fortunately, a simple calculation shows that the government has already saved the first \$2.65 million from budget 2024-25. I really hope that this money will remain in the same budget line to ensure the longevity of this new office. I know that indigenous organizations share our concerns.

• (1125)

We now move on to the most important aspect of this bill: how the office of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation will operate. Indeed, when they are preparing their reports, the commissioner will adhere to the same principles as the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development and the Auditor General of Canada. Federal institutions will have the same requirements as those imposed by the Auditor General of Canada.

This is excellent news because the federal government will not be able to hide from its own failures.

I would also like the government to maintain the principle of committee appearances. I believe that the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs will also play an increasingly important role.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the commissioner will not have any enforcement powers. This means that the commissioner will identify deficiencies and the aspects of modern treaties that the federal government fails to fulfill, but the commissioner will not be able to step in or take any action. The various departments that work with first nations, Métis and Inuit will have to take action.

However, reports tell the real story of the implementation of and compliance with treaties. They will determine the level of Canada's true commitment to indigenous peoples. This will lead to accountability and give parliamentarians who care about first nations, Métis and Inuit a tool to call for meaningful action.

Indigenous partners, including the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Assembly of First Nations are calling for some adjustments, including the presence of a permanent indigenous advisory committee. It would also be important for results to be accessible in indigenous languages to ensure communities take ownership of the results. These organizations are asking for a shared tool that helps ensure transparency and not a one-way report from the government to Parliament. I would therefore like to make some amendments to improve this bill.

I want to acknowledge the consultation and co-creation process that the department went through to put this legislation together. As I said, it is a step in the right direction. It is a meaningful step, and I hope it will build trust between the government and indigenous peoples.

In closing, I would like to once again pay tribute to Jim Aldridge, who dedicated his life to promoting the understanding that the implementation of treaties is the cornerstone of a just and lasting people-to-people relationship. His work requires us to go further and turn words into action.

That is the ideal that Bill C-10 must live up to. It is not just about creating a position; it is about rebuilding trust between the Crown and the signatories, trust between institutions and people and trust that promises will be honoured.

Treaty signatories are clearly not asking for something symbolic. They want a tool that will produce real change, a mechanism to ensure that modern treaties, the foundations of our federation, finally become living, visible realities respected by all.

*Government Orders*

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I think in terms of the legislation, I believe it is ultimately a reality today because of the advocacy of indigenous leaders. This is not something just any political party has been advocating for, but it is something that is long overdue. Ultimately, if we respect the issue of nation to nation relations and indigenous community leaders, this is the type of legislation that will make a positive difference.

I wonder if my friend can continue to add to his comments when he makes reference to indigenous partnership, even in the development of the legislation we have today.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure I talked about that in my speech.

We know the idea of consultation is fragile. Bill C-5 showed us how the government can worm its way out of things. How can anyone think that merely sending a letter and giving certain indigenous communities—not all of them, just some of them—five days could possibly make them feel they have been consulted? That is where things can go awry, and that is why this commissioner position is so essential.

Again, this is about modern treaties. The government must be willing to improve living conditions as well and implement modern treaties faster for those who do not currently have them.

[*English*]

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the independence of this commissioner, should the agency be created. I wish to point him to subclause 28(2), which examines how the commissioner, should the agency be formed, reports. His or her report would go to the minister first, then to the Speakers of both chambers, the Senate and the House. I question that chain of events.

As the Auditor General does, this new commissioner could compel documents and look into reports, but they could not force the government to do anything. We have tons of reports that do not get implemented. Given that we have already had a whole slew of Auditor General reports, what faith does this member have that this new agency, this new commissioner, would actually have a different effect?

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of my colleague's interest in indigenous affairs, but also in public accounts. His question seems to allude to an amendment that we are going to study and that I am obviously inclined to support.

Having watchdog positions whose role it is to bring things out into the open is essential in any democracy. All parliamentarians and the public, especially indigenous, Metis and Inuit communities, have a responsibility to take a hard, critical look at this government's actions and, above all, its inaction.

I have no doubt this will be a useful tool considering that, over the course of our daily activities, we lack the ability to go and check what has or has not been done or follow up on every recommendation. Personally, I welcome this initiative.

**Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his very cogent and interesting speech. If the past is any indication, I would say that we have often seen the government roundly criticize the reports of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who was at least able to inform the House of the government's excesses. My concern is that the first nations commissioner will suffer the same fate.

I would like my colleague to tell us about the possible impact of this new commissioner's reports to the House.

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe in this function of independent officers, in those who have a comprehensive view of the work of the House, who rise above partisan politics and who emphasize accountability. To me that is fundamental.

In our work, raising these issues also helps us to better understand the reality of what is happening on the ground in our own constituencies. All too often, it is upsetting. The government may have good intentions toward indigenous people, but then it only allocates funds to build two housing units even though two housing units per community is not enough, considering the growth of the indigenous population and the fact that we are in the midst of a housing crisis.

We need to be able to have more robust mechanisms in place in order to deliver what the public expects.

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I think that as we go through the debate on the legislation, and I will make reference to a specific example momentarily when I stand up to speak to it, for the government, it is about not only the documents that we sign off on but also the reality of how we are supporting indigenous communities. If we take a look, in terms of the last number of years, we will see that the financial support has been there. I will cite a couple of examples shortly, but I am wondering if the member would not recognize that we have provided financial resources and have been moving forward on the whole idea of reconciliation, particularly the 94 calls to action.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, that will allow me to make further points. The problem is not that the amounts are not announced in a transparent manner by the government. The problem is the actual application of these funds. Standards are being imposed that do not apply to the reality of first nations and northern communities. This means that, in the current context, billions of dollars announced in budgets that make the Liberals look good and show that they are sensitive to the issues are not actually being spent. These funds go back to the Treasury Board, and the situation on the ground does not improve. I am not saying that this is the case everywhere, but it is what we are seeing in many cases.

[English]

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with what the member just said. It is about implementation, and his colleague from Jonquière brought up the exact same point I was trying to make. The Auditor General has a whole library of reports on where the government is failing on a whole range of points, whether it is related to weather, clean water or something else. It is already there. This goes back decades, for 150-plus years. The government is not living up to its treaty obligations, whether modern or otherwise. If the Auditor General, independent from Parliament, tables this report, why does he have confidence all of a sudden that this new commissioner will actually be able to force the government to do something that it has not done for 150-plus years?

• (1140)

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, our positions can change here in the House.

I was indeed inclined to support the speedy passage of this bill because of the clear consensus that has emerged, because first nations have been calling for it and it was co-created, and because the commissioner is independent and there will be ways of implementing it.

I find the points that my colleague raised in his speech to be particularly relevant. I now think that we need to study this bill in more depth in committee and hear from witnesses. I am very curious to see what amendments will be proposed to improve this bill, especially by the Conservative Party. I already have a few in mind, and I think that the work that we do in committee must be as rigorous as that of my colleague.

[English]

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I also share the view my friend just mentioned. We are still not at the point that we are absolutely certain this would actually change anything. We would be creating a bureaucracy starting at about \$2 million and change every single year for the next five years. When we compare it to other offices like it, we are in the tens of millions, so I do not accept that the cost would stay the same.

Again, it is about results. I think what we can do is support that modern treaties need to be implemented once signed. We can forget the photo op, although I know all politicians like to do that. We can do the photo op, but we should ensure the treaty is implemented. We have the Auditor General's report and we have all these depart-

ments looking after it. Has anyone been fired because of that? The answer is probably no. Maybe we should start there first.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes. I will learn the name of his riding since we work together fairly often. I like to see him working hard, persevering and getting down to business. That is what we will have to do.

As for the question that he raised, I completely agree with him on the principle. Accountability rules are fundamental in our democracy. I am aware that the commissioner will not make the decision that the minister failed to make in the past. Crown-Indigenous Relations needs to make the creation of new, modern treaties a priority so that everyone has access to equal opportunities.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to yet another very important piece of legislation that the government has presented to members of the House. As with previous legislation, I would encourage members to get on board with recognizing where it is coming from and see the benefit of having legislation of this nature become law.

There are a number of things I would like to express.

In dealing with the legislation itself, it is important for us to realize how, in essence, it came into being. We did not see bureaucrats sitting around a table ultimately dictating something from the federal government. In fact, there has been extensive work done to ensure it comes from the leadership within the indigenous community. The legislation reflects issues that were ultimately raised by indigenous leaders.

We have this legislation before us today in good part because of the commitment to improve that nation-to-nation relationship we often talk about. It is a significant step toward reconciliation. Even though it is not part of Murray Sinclair's calls to action, I believe that, if we capture their principles and essence, this could have very easily been a 95th call to action. It is a very powerful statement that will become reality if, in fact, we can get it passed through the House of Commons.

In listening to the comments thus far, I am very much encouraged by those from the Bloc. I have some reservations with regard to the Conservatives, and I would like to address those head-on.

In the questions and answers that were posed, I believe that maybe there is some flexibility and some room to see potential changes to the legislation that would satisfy the Conservatives, at least in part. I think we need to, at the very least, explore that possibility.

*Government Orders*

I would suggest that one of the ways we can best explore that possibility is this: After hearing a number of hours of debate on the legislation, some would like to see a smaller number of hours of debate and allow it to go to the committee, where we could hear first-hand from indigenous leaders and other stakeholders. We could hear what it is the Conservatives might say that could improve the legislation.

Let me start off by addressing what seems to be the primary concern of the Conservatives. Two points come to my mind. One is cost and the other is the federal Auditor General.

I will deal with the issue of cost. I could probably spend a little while talking about the cost of not taking actions such as this to all of us. All one needs to do is take a look at the last federal election. There was an issue that came up at every other door. If I raised it, it was 95% of the doors I knocked on. It was a concern about trade, Trump and tariffs, if I can put it in the form of the three Ts. It meant a great deal no matter what the person's background, whether they were from a first nation or anywhere else. It had to do with the impact this is going to have on us economically and socially.

● (1145)

That is why I think the position of the Prime Minister was the right position at the time. He recognized that, if we are going to grow collectively into the future, we need to have one Canadian economy. That is not possible without indigenous leaders at the table. When we talk about nation-to-nation relationships, having both direct and indirect input is of critical importance. We saw that in a very tangible way after the election. We had ministers and others dealing with many different stakeholders, whether provinces, territories, indigenous leaders or others, in order to see what we can do to build upon one Canadian economy.

I do not think it is a coincidence. We can look at the first modern treaty, which has already been cited once or twice now. It was for the James Bay project in northern Quebec. That modern treaty enabled indigenous community members and people living in Quebec to benefit immensely. It was because of that agreement. It enabled the parties at the table to develop an economic opportunity that would never be where it is today were it not for having a modern treaty.

That is why I say we get a lot of benefit when we recognize the true value of modern agreements and these treaties. They are critically important. They are part of the Constitution. There is a constitutional mandate that everyone who lives in Canada has to respect and act upon. A modern treaty is like a living document that needs modifications. Yes, it would be wonderful if all first nations were incorporated into a modern-day treaty. I think it is important that we continue to work in that direction. As the minister commented in her introduction, these are not documents that are made overnight. We need to recognize that it takes time to make these modern treaties a part of reality.

Let us look at the preamble of the legislation. I do not often refer directly to the legislation, but I think it is worth noting what is stated in the preamble. It is relevant to what we should be talking about today.

It states, “Whereas the Government of Canada is committed to achieving reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis through renewed nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown and government-to-government relationships based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership”.

It also states that “modern treaties are part of the constitutional framework,” which is something I have already made reference to, “and represent a distinct expression of that reconciliation”. It also states that “modern treaties are intended to establish a mutually agreed-upon and enduring framework for reconciliation and ongoing relationships between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples”.

● (1150)

It goes on. I am not going to read all of it, but I want to emphasize a couple more points, which members should refer to.

It states:

Whereas modern treaties are intended to strengthen the health, dignity, well-being and resilience of Indigenous peoples, to create enduring relationships between modern treaty partners and to advance national socio-economic objectives that benefit all Canadians;

I want to emphasize that one because the Prime Minister has been pushing to build one Canadian economy. Earlier in September, we had an indication of five major projects. We are talking about 60 billion dollars' worth of economic opportunities. That is “billions” with a “b”. If we factor in the indirect contributions, it is a whole lot more. I can tell members that if it was not for indigenous leadership, a number of those projects would not be possible. Indigenous leaders, businesses and entrepreneurs are at the table, along with others, to ensure that we build a stronger, healthier economy and social fabric in our nation. It might have been encouraged through some of the actions of President Trump, but I can say that these are real projects.

Let us look, for example, at LNG in British Columbia and who the proponents are for that particular project. Reconciliation is about a lot more than just saying, “Sorry”. It is about dealing with opportunities, remembering the past and going forward to build a stronger and healthier economy for all people in Canada. We can talk about the copper mines we are expanding through the five megaprojects. There are particular projects in western Canada where I focus that are critically important to all of us.

Continuing on with the preamble of the legislation, there is one last area I would like to quote.

It states:

Whereas the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements;

I want to highlight those aspects because I genuinely believe that Bill C-10 is all about the creation of an agent of Parliament who is there to recognize the obligations of Parliament.

*Government Orders*

The two primary concerns, it seems to me, that the Conservatives have about the bill are with respect to the cost factor. The critic said that, when dealing with the costs, we are talking about several million dollars. I made reference to building an economy and how, through reconciliation and having agreements, we are able to achieve an economic success we might not have if we did not have that sort of relationship.

• (1155)

When we think of the agent of Parliament, let me suggest that it is well worth the few millions of dollars that it would cost to put it into place.

The other argument being used is about the issue of expertise. As the critic for the Conservative Party made reference to, we have the Auditor General and the Auditor General should suffice. I would ultimately argue that this is not the case. Having the agent of Parliament being proposed through Bill C-10 is very different from having the Auditor General deal with the situation.

Let me give members an example of that. I am a very big fan of Murray Sinclair. My home province is Manitoba, the birthplace of Murray Sinclair. I have been an MLA and am now a member of Parliament, and I have been in politics since 1988. I got to know the late Murray Sinclair and saw first-hand the impact that this individual had on our nation in whatever role he played. I especially got to know him a little better when he was appointed a senator.

Let me suggest why I raise Murray Sinclair. It is because across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, Murray Sinclair's report on the state of indigenous people in Canada and the relationship between the different levels of government has been widely accepted and supported. When Murray Sinclair made the report back in 2015, with its 94 calls to action, I was sitting in the third party. This was back in 2014, going into 2015, a few years ago. At the same time, Murray Sinclair made it very clear that these 94 calls to action were of the utmost importance in dealing with reconciliation. Even though Bill C-10 technically is not one of those calls to action, I believe that if Murray Sinclair could have a 95th, this would likely be it, because it is about accountability and transparency.

If it were not for Murray Sinclair, his life experiences and the knowledge he brought to the table, we would not be where we are today. I would suggest to the Conservatives to take a look at the type of individual who will be filling this particular position. This commissioner, an independent agent of Parliament with an incredible background who is appointed for seven years, cannot be replaced by the Auditor General of Canada. Murray Sinclair demonstrated that very clearly.

The purpose of my standing today is to show the Conservative Party that the merits of this legislation, at the very least, deserve to be brought to the committee stage, where the Conservatives can then deal in more detail with their concerns. Let us recognize that this legislation is good, solid and should pass—

• (1200)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Kenora—Kiiwetinoong.

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is more typical Liberal legislation. I have had the honour of serving

on the indigenous and northern affairs committee for many years now. Over and over, we have seen the government make big promises and then take very little action.

The member spoke about the 94 calls to action, but only 14 or 15 have been completed by the government. It made big promises on drinking water and did not follow through. In the fall of 2022, the government said that legislation was around the corner to make first nations policing services essential, and we are still waiting for that legislation. The same can be said for modern treaties. The government has achieved zero.

Why are the Liberals looking to create more bureaucracy and spend more, instead of just moving forward with modern treaties? They already have the power to do that.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, one thing I am always cognizant of is that at times there are political entities in the chamber that provide misinformation. We are close to having 20 of the recommendations completed. Not all 94 recommendations are federal responsibilities. For example, the Pope gave an apology. The federal government may have tried to influence the Pope, but it was the Catholic Church that ultimately had to deal with that particular recommendation.

Of the recommendations the federal government is responsible for, at least 80% are under process. We cannot just click our feet, wave a magic wand and have them completed. Many of the recommendations take years to complete.

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives support modern treaties, but there are concerns that with this bill, the establishment of an independent commissioner and office would lead to more government bureaucracy. In his speech, my Conservative colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes mentioned alternatives to prevent this.

How can the member opposite be certain that in the establishment of the commissioner position, no government bureaucracy will take place?

• (1205)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I spent a great deal of my time noting how, from an economic and social point of view, it is in our best interests collectively as parliamentarians, representing all of Canada, to ensure that we continue to make progress on indigenous relationships, nation to nation. I believe this legislation further advances that by ensuring that we have an official agent of Parliament to assist in pushing the government to take necessary actions.

I wanted to talk about Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, and I hope to get another opportunity to do so.

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about making progress on these issues. I would point out that under a Conservative government, we signed six modern treaties, and that under 10 years of Liberal government, no modern treaties have been signed. Does the member think that is progress?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister who introduced the legislation explained, it takes years to get a modernization project. I suspect that many of the modernization treaties that were signed by Stephen Harper began under Paul Martin. All one needs to do is look at Paul Martin's impact on the Kelowna Accord, something Stephen Harper opposed. Had Stephen Harper supported it, we would have seen a lot more support on the issues of housing, education and health, which really—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars back in 2005.

At the end of the day, I do not have a problem comparing records. All one needs to do is to look at the calls to action and look at our record.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North. He mentioned that true reconciliation is not limited to apologies. I would like him to explain to us today why his government is not repealing the Indian Act, a discriminatory, colonial and paternalistic law imposed on first nations. That piece of legislation embodies everything that stands in the way of true reconciliation.

Why, after all these years, has his government not taken steps to repeal the Indian Act?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** That is a really good question, Mr. Speaker. I have often thought that myself. When I talk to indigenous leaders and non-indigenous people who are trying to move that file forward, it is often raised.

I believe it is a fairly complicated issue, so I am not prepared to answer at this time. I do not have that level of expertise, but it is something that I too, from what I hear, would like to see disposed of. I wish it were that simple.

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is from Winnipeg, which has a sizable indigenous population. He has been very engaged in consultation with members of his own community. What is the member hearing from those in his constituency and how would he expect that to apply across Canada?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, one of the most prominent individuals I have had the pleasure of representing, who I believe has moved out of Winnipeg North, is the current national chief, Cindy Woodhouse, someone I classify as a personal family friend. She is a very powerful, strong voice for indigenous community members throughout the country. I have learned a great deal from her. It is one of the reasons I am an advocate for ensuring that we continue to push the envelope in dealing with reconciliation and getting the job done on certain projects, like the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation's Freedom Road. Do members know how long it waited for that to happen? There is also the water treatment plant at Shoal Lake to get rid of the boil water advisories.

We want to continue to advocate for good, healthy policy and budgetary measures.

• (1210)

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary can highlight why it was so important for this legislation to come forward now and why we should pass it through the House as expeditiously as possible.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, as I said at the outset of my comments, this legislation is before us today because of the immense amount of work done over the years on identifying how we can further advance indigenous reconciliation. Having an agent of Parliament is something that indigenous community leaders and others, like me, believe will have a very profound and positive impact. It is a seven-year appointment of an individual who has incredible experience. Through that experience and knowledge, someone could make a difference, as Murray Sinclair did.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the member talk about economic issues tied in with social issues, because that is what first nations have been talking about for the last 20 years, at least. It is nice to see the Liberals kind of waking up.

We are talking about Canada's economy as well, which the member also mentioned. The Nisga'a have had a treaty with the government for 20 years. They opposed Bill C-48, the tanker ban, but the Liberal government ignored them. Is the ignoring of treaty bands, especially on the west coast of British Columbia, going to continue?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, on his first comments, I would refer the member to the Paul Martin Kelowna Accord, in which there were solid commitments that dealt with education, employment and living conditions. A lot of consultations were done then.

With regard to the other part of the member's question, I would, in return, ask a question: Was there unanimous consent among indigenous community leaders in B.C. that the ban was not the appropriate thing to do?

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are here talking about the creation of a treaty implementation commissioner. Here is some background. I was the chief councillor of the Haisla Nation Council for six years, and prior to that, I was a councillor for eight years. During that eight-year period, I was treaty chairman under the B.C. treaty process; I was negotiating the treaty, so I read all the announcements over the last 20 years, went to all the meetings and read all the reports and the different positions being created to address very simple issues.

*Government Orders*

For those who do not understand the treaty and how it has evolved, the treaty is basically a formal agreement signed between B.C., Canada and first nations, and has evolved to formalize aboriginal rights and title, and underneath that, case law that established, in the courts of B.C. and Canada, reconciliation. That term is used loosely all over Canada, especially by politicians, for everything under the sun, but when we look at case law, we see that “reconciliation” has a meaning: It is how to marry aboriginal rights and title interests with Crown interests, meaning legislation and regulations.

Under undefined rights and title, which is what we are finding in cases like that of Cowichan, for example, it is complicated, I will admit, but a treaty defines rights and title in a very prescriptive manner, including implementation. There are implementation provisions in modern-day treaties. Why would we create another position, another level of bureaucracy, when implementation is already spelled out in the modern-day treaties?

I have heard the awakening speeches from the Liberal members that talk about social issues tied with economic development issues, which is great. I am glad they have finally woken up to that reality, especially in first nations regions, because we have been talking about that for the better part of 20 years. Before the 2004 court case came along, first nations really did not have a seat at the table. It was the Haida court case of 2004 that defined the role of the Crown in dealing meaningfully with aboriginal rights and title interests, even if it had not been proven. By the way, the Haisla first nation, where I come from, intervened in that court case.

The Haida court case turned things around for my band. We went from being one of the poorest first nations communities in B.C. to being one of the wealthiest and most successful. More importantly, we resolved poverty and unemployment. All those social issues, including the violence of poverty, started to go away. I am incredibly proud of that. In fact I would love to see some type of report done on that. My band is not talking about the social issues that many other first nations are talking about anymore, just because we engaged in the economic fabric of Canada and B.C.

However, it is the politics that have held us back, the legislation created in places like this and in Victoria that many people do not understand and do not follow. I do not blame them, especially today. They are out there trying to make life more affordable and trying to find a job, especially our young people, who are reaching higher levels of unemployment. They have their own issues.

I believe that part of my job is to describe what is happening here in terms of legislation, and to describe how it affects the individual, which is extremely hard. A lot of people think, “Implementation of treaty is such a great thing. They are going to create a commissioner.” Well, a commissioner has no authority. What the commissioner would do is take the decades of complaints from first nations, formulate them into a report and give it to government.

Then, if government repeats its past behaviour, it will ignore the report or come up with some type of word-salad speech, just for the perception that it is actually doing something, when really, first nations leaders are coming to the table in good faith, not only to resolve their issues but also to sign a treaty. They are moving from a place of undefined aboriginal rights and title that requires consulta-

tion, and they think they are moving into an arena where they are going to be treated as an equal partner to Canada and B.C.

● (1215)

The Nisga'a Nation, in my region, has had a treaty for over 20 years. Its members were the first to complain of the tanker ban that restricted their economic future. They are a treaty partner of Canada, but Canada did it anyway. To be clear, the Nisga'a were not supporting the transport of oil; they just thought that the treaty outlined specific roles and responsibilities between their treaty nation and the Government of Canada. That is all they wanted. They expected more, because the provisions of the treaty said so.

For treaty bands, unless they are gifted with location as an asset, it is really tough to implement a loan by themselves without an economic base. For some treaty bands that are close to urban centres, an economic base is not that much of a problem, especially if land values are high, such as in Vancouver. However, for remote bands that sign on to a treaty, there are provisions in the treaty where, at some point, they are going to have to get off government funding.

The whole point of signing on to a treaty is to formalize an agreement between Canada and B.C., but also to get away from Indian Act funding. Everybody talks about dependence. Well, for the most part, the Indian Act is irrelevant; nobody is going to enforce those archaic provisions, but the funding agreements still hold first nations dependent on government funding.

Treaty bands get government funding as well, but there are provisions where they have to develop their own source of revenue, which is really hard to do. If we think about a typical band with maybe 800 people on reserve and 800 off reserve, its funding agreement probably amounts to \$7 million or \$8 million a year; I have been away from council for quite a while, so I am not quite sure, but the provisions of the treaty expect them to replace that funding and be independent of government funding.

There are also extra costs, because Indian Act funding is formulated in such a way that first nations do not really get the entire cost covered by Indian Act funding. If they need \$100, the Indian Act will provide \$70, and they have to figure out the rest. That goes for water, sewers, administration and health, so first nations are continuously trying to make up the difference.

### *Government Orders*

By the way, under the Indian Act, if a first nation produces a deficit, it will get punished. There will be clawbacks, by a cessation of programs, for example. However, here is the thing: In certain funding agreements under the Indian Act, if a first nation produces a surplus and it is not entirely under the criteria of what government expects, it also gets punished. First nations cannot win under the Indian Act agreement, so it is no wonder they are trying to find a way out, whether that is by leveraging their aboriginal title to be engaged in economy to create their own source of revenue, or by signing a treaty. Either way, first nations leaders are still trying to resolve one central thing: How do they resolve poverty and all the violence that accompanies it?

This is not new. I became treaty chairman in 2003. I used to go to the summit meetings in Vancouver, in Musqueam. They were talking about this back then, not only in terms of implementing a signed treaty but actually in terms of the provisions that we were negotiating at the time. I do not see how a commissioner would change this, when it would be just another office to pass the message on to government that “hey, government, you are not doing your job”, which is what it boils down to.

● (1220)

Liberal members have been getting up and talking about a new era of partnership and building an economy to combat Trump's tariffs. Why, then, have they opposed economic development for the last 10 years? Why did they create Bill C-69? Why did they create Bill C-48? We have already heard energy experts saying that we cannot be an energy superpower without oil and gas, that our dependence as a country on the United States, taking our own gas at a discount, is not only going to limit our ability to diversify our economy but will also limit us in becoming an energy superpower.

First nations are already there; we have been there for the last 20 years. If we look at the Haida court case of 2004, we see there is a specific clause that says there is an economic component of rights and title that must be respected. That is in relation to the land.

First nations get it. They have to make a trade-off, and they have been willing to make that trade-off. They have a specific parcel of land, and in their past practices it might have been subject to ceremonial purpose, food gathering, hunting or fishing. They get it, but they are also looking at the ravages of poverty, especially on reserve, and even, for that matter, off reserve, so first nations have been pushing for economic development in all sectors as much as they could. Who stops them? The Liberal government stops them with its legislation.

I already outlined the Nisga'a Treaty, with the government's partner that has a higher level than just consultation of aboriginal rights and title because it has defined rights and title. The first nation signed a constitutionally protected document with Canada and B.C. that said that the Nisga'a Nation is a partner of Canada and B.C. The leaders did it not just for the glory of signing a treaty; they thought they could build a better future for their people, and they are doing a great job.

At the same time, every modern-day treaty agrees to abide by the laws of B.C. and Canada. This is called the paramountcy of laws. They are agreeing to that, meaning that if someone goes onto treaty territory of a modern-day treaty, they are not going to come into a

brand new country with the old set of laws regarding speeding or crimes. They trade their undefined rights and title for that because they want to be a partner.

Most first nations leaders see that the issues we are facing as aboriginals are the same issues all Canadians are facing right now. We are in this together. Like a judge said, let us face it: None of us are going anywhere. First nations want better medical services just like everybody else. They want better highways and better schools. Treaty bands are subject to taxation. They do not want higher taxes, and if they do submit taxes, they want to see those taxes being used responsibly, just like non-aboriginals in Canada do.

Therefore, somehow the new-found idea of partnership with the first nations in economic development for Canada, coming from the Liberals, sounds disingenuous given the past 10 years, but it is more important than ever. It is more important because as we go into a limited economy stifled by legislation and regulations, combined with unmanageable deficits with no plan to pay off the debt, Canada is going down a dangerous road. I can say, as an aboriginal coming off reserve, that I cannot believe there are not more people talking about this.

● (1225)

Other countries have proven what happens when decisions are based entirely on politics. We think the cost of living is bad now, but if we go to a place like Venezuela, which bases its entire system on politics, it is now selling its resources for pennies on the dollar. People there need a wheelbarrow of cash just to buy a loaf of bread.

Governance is serious stuff, and I do get the politics. I understand it, but if we keep making political decisions and not thinking about the present day and future of our country, Canadians will pay for that for decades, for generations.

We are talking about treaty implementation. When I was a treaty negotiator and a chief councillor, it was made clear to me that decisions are to be made based on seven generations in the future. We did not have the luxury of spinning the truth, or at least I did not. Maybe I did have the opportunity, but I did not go down that road.

Yes, a lot of my policy decisions were not liked, but I was doing what I did for a reason. There were issues I wanted to resolve. I also wanted to leave a better place for my descendants. It turns out that LNG Canada was a good decision, even though politicians rejected it. For decades, the B.C. NDP made outrageous claims about why LNG was bad. They were saying that if LNG was approved, Victoria would be under water. The Liberals said that there was no business case for LNG and told that to Germany.

Meanwhile, we were waving from over here, saying, “Hey, wait a minute. We have LNG in Canada, in our territory.” We had Chevron, which was chased out. That was a \$30-billion project. It was chased out. There were 18 projects in B.C., and all but three left.

The Liberal government is talking the reverse side of it now, saying that we need an economy, we need LNG and maybe we will become an energy superpower, but it is not going to talk about how it will do that. The government says that it will build oil pipelines but that it is not going to build oil pipelines. All this mixed messaging, wordsmithing and truth spinning is going to hurt Canadians.

This existential crisis that Trump created is not an opportunity for more politicking. It is a time to think about us as a country. Where did we come from? It is a pretty messy picture when one talks about where we came from in terms of aboriginal interests. I acknowledge the past and understand the wrongdoings, but I learned a long time ago that it is better to build a future. It is easy to tear down.

The Liberals have already torn down our economy by saying no to oil tankers on the west coast of B.C., even though there are tankers coming down the west coast of British Columbia on a daily basis from Alaska to Washington state. There is no mention of that. By the way, Washington state will refine some of the oil it gets from Alberta into gas, diesel and jet fuel and sell it back to Canada for incredible profits.

The United States has become an energy superpower for exporting oil and gas for domestic purposes and export. Where do they get a large part of their supply? They get it from Canada, at a discount. Treaty first nations are there; they have been begging for the government to stop ignoring them. All we are saying to the government is to do its job and not create another level of bureaucracy for a message to come from the commissioner to the government to tell it to do its job. First nations want to build Canada, just as everybody else does. Canada should just do its job.

● (1230)

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 is part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act's action plan. This, as the member would most certainly know, specifically protects the rights of indigenous peoples to their culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and natural resources.

Notwithstanding the fact that, in 2021, every single Conservative member voted against the adoption of UNDRIP, could the member opposite please tell us how important it is to apply the principles of UNDRIP when working with indigenous peoples?

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, the principles are important, but not to the point of ignoring the Haida court case from 2004 or ignoring treaty first nations. The government is using UNDRIP as a cover to say that Bill C-48 is basically needed. It is not needed, especially when first nations are trying to resolve poverty.

I put this back to the member: How does the government's UNDRIP legislation resolve poverty?

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member represents a large rural riding in northern

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British Columbia, just two ridings over from northern Alberta. I appreciate his comments immensely.

He talked about the treaty relationships we have around the world and getting out from underneath the Indian Act. It is a mantra I think all parties in the House talk about: getting folks out from underneath the Indian Act.

I was wondering if the member could explain a little more what that would look like for his particular community.

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, development of resources, such as forestry, mining and LNG, has actually brought in a lot of revenue, employment and training. I already mentioned that, to me, the Indian Act has become irrelevant and archaic, except for the funding agreement.

We segregated Indian Act programs and funding into Indian Act bureaucracy through departments of my band council. However, we created a new structure to deal with government, any kind of development and politics. That really turned it around for us.

This was in a short time frame. Within 10 years, we basically no longer needed Indian Act funding. The social issues started to decrease on their own with no intervention from our band council, or government for that matter.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

**Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that my colleague's speech was not so much about Bill C-10 as it was about how passionate he is about oil development in his province. Good for him, if that is something that is important to him. However, it seems to me that the bill before us is the main topic of discussion.

The government does not have a particularly good record when it comes to respecting indigenous rights, particularly with the passage of Bill C-5 last spring. Indigenous groups spoke out about that bill in every possible way, but the government forced it through anyway.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on respect for indigenous rights, because the current government does not seem to respect them. I wonder if the Conservatives, if they came to power, would respect them any more.

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[English]

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, that was a great question. In fact, it was the Liberals' speeches that actually guided me toward economic development issues, such as forestry, mining, and oil and gas. I agree with my colleague that, over the last 10 years, I have not seen the Liberal government giving respect to first nations members regarding their rights.

By the way, I am talking about the rights as defined in the Haida court case from 2004. As Conservatives, we fully respect and will honour that court case. I can tell members that. It actually has all the answers, as opposed to what is being proposed by Bill C-10.

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is frustrating to hear my hon. colleague, who is also from British Columbia, repeating some of the selective amnesia of his fellow members on the other side of the aisle around just how much development has happened in our province over recent years.

Despite the member's assertions otherwise, there have been at least four major energy projects, including two major pipelines; a major LNG facility, which I know the member knows well; and the Site C dam have all been constructed in B.C., with a value that the Vancouver Board of Trade estimates at around \$80 billion for British Columbia's economy.

Notwithstanding, the issue I question the member on is whether he will accept the view of coastal first nations in our province, who have said very clearly just in the last week that they do not support a project from Alberta that is as yet completely unspecified being built to the B.C. coast.

The member is clear and correct in his assertion of first nations' rights and title. He is deeply experienced on this file. Will he respect the rights and title of coastal first nations in B.C.?

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, that is basically what the Haida court case of 2004 clearly defines. I will make it clear: It is the community that owns the rights and title; it is not a collective of first nations. It is not even their leadership, unless the community itself decides who the leadership will be.

By the way, the Liberals talk about respecting aboriginal rights and title interests. Why did you approve Bill C-48 when you knew full well that Nisga'a Treaty Nation opposed treaty implementation? You did not say anything about that in your press releases, and you still have not addressed it.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I just want to remind all members to address their comments and questions through the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kenora—Kiiwetinoong.

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's sharing his experience as an elected member of this place, of the provincial legislature and, of course, in his nation as well. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge.

I wonder if he has more commentary on the pattern of the Liberal government in making big promises and bringing in very little follow-through afterwards. It is looking, once again, to create more

bureaucracy and throw more money at an issue that it has the power to address very well right now. I wonder if my colleague has any other thoughts on that.

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, the provisions of a treaty already define what the government is supposed to do, not only in terms of the federal government but also in terms of the provincial government and the first nations as well. It defines what their roles and responsibilities are now. This has always been a one-way street, though. First nations have always gone to governments and asked if they can implement the treaty as outlined in the treaty. They asked if they could do that, and it has always been ignored. My point about appointing a treaty commissioner is to ask, is this another level of bureaucracy the government intends to ignore?

• (1240)

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech suggests that he has experience in this area. However, I would like him to clarify something for me. There is a contradiction between the Conservative Party's intentions and actions today and what we saw in June. The government introduced Bill C-5 in June. The Conservatives supported this bill concerning projects of national interest, but not just any old way. A gag order was imposed after the new government had been in power for just four weeks, and the official opposition supported it. That has not happened very frequently in Canadian history.

Bill C-5 has been criticized, particularly by indigenous communities, because there was no prior consultation. They were simply sent a document and given five days to respond and say whether they were okay with it.

I would therefore like my colleague to explain something. If there is a genuine desire for reconciliation, why did his party support a bill that was drafted without consulting first nations? This bill concerning major projects of national interest will have a huge impact on first peoples.

[English]

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, basically, yes, we supported it, but we wanted to put protections in, which we debated and we got in. By the way, I do not blame the first nations for their distrust of this, because one day, the government said first nations do not have a veto. I suspect it got that out of the case law, specifically, the Haida court case of 2004. However, the very next day, when it got political push-back, it said it would not do anything without first nations' consent. It then added it would not do anything without national consensus. In both cases, this was not defined.

I think we all agree that we all have to build up the economy. We have to get away from the tariffs, and we have to actually rebuild our economy for the sake of Canadians.

**Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Yellowhead.

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*Kwe. Ullukkut. Taanshi.* Hello. I would like to begin by honouring the Algonquin Anishinabe nation, on whose traditional, unceded and unsundered territory Canada's Parliament is established.

I am honoured to rise and speak today in support of Bill C-10, which would establish a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The bill has strong support from modern treaty partners, and its introduction is an important step forward on the path of reconciliation. At its core, it is an opportunity to turn shared priorities into shared progress.

To better understand this opportunity, I will speak about how we got to where we are today. That means looking back at the history that shaped our present reality and the history of treaties in Canada. I will also discuss what a modern treaty is and why we have faced calls to improve their implementation, accountability and oversight for more than 20 years.

Treaties have long been the foundation of the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples. For example, in the 18th century, the peace and friendship treaties were intended to re-establish peace and trade after conflicts. Meanwhile, the treaties signed after 1763 over first nations territories opened up much of Canada to non-indigenous settlement in return for recognition of specific rights, annuities and goods, among other benefits. The treaties from this period and into the 1920s are referred to as historic treaties.

I would like to take a moment and say that last Wednesday was Treaty Day for all of Mi'kma'ki. In Nova Scotia, we had a flag-raising at the lieutenant-governor's house, which was very well attended. I saw the framed document, which is now 300 years old, in that house. It was a truly special moment.

As members know, during the historic treaty period, Canada adopted colonial, paternalistic policies that inflicted harm on indigenous peoples. These are painful truths that we now acknowledge as part of our ongoing journey of reconciliation. Decades later, Canada entered the modern treaty era of treaty-making. While modern treaties are distinct from historic treaties, they remain a foundational part of the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples.

I am now going to explain some of this history.

The modern treaty era began in 1973 with the Supreme Court decision of *Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*. This case centred around the Nishga Tribal Council in British Columbia, which sought recognition of the title to lands its people had historically inhabited. Until 1951, the Indian Act made it illegal for indigenous communities to use band funds to support any litigation or claim, making it difficult to pursue the title to the land.

Nishga Chief Frank Calder brought the case to the courts. The case was first rejected by the Supreme Court of British Columbia and then by the Court of Appeal of British Columbia. The Nishga Tribal Council escalated the case to the Supreme Court of Canada, where, at trial, it lost the case by one vote based on a technicality in the judicial process. Although the Nishga Tribal Council did not reach the outcome it sought, the decision led to the Government of Canada's first land claims policy concerning the settlement of land claims by groups seeking title rights to land. This new policy would

be important when Canada entered into the first modern treaty with the James Bay Cree.

Around the same time as the Nishga and the *Calder* case, Hydro-Québec sought to develop land claimed by the James Bay Cree without consulting the indigenous people inhabiting it. In response, the first nation partnered with the Indians of Quebec Association to negotiate with the Province of Quebec, though without success. Later, with the help of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association, the case was escalated to the Superior Court of Québec. Eventually, the James Bay Cree and the Inuit of northern Quebec signed a modern treaty with the Government of Canada and the Province of Quebec. The implementation of that treaty began 50 years ago, on November 11, 1975. The treaty permitted Hydro-Québec's development of the land, and the Cree and Inuit inhabiting the territory were offered an acknowledgement of their rights to the land. This first modern treaty was a landmark for indigenous peoples across Canada, setting a new precedent in treaty-making.

In 1982, there was another landmark that proclaimed and affirmed the rights of indigenous peoples in Canada: the Constitution Act of 1982. Notably, it was forward-looking, acknowledging that additional rights and freedoms could be defined by indigenous peoples in the future through land claims settlement.

• (1245)

Despite this progress, tensions and disagreements persisted. To find solutions, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established to find ways to rebuild the relationship. It spent five years studying the relationship between the Government of Canada and indigenous peoples and found that the federal government lacked policy oversight and needed better guidance on land claims other than through the courts. The commission proposed that an implementation office be established to oversee the government's treaty claims, self-government accords and other obligations. At the heart of these recommendations was the need for the "foundations of a new relationship". This included calls for improved review and oversight of modern treaties.

Since then, the Government of Canada has faced many calls to improve modern treaty implementation. For instance, in 2003, an Auditor General report outlined the findings of an audit that studied the department's management of and accountability in its transfer of responsibilities to the Yukon, as well as land claim agreements. The report found that there was a "lack of performance reporting" measures and "ineffective implementation".

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The Auditor General published a report in 2007, four years later, on the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. The report noted the “absence of a formal structure” to oversee implementation, a “lack of a strategic approach” to implement its modern treaty obligations and a lack of monitoring of how Canada fulfilled these obligations. It also noted an inconsistency in the vision between the Government of Canada and claimants regarding their respective roles and responsibilities.

Most striking was the recommendation from the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples that said the Government of Canada immediately begin to establish, in collaboration with modern treaty partners, an independent commissioner for modern treaty implementation. A similar call was included in the calls for justice detailed in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The report called on the Government of Canada to immediately implement and comply with the calls from international and human rights bodies to establish treaty-monitoring bodies such as the one we are discussing here today.

To summarize, since the beginning of the modern treaty era in Canada, the federal government has been called upon to improve accountability and oversight. Today, we have the opportunity to make history by responding to those calls, fully committing to honouring the relationships and fully meeting the obligations enshrined in modern treaties. Modern treaty partners strongly advocated for the introduction of this bill, and modern treaty partner leadership named establishing the commissioner as a top priority during the Land Claims Agreements Coalition conference that was held in February this year.

It is important to remember that modern treaties are about moving the Government of Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples forward. The social, cultural and economic growth driven by modern treaties creates opportunities for indigenous partners and all people in Canada. It is also central to the one Canadian economy act, which would integrate indigenous leadership into national infrastructure and climate planning.

I ask the members of this House to vote yes on this legislation. I ask them to vote yes on responding to 20 years of calls for greater accountability and transparency in modern treaty implementation and vote yes on living up to the promises enshrined in modern treaties in our laws and Constitution. I ask them to vote yes on a stronger and more resilient Canadian economy, underpinned by thriving indigenous communities and meaningful Crown-indigenous collaboration.

I ask them to vote yes on Bill C-10, the commissioner for modern treaty implementation act.

*Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.*

● (1250)

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her election to this place.

What is striking about this bill is that it is really not necessary. The government has the power right now to bring forward and deal with modern treaties. The past Conservative government got six modern treaties signed.

After 10 years of the tired Liberal government, I wonder if the member can share what exactly has prevented the Liberals from doing this work to this point, because the power is in their hands.

**Shannon Miedema:** Mr. Speaker, the need for this commissioner comes from the relationship that we have now and are continuing to grow with our indigenous partners across this country. This bill was in the last Parliament and up for debate, but it did not get passed.

We have been asked specifically to consider passing it without amendment, because it is a top priority. Part of a healthy relationship is listening to the people in that relationship, and this is very much wanted. It would hold the government to account and it would have a very big role in transparency.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. She referred to a key word, namely “accountability”. There is something I would like her to clarify for me: Where is the accountability in this bill?

The new commissioner will have the power to analyze but not the power to compel action. This means that the commissioner would be able to paint a picture of the government's shortcomings but would not be able to change anything. It is like hiring a referee but not even giving them a whistle.

Could my colleague explain something to me? Could it be that the Liberals are afraid of implementing actual mechanisms for holding them accountable for their actions?

[*English*]

**Shannon Miedema:** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear from some of the details in the bill that there are not teeth like there are in a court. This is more about holding the government to account, being transparent, making sure that we are what we have committed to doing in this relationship, and progressing truth and reconciliation in this country.

The bill is not intended to have those teeth, but it is intended to be a positive step forward in guiding us on this journey we are all taking together.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's advocacy. She is a very powerful speaker, I must say, and has taken a responsible position on Bill C-10.

Let us be very clear. There is an opposing viewpoint. The Conservatives tend to believe that the Auditor General of Canada will suffice, and that we do not need this legislation.

Would having an independent agent who has background experience in dealing with the whole issue of reconciliation and these modern treaties be of great value to Parliament? By establishing the commissioner, all of Canada would benefit from having an advocate who has a special focus on this issue. Would she not agree?

**Shannon Miedema:** Mr. Speaker, I 100% agree that we need this independent commissioner, who would be chosen in collaboration with our indigenous partners, with whom we have been working on this for so long.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to clarify something for me in terms of words and actions. She speaks of reconciliation and transparency and yet, in June, this government tabled Bill C-5 without first consulting indigenous communities, for which it was criticized.

How can we trust a government that completely ignored indigenous communities only a few months ago but is now saying that it wants true reconciliation?

[*English*]

**Shannon Miedema:** Mr. Speaker, we have been consulting indigenous communities across this country on Bill C-5. We have been in these conversations for months now. I disagree with that statement.

**William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in strong opposition to Bill C-10, the so-called commissioner for modern treaty implementation act.

Let me begin by stating what should be obvious but often gets lost in the noise of the Liberal government's grandstanding: Conservatives support treaty rights. We support the process of reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis people, not just in word but in meaningful action, and we have the record to back that up. Under Prime Minister Harper, five modern treaties were successfully negotiated in just six years. These were not symbolic gestures; they were real agreements that advanced indigenous self-government and secured land and government rights that had been long delayed.

Contrast that with the current Liberal government: zero modern treaties negotiated in over a decade in office. That is not progress; it is paralysis, and the Liberal record is shameful. Now, after years of doing nothing, the Liberals are suddenly telling Canadians that the answer to their own failure in bureaucracy is another office, more Ottawa insiders and a new commissioner who, let us be honest, would duplicate work that is already being done by the Office of the Auditor General.

My riding of Yellowhead is home to seven indigenous communities and is located on Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 lands. These are proud nations with deep roots, strong traditions and growing aspirations. I have had the opportunity to meet with leaders and members of the communities since my election this spring. What they need is not another report from another commissioner; what they need is for government to do its job. Imagine what an estimated \$2.6-million annual budget for the proposed office could accom-

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plish in indigenous communities in my riding and across the country.

Throughout the country, indigenous communities need housing, better infrastructure and clean water, something the government has promised but has repeatedly failed to deliver. They need the federal government to live up to existing treaty commitments, not to kick the can down the road while claiming moral high ground from behind a new desk in Ottawa. Bill C-10 is not about reconciliation; it is about political theatre.

Let us take a closer look at what the bill would actually do. It would create a new agent of Parliament, the so-called commissioner for modern treaty implementation. This commissioner would write reports, table findings and issue recommendations, but as we have already heard today, would not have any authority to enforce anything. The kicker is that the reports would go to the minister first, the same minister who is failing to implement the treaties in the first place, before the reports are even tabled in the House. That does not sound very transparent to me.

Proponents of the bill, including many indigenous stakeholders, have expressed support, saying it would improve accountability. I respect their voices and their opinions on the legislation. I also respect their frustration. After a decade of broken promises from the Liberal government, I understand the desire for any measure that might force Ottawa to pay attention.

However, we need to be honest about what the bill is. It is not real accountability; it is bureaucratic theatre, and it comes with a price tag. We are told the new office would cost \$10.6 million over four years, employing about 15 full-time bureaucrats. That may not sound like much to the big spenders on the other side of the House, but let me remind them that Canadians are hurting right now. Inflation is out of control. Families across Canada are struggling to heat their home, fill their gas tank and put food on the table.

These struggles are not exclusive to indigenous communities, nor are they exclusive to communities in my riding. Every member of the House sees the impacts of Liberal spending in their riding and hears about the needs of their constituents on a daily basis. As a CPA, I have seen first-hand the effects of increased Liberal taxes on my community. Small businesses are drowning in red tape. The Liberal government's solution is to spend millions more dollars creating yet another office in Ottawa. This is not common sense; this is Liberal nonsense.

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• (1300)

Let me remind the House that we already have a respected independent institution that audits federal indigenous programs and treaty obligations: the Office of the Auditor General. Since 2005, that office has issued over twenty reports on everything from treaty land entitlements to self-government agreements and to the implementation of modern treaties. As a new member of the public accounts committee, I am dismayed to learn how so many of these reports and recommendations have gone unimplemented.

Although I have been assigned to the committee for only a short time, I have seen time and again that the work is being done. The Auditor General and her office are spending time and money to dig into the issues and to table reports in Parliament, yet again and again, their tangible recommendations that the government cannot bother to follow through on are ignored. In fact some of the most damning evidence of the government's failure has come from the Auditor General's reports.

What has the Liberals' response been? It has not been action or implementation but more delay, more excuses and now more bureaucracy. Creating a new commissioner would not hold government to account; it would just add a middleman. What we need is not more paper; we need more performance. We need ministers and departments to do the job they are paid to do, with no more shifting of blame or hiding behind reports. They should just do their job.

I want to speak directly for a moment to the indigenous leaders and communities in Yellowhead and across the country. I hear them, I see their frustration, I know they are tired of waiting, and I know they have heard a lot of promises from governments of every stripe, with too few results. We do not need more layers of government to make good on its obligations. Government just needs to take leadership. We need accountability and action.

Conservatives are committed to advancing reconciliation through real results, negotiated agreements, infrastructure development and ensuring that indigenous communities have the tools they need to succeed on their own terms. Reconciliation is not served by bloating the bureaucracy in Ottawa; it is served by empowering indigenous communities at home.

The Liberal approach to reconciliation has become performative and bureaucratic, and Canadians are seeing through it. Bill C-10 is not a solution; it is a diversion. It is a smokescreen for a government that has failed to act. It is a press release disguised as policy. It is, ultimately, a waste of time, energy and taxpayer money that would be better spent actually implementing the treaties we already have

On June 11, 2008, former prime minister Stephen Harper said the following about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, during the government's apology to former students of Indian residential schools:

It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

What the bill proposes would not improve the lives of the communities it seeks to help. It would only create another hurdle, an-

other level of bureaucracy and another barrier for indigenous communities that simply need the government to do its job, to honour existing treaties and to follow through on its promises.

Let me close by returning to my riding of Yellowhead, a region rich in history and tradition and home to proud indigenous peoples who want the same thing as every Canadian: the opportunity to build a better life, to raise a healthy family and to move forward with dignity and respect. They do not need another commissioner. They do not need another report. They need a government that will stop talking and start doing. That is what Conservatives will fight for and what I will fight for.

I urge all members to vote against Bill C-10.

• (1305)

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to point out that members opposite and members in the opposition actively deny some of the horrors of residential schools and subsequent intergenerational trauma, so will the member take this opportunity to state on the public record that he acknowledges the horrors of residential schools, acknowledges the deaths of indigenous children at residential schools and acknowledges the need for genuine truth and reconciliation?

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my speech earlier, the Conservatives have a long history of stating that they do recognize that there were problems in the past and that we have addressed them, starting with Mr. Harper. There were several times when actual action was done; it was not just words but things that were actually produced and going forward. I do recognize that there were these problems.

We on the Conservative side want action, not just more words.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I will wait until he puts his earpiece in so that he can understand one of the two official languages in the House. Here is my question for my colleague.

We know full well that the Conservative Party is the champion of accountability. In this bill, the new commissioner only has the power to observe. They have no power to enforce and to actually change things. They can watch, but their hands are tied. They cannot change anything.

I would like my colleague to tell me whether his party agrees that the commissioner should be given real mechanisms so that they can actually change things when the government acts against first nations.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that the commissioner would have absolutely no teeth. It begs the question, would they really have any ability to do anything that is not already in existence? It would be very similar to the Auditor General, who has made all kinds of recommendations, but nothing is accomplished. The government can choose to ignore things.

I do see the proposal as a waste of money, when we already have the ability, with the Auditor General, to do the reports that the commissioner would now have the ability to do. It is just a repeat of the same abilities we already have, so it would be very much a waste of time. However, I am not sure that I would actually want to give the commissioner any more power unless we wanted to extend to the Auditor General the power to make implementations. They would be on the same level, as far as I see it.

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is new to this place, but I am not. I have been here for 10 years now, and I have seen repeatedly how the government ignores reports from officers of Parliament. It ignores reports from the Auditor General. The Auditor General audits a department, finds shortcomings and tables a report. The government says it accepts the findings, and then it does nothing. It has done this with every officer of Parliament. It ignored the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner.

What would adding another officer of Parliament do, other than give the government another person whose reports it can ignore?

• (1310)

**William Stevenson:** Mr. Speaker, from my reading and learning over the last several months, I see absolutely no benefit to creating more reports. We need to actually have action. Just having another place for another bookshelf to store another report to collect dust would not be productive and would not get to the root of any of the problems.

We need to actually implement what we have and listen to the reports we have, as I said earlier in my speech. We have had over 20 reports from the Auditor General, and very few of those have actually been implemented. There is no point in creating more reports to be ignored.

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to address the House this afternoon and join the debate on Bill C-10. I thank the member for Abbotsford—South Langley, who is covering for me at committee at the moment, for assisting me so that I could be here to address the House on this important legislation.

I want to acknowledge that today, October 7, is the sombre anniversary of the worst instance of anti-Semitic violence since the Holocaust. My grandmother was a Holocaust survivor, and I cannot imagine what her response would have been, were she still alive, to the horrific images from that terrorist attack. The violence and the holding of hostages has continued since that day, and I add my voice to the many calling for the release of hostages and for Hamas to lay down its arms. I know that is not the topic of the bill before us, but I did want to mention it given what day it is.

Today, we are debating Bill C-10, a government bill purportedly dealing with issues of justice and reconciliation. The bill would not do that at all, and on that basis, we will be opposing it. I will explain both our opposition to the bill and why I think we should take a different approach.

Bill C-10 would add an additional bureaucratic system around adherence to modern treaties. It proposes to create an additional commissioner of Parliament who would assess and look at the government's response to modern treaties. I suppose the logic of the government here is that the only thing holding the Liberals back from fulfilling their promises is if there was just one more commissioner telling them to do the right thing.

As my colleagues have pointed out, there is always a multiplicity of reports from independent officers or commissioners of Parliament and from civil society highlighting the shortcomings of the government. The government could act on the many recommendations it has received for concretely improving the lives of indigenous peoples, but instead of taking the kind of concrete action that we and many others have proposed, the approach of the government is to say that maybe if we had one more commissioner, it would make all the difference.

I will also comment in response to, I believe, the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, a new member who was making some outrageous claims about the Conservative Party's approach to what happened in residential schools. In fairness, he is a new member, but he could still read the history of what occurred and was said here prior to the time he was elected.

The member maybe does not know, although he could know, that it was Stephen Harper, a previous Conservative prime minister, who apologized officially on behalf of the Government of Canada for what happened in residential schools. It is the Liberal Party that continues to acknowledge, honour and celebrate Liberal prime ministers, in their recent history, who were involved in the opening of residential schools.

Given the efforts of the member to try to make the issue of truth and reconciliation partisan, if he wants to talk about partisan differences when it comes to actions and steps, I am happy to educate him about partisan differences. It was a Conservative government that had the courage, vision and honour to give an apology when previous Liberal governments were unwilling to. We also set up the truth and reconciliation process. Many individuals, of course, were involved, but it was a process that began and took place under a Conservative government.

• (1315)

If the member is unaware of this country's history, I am happy to helpfully add to his knowledge by emphasizing the work that was done by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in that regard. Conservatives believe deeply in the importance of truth and reconciliation, and we are proud to recognize the role Prime Minister Harper played in that. I hope the member will come back during questions and comments to follow up on this point.

### *Government Orders*

To get back to this legislation, this bill proposes to create another bureaucratic position, an officer position, in Parliament that would add to an existing group of oversight bodies that can look at the government's performance on these files. In our judgment, that would add additional bureaucracy when what the government needs to do is take the concrete steps that would improve the lives of indigenous people.

I want to drill into some of the actions that the government could consider that would be more concrete and meaningful. Before speaking in the House, I came from the human resources committee, where we are studying the critical issue of unemployment in this country. Youth unemployment is at 14.5%, and unemployment overall continues to climb. It is now at 7.1%. We are going to see new jobs numbers out this Friday, but we continue to see serious, worsening problems in unemployment, the continuation of a multi-year trend.

We know that unemployment challenges are particularly acute among indigenous Canadians. The Statistics Canada reports on unemployment do not include indigenous people living on reserves, but we know through various metrics that there are persistent challenges with indigenous unemployment in this country.

It is worth noting, as we think about that challenge, that indigenous people are more likely to live in rural and remote areas, proximate to the natural resource sector. While employment in the economy overall is substantially impacted by the kinds of policies that exist in the natural resource sector, employment for indigenous people is disproportionately impacted by policies that relate to natural resource development. This is precisely the testimony we heard this morning at committee: Indigenous people are represented in employment in natural resource development in much higher numbers than they are represented in employment in other sectors.

As Conservatives, we have championed, as part of a larger reconciliation agenda, the importance of economic reconciliation, that is, policies that provide indigenous people with access to employment opportunities. If we want policies that provide access to employment opportunities for indigenous people, they have to include sectors in which indigenous people are more likely to be employed, one of which is, substantially, natural resource development.

Policies from the Liberal government that have blocked at every turn the natural resource sector make it more difficult for indigenous people to find employment. Policies from the Liberal government that block natural resource development disproportionately affect indigenous people seeking employment. That is a reality. Some in the government, for ideological reasons, may say that it is worth it and is a price they are willing to pay, but I think they should acknowledge the disproportionate, negative impact of their anti-energy policies on indigenous people.

What we also heard just a few minutes ago at the human resources committee on the issue of resource development was an acknowledgement from experts that the tone and aesthetic from the Prime Minister's Office may have changed around the discussion of resources, but the substance has not changed. Although we hear words and sounds that are supposed to give the impression of more interest in resource development, the reality is that the policies have not changed. Energy companies looking to create jobs and opportu-

nity here in Canada are asking for the necessary policy and regulatory changes that would unleash economic development and allow for the creation of additional economic opportunities for indigenous people, but the government has not only refused to make those changes but outright opposed them.

● (1320)

One obvious concrete example is the incredible economic opportunities that would be associated with the development of pipeline infrastructure connecting Alberta with export opportunities in northern B.C. We have seen instances of indigenous nations not only supporting but coming forward as proponents of these kinds of projects. They see the opportunities that would emerge from these kinds of developments.

However, the Liberals have persisted in their support for anti-energy Bill C-48, which prohibits exports of energy resources from B.C.'s north coast. Let us acknowledge an obvious reality that some people would like to pretend is not there but clearly is. There are ships off B.C.'s north coast that are carrying energy products; they are just not Canadian ships. There is an abundance of traffic in that region carrying products that could be exported from Canada.

There is no legal way of keeping trade in energy from being in that part of the ocean. It is just a question of whether Canada will benefit economically from the export of our resources, whether we will allow indigenous people who want to be part of those projects to benefit and whether the government will continue to keep its head in the sand and ignore these economic realities. Some of us are hearing from time to time about ostriches. There are certainly people in this House who have their heads in the sand when it comes to these realities of energy development, and they are the ones across the aisle.

The other thing I want to underline when it comes to measures that would improve the quality of life for indigenous peoples is that the government really needs to clean up the mess it has created in the indigenous procurement program. In the last Parliament, we saw the very directly prosecuted issue of the Liberal indigenous procurement scandal.

This is the way the scandal has worked. The government put in place a target for indigenous procurement. It said that it wanted 5% of government procurement to come from indigenous businesses. There are existing organizations supporting and recognizing indigenous businesses, and there are a number of lists and entities outside of government connected with indigenous entities that are working on maintaining lists of indigenous businesses and providing supports to them. The government chose, instead of effectively engaging with external organizations on indigenous business identification, that it would create its own list of indigenous businesses, and it turned out that some businesses listed as indigenous businesses by the Liberal government were not on the indigenous business lists of any external organization.

If the Liberals say that a particular business is an indigenous business and no indigenous entity outside of government says it is an indigenous business, I would suggest there might be some red flags there. Hypothetically, if one of those businesses was owned by a minister of the Crown who was not indigenous, that would also be a red flag.

*Government Orders*

**An hon. member:** Name him.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, a member is asking that I name the individual involved. There were at least two individuals involved, and it is fair to say both of them were named Randy.

The tragic and disgraceful case of the former Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre is notable, but it is also not the only case. The AFN told the government operations committee that, in its view, a majority of companies benefiting from this set-aside were actually shell companies. This explains well the virtue signalling over substance we see from the government when it comes to these issues.

● (1325)

On the one hand, the Liberals want to trumpet the fact that they are putting forward a target for indigenous procurement. On the other, they allowed well-connected Liberal friends who were not indigenous to pretend to be indigenous in order to access these contracts that were supposed to be set aside for indigenous people. What an utterly disgraceful mockery they have made of, I think, the good intentions of Canadians, who asked their government to try to undertake concrete policies that are going to create jobs and opportunity for indigenous peoples, moving forward with economic reconciliation.

They allow non-indigenous pretenders and shysters to benefit from contract set-asides that were supposed to be for indigenous people. At the government operations committee, we had a whistleblower come and testify about a situation in which a clearly non-indigenous company, which basically had one indigenous employee, created this structure of a joint venture between this one individual and this larger company to try to make it look as though it was an indigenous joint venture. The indigenous person was clearly taken advantage of in this arrangement, but it allowed the non-indigenous company to access a significant number of government contracts under the guise of being part of an indigenous joint venture.

We had the whistle-blower, a former auditor, come before the government operations committee to testify about what happened in this case. Further, he testified that the government was not interested in hearing his feedback. In fact, he was gradually pushed out from being able to provide this feedback. Because of that, we were able to pass a motion at the government operations committee to further probe this particular case that this former auditor and whistleblower was bringing to the attention of the committee. We had lined up a number of witnesses to hear from, including the company that was part of this joint venture, as well as giving an opportunity to this indigenous individual, who I think was taken advantage of in this arrangement. We had a plan to have this study, but, of course, the rest is history. The government prorogued Parliament, and then we went straight into an election. The Liberals tried to bury this issue of the Liberal indigenous procurement scandal in the ensuing months.

This is very important, and it is something we need to talk about. My understanding is that we will be hearing from the procurement ombud, as well as from the Auditor General, at some point in the next year about the Liberal indigenous procurement scandal. I certainly look forward to those reports. Unfortunately, I suspect that, as with many of the reports that have been done in the past, we will

see the government ignore the results of these reports. It will be up to Canadians to look at the work done by the Auditor General and the procurement ombud and to respond to the fact that the Liberals, while sometimes talking a good game on reconciliation, have actually blocked economic development for indigenous people and allowed a situation in which non-indigenous fraudsters take advantage of these set-asides by taking contracts that were supposed to be set aside for indigenous people.

The Liberals have allowed this to happen. They have, at best, looked the other way in order to make it look as though their indigenous procurement numbers are better than they actually are. Canadians will see these reports and will be able to respond to this.

Meanwhile, the persistence of these scandals underlines just how ridiculous the government's approach is today. We have seen these scandals. They have been investigated. There have been auditors the Liberals have maligned and ignored, whistle-blowers needing to come to committee to talk about abuses of the Liberal indigenous procurement program, and now they are bringing a bill saying they are going to create one more commissioner.

How about they listen to the auditors who have already brought forward problems? How about they prepare to meditate deeply on what will no doubt be a damning report from the procurement ombud and from the Auditor General? How about they engage in a more substantive and serious way with the work of existing officers of Parliament, who are calling them out for corruption and abuse of process? How about, instead of focusing on trying to look good on these issues, the government take seriously the need for substantive policy change to catalyze economic development for indigenous peoples and for all Canadians? How about they focus on the results instead of on trying to continually send signals?

That is all Bill C-10 is. It would create an additional officer, an additional commissioner of Parliament, whom the government would no doubt ignore, instead of focusing on the real issues and the real solutions this country and indigenous people need.

● (1330)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the position of the Conservative Party on the legislation is somewhat disappointing. As the day proceeds, it is becoming more evident that its members will not support Bill C-10.

Modern treaties have provided and afforded social and economic development. This has really had a very positive outcome for the whole issue of reconciliation. The legislation is being led by indigenous community leaders who see the benefit of having a commissioner, an agent of Parliament, who has the experience and the ability to reflect on the many desires that are there within the indigenous community.

My question for the member opposite is this: Does he, at the very least, recognize that there would be some value in allowing the bill to go to committee at some point in time?

*Government Orders*

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for, perhaps unintentionally, recognizing the good work done by the previous government, that of former prime minister Stephen Harper.

The member said he believes that modern treaties are important and provide value. He will then appreciate the fact that five modern treaties were negotiated under former prime minister Stephen Harper.

I wonder if members could help me. How many modern treaties were negotiated under Justin Trudeau?

**An hon. member:** Zero.

**Garnett Genuis:** Zero. Wow.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize that the member was willing, in his comments, to highlight the importance of modern treaties, even though recognizing their importance is probably not in his partisan interest. We have five negotiated by the Conservatives and zero negotiated by the Liberal government.

The point is that we did not need a commissioner to get it done. We did not need an extra layer of bureaucracy to get it done; we just got it done.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. He said the Conservative Party is a reconciliation champion because, during the Harper era, it was the first official party to apologize for residential schools.

I find that interesting, but I would like him to explain the disconnect between that statement and what his party did a few months ago when Bill C-5 was introduced. There was no prior consultation of indigenous communities about that bill. The Assembly of First Nations and Métis and Inuit communities all spoke out against that, but the Conservative Party never did. It said nothing at all. I think perhaps the Conservatives should be a little more careful about claiming to be reconciliation champions.

There is one major contradiction in particular that I would like my colleague to explain. How could his party also vote in favour of a closure motion to help the Liberals muzzle the House just four weeks into a new government?

How exactly does my colleague plan to extract a reasonable explanation and justification from all these contradictions?

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that there are problems with Bill C-5. We are a responsible opposition. We tried to improve this situation.

However, the fundamental problem is that we need to improve the system for assessing projects. The Liberals created major obstacles that prevented projects from moving forward. Then they said that they wanted to introduce a bill to create special and unique circumstances for certain major projects.

We hope to be able to move a few more projects forward. However, at the end of the day, the system set out in Bill C-5 is not the

solution. We need to put a new system in place that is clear, simple and fair to reduce barriers and allow projects to move forward.

● (1335)

[*English*]

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member reminded the House of some historical facts and that some members who have engaged in the debate are on some pretty weak ground in taking such a condescending tone toward Conservatives.

The member reminded the House of the scandal of one year ago. It seems a long time ago, but it was this time last year, if I remember correctly, that the scandal of indigenous procurement came to light involving a then minister of the Crown. I thank the member for reminding Canadians of that. Perhaps the Liberals ought to be a little less haughty in their defence of the bill and on indigenous policy altogether.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, those are great points from my colleague.

What happened with the former member for Edmonton Centre, the Liberal minister who pretended to be indigenous and was not, is part of a pattern of elite people in positions of privilege who say they are trying to help those who are disadvantaged. They then seek to fraudulently appropriate for themselves benefits that were supposed to be set aside for those disadvantaged communities.

It is really disgraceful, but it is what has happened under the Liberal indigenous procurement program. On the one hand, the government is saying it is setting aside benefits for indigenous peoples, and on the other hand, non-indigenous people connected to the government have appropriated those benefits for themselves, from taxpayers. This is what happened in that high-profile case.

That is not the only case. The Liberal indigenous procurement scandal is much larger than just that instance. We have had multiple instances of specific cases coming forward. We know the numbers overall. We are hearing from indigenous leadership that a majority of contracts under this program have gone to shell companies.

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on that last topic.

The member and I had an opportunity to do some travelling together. We met with some first nations. Particularly, at Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation outside Thunder Bay, we had a great discussion about the procurement process. We heard first-hand how they did not feel involved and did not feel they had the opportunity to be involved in that process. Then, of course, we saw that contracts were awarded to many non-indigenous organizations.

*Government Orders*

I wonder if the member has any more comments on situations like that, things that he has heard across Canada about how those opportunities have not been there for first nations and for indigenous communities across the country.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, it was about a year ago now that I was on a road trip across the country, mainly focused on meeting with people in different places on this indigenous procurement issue.

I had a chance to meet with the folks he mentioned in his riding, as well as with Winnipeg's Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and a number of educational institutions in western Canada.

This was a great opportunity to talk to people outside the national capital about the real impacts of various government policies in this regard. The economic reconciliation agenda is very important to indigenous peoples across this country. They want to see government policies that support economic development, prosperity and opportunity. Part of that issue is addressing the underlying economic challenges facing this country as a whole. If we are able to address those problems, we will all be better off, as well as if we clear up some of the abuses and problems in these programs that are supposed to benefit indigenous people but do not.

• (1340)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, could the member provide his thoughts in regard to why Stephen Harper, for example, refused to support the Kelowna accord, which provided many of the things the member just finished talking about.

The member is not talking about Bill C-10, so maybe he could provide a specific answer on why the Conservative Party continues to put up roadblocks, in terms of development and support for health, education and other activities within indigenous communities by working with indigenous community leaders.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, as we have seen for the last 10 years, the approach of the Liberals is to not address the issues. Conservatives have a plan and a vision that support strong indigenous nations that are developing economically, that control their own resources and that control their own futures. That is why our party is proud to have a growing presence among and representation from indigenous leaders who are excited about our agenda.

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Brooklin.

*Kwe kwe, ulaakut and tanshi.* Let me start by acknowledging that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin people, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

I am pleased to speak today about the proposed commissioner for modern treaty implementation act and to highlight some of the key points contained in this legislation as well as the roles and responsibilities of the newly proposed agent of Parliament.

For 50 years, modern treaties have been fundamental to our work to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples. They promote strong and sustainable indigenous communities and help make sure that indigenous peoples can decide what is best for their future. The Government of Canada is continuing to work on fulfilling its obli-

gations under modern treaties and building and maintaining true nation-to-nation, government-to-government and Inuit-Crown relationships with modern treaty partners.

Though we have made important progress like developing Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy, there is still much more to do. For more than 20 years, modern treaty partners have been calling for more oversight to address persistent modern treaty implementation issues and to hold the federal government accountable to Parliament for its modern treaty responsibilities. That is exactly why, in May 2024, at the intergovernmental leaders' forum, the government announced its intention to create a new agent of Parliament: the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

After this long-overdue announcement was made, many indigenous partners and groups voiced their support. Eva Clayton, president of the Nisga'a Lisims Government and one of the co-chairs of the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, stated on CTV News that the commissioner "will give a focus on areas that the Canadian government needs to address in order to ensure that the spirit and intent of each of our agreements are fulfilled". She added, "Because we know that once our agreements are fully implemented, it will make life better for our people, our community members, which in turn will have a positive impact on all Canadians."

There would be many benefits to having a commissioner fulfilling this role. Most importantly, the commissioner would shine a light on areas where the Government of Canada is not successfully addressing ongoing structural modern treaty implementation issues. The commissioner's role was codeveloped with modern treaty partners to make sure there would be independent, credible, effective and sustainable oversight of modern treaty implementation. It was specifically designed to hold the federal government accountable to Parliament for implementing its modern treaty obligations and to make sure the federal government acts in ways that strengthen its relationships with its modern treaty partners.

By providing independent oversight, the commissioner would help improve the implementation of modern treaties at the federal level and improve awareness, understanding and action across the federal public service. The bottom line is that the commissioner would support Canada in being a better modern treaty partner.

### *Government Orders*

As my colleagues have mentioned on the floor of the House, the commissioner would be a new agent of Parliament, similar to the Auditor General and the Privacy Commissioner. This means they would have a direct reporting relationship to Parliament. The scope of the commissioner would cover all federal activities related to implementing modern treaties. This would include the implementation of modern treaties themselves as well as any associated self-government agreement or other arrangement related to modern treaties.

It is important to note that the commissioner's mandate would only be focused on federal activities related to the implementation of these modern treaties. It would not include activities of provincial, territorial or indigenous governments. The commissioner's main job would be to look at what government departments are doing to carry out modern treaties and to give advice on whether their actions follow three key principles: first, strengthening the relationships between the Government of Canada and modern treaty partners; second, fulfilling the Government of Canada's obligations under, and achieving the objectives of, modern treaties; and third, upholding the honour of the Crown through the timely and effective implementation of modern treaties.

● (1345)

The core functions of the commissioner would be to perform reviews and performance audits. Reviews are a fit-for-purpose tool meant to provide the commissioner with the means to identify ongoing, systemic issues affecting modern treaty implementation. They would allow the commissioner to look deeper into these issues, identify their underlying causes and thoroughly examine how federal decisions are made and implemented. A review could focus on a specific program or activity within a single organization, or it could be more expansive and capture a systemic, cross-cutting issue across multiple federal government departments. For each review, the commissioner would work closely with modern treaty partners to determine the terms, procedures and methodology to be followed.

The commissioner would also be empowered to conduct performance audits. These performance audits would be conducted based on national, widely accepted auditing standards that are the same as those followed by the Auditor General. When a review or performance audit is completed, the final report would be submitted to the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons for tabling. This is the most direct and effective way of holding the government accountable for its actions.

At the end of each year, the commissioner would send a report to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. This report would include what the office of the commissioner did throughout the year, as well as the findings and recommendations outlined in any reports published in that year. This would also be tabled in Parliament.

In addition to reviews and audits, the commissioner would also be authorized to provide briefings on their work to any minister or modern treaty partner as they consider appropriate, or with any committee designated or established by Parliament, at the committee's request.

When it comes to the appointment process for the commissioner, they must hold the confidence of modern treaty partners and of Parliament. The commissioner would be appointed through a Governor

in Council appointment process. This means a cabinet order. Before that order is given, however, there are a few steps that must be taken. First, modern treaty partners would be consulted. This would be an integral part of the appointment process. Then consultations would take place with the leader of every recognized party in the Senate and the House of Commons. Like the Auditor General, the appointment requires a resolution from the Senate and the House of Commons. Only after that can the commissioner be appointed.

The commissioner would be appointed for a term not exceeding seven years, with the possibility of reappointment for one additional term. They could be removed only by the Governor in Council on address of the House and the Senate. This is critical to protecting the commissioner's independence and maintaining their ability to complete their mandate.

I would like to emphasize that this entire appointment process, along with this entire initiative, was codeveloped with modern treaty partners. Based on feedback from codevelopment sessions in the development of the oversight body proposal, we learned that partners wanted to make sure that the commissioner would have the necessary knowledge of modern treaties to fulfill their mandate.

What we have accomplished with modern treaty partners in the past proves that so much is possible when we work together. We know that the Government of Canada values its modern treaty relationships and is committed to fully and effectively implementing these agreements. As we learn from our past mistakes, we are listening and growing. Together, we are addressing challenges faced by modern treaty partners across Canada.

The commissioner's oversight would support modern treaty implementation and, in turn, support self-determination, decision-making and economic growth for indigenous communities. Above all, the commissioner would help build trust, transparency and accountability as we work toward building a better democracy in this country.

*Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsee.*

● (1350)

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to begin with a correction. Earlier today in debate, I mentioned that Conservatives got six modern treaties signed in six years, but it should have been five. I apologize for that. I will note that five modern treaties in six years are still five more than the Liberals have achieved in 10 years.

We have seen time and time again that the Liberals have ignored the reports of the Auditor General that have been brought forward. Why should we believe that just because they have created a new bureaucracy and a new officer to tell them the same thing, which is that they are not getting the work done, they are actually going to do the work? Why will they not just do the work they have been tasked to do?

*Government Orders*

**Will Greaves:** Mr. Speaker, I find myself confused by the Conservatives' position on this matter. They say very vocally that they support the implementation of modern treaties and they say they support the recognition and implementation of indigenous rights in this country, yet they are vociferously objecting to the establishment of an agent of Parliament who would be mandated to track the government's progress toward implementing those very modern treaties.

It is a confusing position, and I encourage the Conservatives to go back to the drawing board and try again.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily want to defend what my Conservative colleague just said, but as the saying goes, the past predicts the future. We have seen the Liberals forcefully and vehemently state on several occasions that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's reports were unfair and then refuse to act on them. I wonder if they will do the same thing to someone in charge of alerting us to unfortunate situations experienced by first nations.

I would like my colleague to talk to us about that. I would like him to perhaps be a little more frank and direct about what the government will do when it receives reports that directly contradict its policies.

**Will Greaves:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[*English*]

It is an excellent question and an important one that speaks to the vital role that independent agents of Parliament play within our political system. They are not answerable to any government. They are answerable to this body, the Parliament of Canada. That is the source of their authority, and that is precisely why their role is so important. It means that very often, they will tell governments things that they do not want to hear. Certainly our Conservative colleagues will remember that from the decade when Mr. Harper was in power. Many reports of the agents of Parliament criticized that government, and rightly so because that is their function.

The modern treaty commissioner is a role that the government will heed and, indeed, I expect that role will have criticisms of government because that is the function we expect in the exercise of their duties.

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, another Conservative member from Vancouver Island recently made a statement that indigenous bands asked for residential schools, and supporters of the Conservative Party routinely engage in residential school denialism, supported by the Leader of the Opposition.

How would the member for Victoria respond to those kinds of comments and how are they received in his community?

**Will Greaves:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, just in the last week, I and many other British Columbians have been embarrassed at the travesty of the shambolic conduct of Conservatives in the province of British Columbia with respect to the question of reconciliation and indigenous rights and title. We have seen overt and unabashed residential school denialism. We have seen a flagrant attempt to white-

wash history. We have seen patent disrespect heaped upon first nations in British Columbia and elsewhere across the country by all kinds of individuals closely aligned with the B.C. Conservative Party and the Conservative Party of Canada.

This is a debate that is being had by precisely one party in the House. There is no debate on this side of the aisle. We understand the legacies of residential schools. We heed the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we are determined to do better in the future and move forward in a good way.

• (1355)

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *kwe kwe, taanshi*. Hello.

Before we proceed, let us take a moment to recognize the gratitude we have for being gathered here on the traditional, unceded and unsundered lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people, whose connection to this land continues to this day.

I am thankful for the time to speak today to the proposed legislation to establish a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. I will focus on the partnership approach that was used to codevelop this initiative with modern treaty partners.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the painful legacy of colonialism in this country and understands the need to change the path going forward. One way of doing so is through modern treaties, which have been an essential part of advancing reconciliation and building nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, and government-to-government relationships that are based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

Modern treaties are part of the constitutional framework of Canada and represent a distinct expression of reconciliation. They are created through negotiations with indigenous groups to reflect their specific needs, priorities and circumstances, be they political, economic, legal, historical, cultural or social.

In February 2023, the Government of Canada and modern treaty partners jointly announced Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy. The policy acknowledges that Canada can and must do better with respect to modern treaty implementation. The policy was an important step forward, creating greater oversight to make sure the federal government keeps its modern treaty promises and is held accountable to Parliament for its commitments.

In March 2023, the Government of Canada and modern treaty partners began an intensive codevelopment process. It was facilitated mainly through the modern treaty implementation policy working group. The group consisted of representatives from most of the 27 modern treaties, and federal officials from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. The groups that did not participate through this forum were engaged through their preferred methods.

*Statements by Members*

Throughout the codevelopment period between March and September 2023, department officials also held over 90 engagements across the federal system with other government departments and agencies. The proposal was under federal consideration until May 2024.

At the second annual Intergovernmental Leaders Forum, the Government of Canada, modern treaty partners and self-governing indigenous governments came together to announce the intention to create an independent oversight body headed by a new commissioner of modern treaty implementation as an agent of Parliament. This new role would be a long-overdue, transformative shift in the modern treaty relationship that symbolizes a collaborative approach to governance and accountability.

The commissioner would work to hold the federal government accountable to its modern treaty obligations and objectives, as well as to the relationships they embody. Following the announcement, the Government of Canada began an extensive period of consultation and engagement on a draft legislative proposal to create the commissioner—

• (1400)

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt. The member will have close to six minutes left after question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### VAL-DES-MONTS SCHOOL

**Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on September 12, a major fire destroyed the Val-des-Monts elementary school in Prévost, which was quite a shock for the children, their families and the community.

Despite the fire department's quick response, the school was a total loss. However, Prévost is a tight-knit community and quickly sprang into action. The children were relocated to four other schools in the area and they were able to go back to class on September 18. The 400 children only missed three days of school.

This remarkable outcome was the result of outstanding efforts. I would like to highlight the work of the teachers and school administration of the Val-des-Monts school, the staff at the Centre de services scolaires de la Rivière-du-Nord, and Mayor Paul Germain and his team who organized a fundraiser that raised \$140,000 to replace students' school supplies. I would also like to thank Sonia Bélanger, the MNA for Prévost, and Sonia Lebel, the education minister.

When a community works together for the well-being of children, anything is possible.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Mayor of Grand Forks announced that the Interfor mill is closing indefinitely because of unjustified U.S. tariffs. To the people of Grand Forks and

Boundary, this is devastating. The mill is an important employer; there are 150 jobs being lost in one small town.

I say to the families affected by the mill closure that I will continue to call on the Liberal government to get a softwood lumber deal, one that is fair to our workers in our communities like Grand Forks. Current programs and 10 years of Liberal pledges are not putting a roof over families' heads, putting food on the table or creating jobs like those that have been available at the Interfor mill for generations.

Grand Forks and its residents deserve more. Grand Forks families want their jobs back.

I say to the families of Grand Forks that my office is available to support them in any way I can.

\* \* \*

## MENTAL HEALTH

**Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Friday marks World Mental Health Day. Mental health is health. One in five Canadians experiences a mental illness each year in their daily life. From youth to seniors, mental health impacts every generation.

In Brampton South, community organizations such as the South Asian Canadians Health and Social Services, Roots Community Services, CMHA Peel Dufferin, KMH and many others are providing vital care and support. Our government has partnered with these organizations to strengthen supports for mental health and substance use. Canadians can get access to the care they need through our youth mental health fund and expanded Wellness Together Canada portal.

I want to thank all the dedicated mental health workers across Canada for their compassion and their commitment to helping others.

I say to anyone struggling that they are not alone. I ask them to please reach out and seek the supports—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Edmonton Southeast has the floor.

\* \* \*

## MILL WOODS CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY ASSOCIATION

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to recognize an organization that has greatly benefited the Mill Woods community in my riding of Edmonton Southeast.

*Statements by Members*

The Mill Woods Cultural and Recreational Facility Association has raised money for and operates community leagues; the Mill Woods Golf Course; Jackie Parker Park, a sensory playground for autistic children; and much more. Over the past 50 years of operation, the organization has contributed over \$10 million to the community. The work done by the staff, board and volunteers of the organization greatly benefits the city of Edmonton by bringing people together and providing them with fun recreational activities.

I thank the board and all members of the Mill Woods Cultural and Recreational Facility Association for all their hard work.

\* \* \*

**CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE**

**Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I came from a meeting with Children's Healthcare Canada and the Pediatric Chairs of Canada, whose members have flown to Ottawa from across the country to meet with parliamentarians. They are focused on ensuring that Canada's children have access to care that is timely, equitable and designed with the unique needs of young people in mind.

We know that Canada's pediatric health system is facing mounting pressures as our population grows and children's needs become more complex. Strategic investment and collaboration will be crucial to making certain every child receives the care they deserve.

Children's health care is an investment in our future. As a parent of young children, I know that healthier kids are happier kids. Healthier kids make for happier and healthier parents too.

I invite all members to join me in supporting the vision of a Canada where every child, no matter where they live, can grow up healthy, supported and able to reach their full potential

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have unleashed a crime wave in Niagara like we have never seen before. It has gotten so bad that the Niagara Regional Police Service is reminding people to do a nighttime routine. They call it the 9 p.m. routine: "It's 9pm, Niagara. Have you completed your #9pmRoutine? Ensure all your valuables are secure, cars, doors and windows are locked, and alarms are activated if you have them."

This falls on the heels of Toronto police and York police telling people to leave their keys by the front door and lock themselves in the closet while criminals steal from their home. The only thing they did not say was to leave a full tank of gas, and cookies at the door.

This is happening as Liberals keep telling Canadians, "You've never had it so good." Let me remind folks of the Liberal record. Liberal Bill C-5 eliminated mandatory minimum sentences for serious violent crimes. Bill C-75 requires judges to release accused offenders at the earliest possible opportunity and under the least onerous conditions.

Canadians live in fear as criminals roam the streets knowing they can do whatever they want to whomever they want and still be out on bail before the ink on their paperwork is even dry.

\* \* \*

**BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE PROGRAM**

**Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mahatma Gandhi is quoted as saying that a nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.

As parliamentarians, we have an opportunity and an obligation to take bold action to address income inequality in Canada. Day after day, we squabble in this place over who is at fault for the state of health care, food insecurity, criminality and low productivity, but at the root of all these challenges is one common denominator: poverty.

In Prince Edward Island, the legislature unanimously passed a resolution calling for a province-wide basic income guarantee demonstration project. Coalition Canada convened a working group to design a feasible and progressive program and published a comprehensive report on how it could work.

Today, advocates for the proposal are here in Ottawa. I want to thank them for their tireless dedication to ending poverty. I also thank the members from all parties who have met with them to learn more about this initiative, one that has the potential to become a true nation-building project for Canada.

\* \* \*

**ANTI-SEMITISM**

**Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will remember the babies sliced, the women raped and the fathers beheaded. It has been two years since October 7. We keep saying "never again", but it happened again.

I do not want the Liberals doing the Jewish community any favours. They rewarded the worst possible act of terror with a terrorist state, for votes. They are morally bankrupt.

However, it gets worse. Today, at the University of Toronto, there is a celebration called "honouring our martyrs", with thugs hiding their faces in keffiyehs, glorifying murder. They are inciting violence, but nothing is going to happen.

A Jewish school in my riding has been shot at three times.

*Statements by Members*

The Liberals have done a great job. They can save their tweets. They must start taking action against the extremism brewing in Canada. They have been warned.

May the people who are still in the tunnels come back, and may the memory of those whose lives were lost be a blessing.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the unthinkable happened. On October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,219 people, including women and children, with unspeakable violence. It took 251 people hostage, 48 of whom still remain in captivity and approximately 20 of whom are still missing but presumed to be alive. On October 7, the Middle East was plunged into war.

On behalf of the Bloc québécois, I want to honour the memory of the innocent victims of October 7. I stand in solidarity with the entire Jewish community of Quebec. I want to reiterate that we firmly condemn Hamas, which must be denied any role in the future of Gaza and Palestine. I want to reiterate our hope that the current negotiations will lead to a lasting peace that includes the release of all hostages, as well as to a two-state solution and the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Lastly, and most importantly, I call on all Quebeckers of every religion and background to show each other more empathy and respect.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[*English*]

**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARETS**

**Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this October as we mark Women's History Month, I rise to celebrate an extraordinary leader from Cape Sable Island, Gail Atkinson. For more than two decades, Gail worked alongside her father, purchasing her own lobster licence and her own vessel, the *Nellie Row*. She went on to become one of the very few women here in Canada to captain a lobster boat.

In a field that has long been male-dominated, Gail charted her own course, demonstrating that determination, skill and leadership know no gender. Today she employs an almost all-female crew and remains deeply engaged in her industry, opening doors for women who aspire to have careers in our maritime trades. Gail's story is one not only of personal success but also of possibility for the young women and girls in our coastal communities who see their own future reflected in the water.

This Women's History Month, I am proud to honour Gail Atkinson for breaking barriers, inspiring others and strengthening the proud fishing heritage of South Shore—St. Margarets.

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA**

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, instead of a mid-life crisis, we now have a crisis of the young. That is what researchers across Canada are saying about the happiness of Canadians. After 10 years of the Liberal government, Canada has fallen to its lowest point in global happiness rankings, and no one feels that more than young Canadians.

Once full of optimism and opportunity, our country has dropped to 58th in the world for life satisfaction among people under 30. That is what happens after years of Liberal mismanagement and prime ministers who chase photo ops and celebrity moments instead of solid policy at home. We have a housing crisis, record food prices and taxes that punish hard work.

The Conservatives will turn this around. We will build homes, not bureaucracy. We will lower costs, put violent criminals behind bars, not out on bail, and reward hard work so that young Canadians can once again believe their dreams are possible. The Conservatives are here for the young people in this country, this generation and the next, to restore hope for a bright future in Canada, the true north strong and free.

\* \* \*

**MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

**Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my diverse riding of Willowdale, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all those celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival. Referred to by many as the Moon Festival, and in Korea as Chuseok, in Japan as *Tsukimi* and in Vietnam as *Tet Trung Thu*, it is considered one of the most cherished festivals by Asians around the world. It is a time for families and friends to gather and celebrate a good harvest while also enjoying delicious cuisine and one another's company under a full moon.

To the many celebrating in Canada, may the glow of the full moon illuminate their path and bring them peace and prosperity throughout the year ahead.

\* \* \*

**PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

**Blake Richards (Airdrie—Cochrane, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal government claims to be fighting a trade war, its policies are directly helping the Americans. Due to their job-killing policies, like the west coast tanker ban, the oil and gas cap and others, the Liberals have caused many Canadian companies to invest billions of dollars in the United States rather than here at home, because, as the CEO of Enbridge said, "No company would build a pipeline to nowhere."

The Prime Minister told Canadians that he would unleash national projects and bring new revenue into Canada to help ease the pain of Canadians, but he has done the exact opposite. Like his predecessor Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister makes grand statements but takes no action, and action speaks much louder than words. Until he gets out of the way or removes his job-killing regulations, Canada will continue to fall further and further behind.

How can the Prime Minister say that he is fighting for Canadians when he is funding the U.S. President's war on Canadian workers?

\* \* \*

#### ALEXANDRE LOOK

**Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Alex Look was a force of nature. He embodied love, generosity and courage. He was Raquel and Alain's son and Kayla's brother. He had friends and family who loved him. He grew up in Montreal but was also a man of the world who spoke seven languages and ran an international business. He was the life of any room.

Alex was also a proud Jew. On October 7, 2023, he was vacationing in Israel attending a music festival, when dozens of armed Hamas terrorists attacked. He calmed people down and stood at the door of a shelter blocking the terrorists.

He died a hero, saving the lives of others. He was one of the eight Canadians and 1,200 people murdered that day, when 251 people were taken hostage, some of whom are still in tunnels under Gaza.

On this anniversary, let us remember that this war was started by Hamas terrorists who have brought nothing but misery to Israelis and Palestinians. Let us pray for those murdered and their families, for the immediate release of hostages and for a future where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

#### JUDAISM

**Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the prism refracts the light. Two years ago, the world turned on itself, with an epidemic of anti-Semitism against the Jews and their state, the greatest test of our generation and our way of life, a fight for civilization over our medieval rivals.

Across millennia, Jews have faced down Haman and Antiochus, and, in the last century, Hitler and Hamas. All through this, Canadian Jews have taken their mezuzahs off their doors out of fear, students have hid and mobs have gathered outside classroom doors, as everything we know, everything we are, is tortuously inverted.

Where were we. May the memories of Ben, Vivian, Judih, Adi, Alexandre, Netta, Shir and Tiferet be a blessing. May we remember that the source of both pain and joy is love. In this broken prism, I thank God for the Jewish world that is the light.

#### Oral Questions

[Translation]

#### ORDRE DE LA PLÉIADE

**Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my role as chair of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, I had the privilege of presenting the insignia of the Ordre de la Pléiade to five extraordinary Canadians at a ceremony held on September 23. These leaders of the French fact were recognized for their ongoing commitment and dedication to promoting the French language in the arts, business, community and politics.

Édith Butler was promoted to the rank of Commander of the Ordre de la Pléiade, while René Arseneault, Karl Blackburn, André Gagnon and Agnès Mbome Moume received the knight's medal.

I want to thank all my parliamentary colleagues who joined me at this ceremony.

I would also like to congratulate the recipients and thank them for all that they have done and continue to do for the French language in Canada.

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#### ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised us that he would negotiate a victory with the United States and that there would be a deal by July 21 of this year. There is still no deal and no victory, and American tariffs have doubled.

Today, the Prime Minister made his biggest concession of all by promising to push \$1 trillion in investment out of Canada and into the United States. That means lower wages and fewer jobs for Canadian workers.

Why are Canadian workers always on the menu when the Prime Minister goes for lunch at the White House?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and many of his colleagues are at the White House today to advance the interests of Canadians. I know that the entire country wants our Prime Minister to keep moving forward on this file, to protect jobs, to build Canada strong and to create opportunities.

I hope the Leader of the Opposition supports him on that.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a victory, but there is no victory. He promised a deal, but there is no deal. Now he is promising to push \$1 trillion in investment out of Canada and into the United States, with nothing in return. When we talk about \$1 trillion in investment, we are talking about mines closing in Quebec and reopening in Pennsylvania; we are talking about paper mills closing in British Columbia and reopening in Washington state; we are talking about factories in Ontario closing and reopening in Michigan.

Why did the Prime Minister sell out Canadian workers during his visit to Washington?

● (1420)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is absurd.

The Prime Minister was there to promote Canadian interests, including commercial interests. Canadians are also proud to be major investors who reap profits abroad in order to bring them back to Canada and pay for Canadian pensions.

I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about, but it seems that he does not want the Prime Minister to be successful today, which is shameful.

[*English*]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians he would negotiate a victory. He promised to have a deal by July 21, 2025. There is still no deal and still no victory, and American tariffs have actually doubled.

Today, the Prime Minister made his biggest concession of all. He promised to push \$1 trillion of investment out of Canada into the United States of America, which will drive down Canadian wages and Canadian jobs.

Why is it that when the Prime Minister goes for lunch at the White House, it is Canadian workers on the menu?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his colleagues are at the White House today advancing Canada's interests: advancing Canada's trade interests and advancing our interests in foreign policy generally. I know the hopes of all Canadians accompany our Prime Minister to those meetings, where he very clearly defends the rights of Canadian workers and the Canadian economy. I sure hope the Leader of the Opposition is among those Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister casually said, "Half a trillion dollars in the last five years alone" of Canadian investment has left for the U.S. Then he said, "probably one trillion in the next five years if we get the agreement that we expect to get." In other words, he made a massive trillion-dollar concession before the deal was even signed and without getting anything in return. This \$1 trillion of exit investment means closing mines and factories in Canada and opening them in the U.S.

Why did the Prime Minister sell out our workers on his visit to Washington?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we do not need Donald Trump's permission to open mines, roads and infrastructure in Canada. That is exactly what we are going to be doing, building Canada with Canadian labour, Canadian steel, Canadian aluminum and Canadian lumber.

If the member is referring to the Maple 8, the pension funds that Canadians are so proud of and invest in, which invest all over the world and take their profits back to Canada to pay Canadian pensions, I say to bring that on too.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has already admitted that we have a problem with Canadian pension money leaving Canada to create jobs in other countries. It even created a Brookfield-run program to bring it back.

However, today the Prime Minister promised the President that Canadian government policies would drive a trillion dollars out of our economy and into the American economy over the next five years. That is twice as bad as what happened over the last half decade. That means lost jobs and lower wages for Canadians who already cannot pay their bills.

Again, why did the Prime Minister sell out Canadian workers in his visit to Washington?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, do members know how Canadians feel when they see the Prime Minister and ministers in the Oval Office defending Canada? They feel pride. They feel pride that the Prime Minister is standing up for our country, standing up for our workers, standing up for our steel industry.

These crazy hare-brained schemes that the Leader of the Opposition comes up with just to get in the news cycle are, quite frankly, a little embarrassing.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all the hyperventilating in the world will not change the fact that the Prime Minister casually bragged in the Oval Office today that a half-trillion Canadian investment dollars had left for the States in the last five years and then promised that a trillion more will leave in the next five years.

That will mean mines closing in Quebec and opening in Pennsylvania. It will mean mills closing in B.C. and opening in Washington state, and factories closing in Ontario and going to Michigan.

Why is it that the Prime Minister sells out Canadian workers, Canadian jobs and Canadian investments when in the White House?

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

• (1425)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have said all along that Canada will look after its own people with our own projects, our own labour and our own material. We will be opening mines. We will be opening ports. We will be opening railways. We will be opening our Arctic. We are going to continue to build this country and get a fair, good trade deal for Canada.

It will be thanks to the Prime Minister.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's meeting with Donald Trump was supposed to be about tariffs, but the goal was to eliminate them, not add more. To date, the Prime Minister has not had any wins in Washington, but he has suffered two defeats in the past seven days: new tariffs on our softwood lumber and, since yesterday, tariffs on trucks, which threaten Paccar in Sainte-Thérèse. That is zero wins and two more defeats for the Quebec economy. Members will recall that, during the election, the Prime Minister boasted about his negotiating superpowers.

Where are those superpowers now?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what Canadians saw today is a Prime Minister who stands up for our industries, for our forestry industry, our steel and aluminum industry, and yes, our manufacturing industry, including heavy trucks.

Our Prime Minister is working to reach very complicated trade agreements and move forward with them. We already have the best trade regime in the entire world. The Prime Minister is trying to move things forward. I hope that this member and all of Parliament wish him to succeed.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I can hardly imagine that we are any further ahead today on tariffs. The Prime Minister's press conference with Donald Trump focused less on the economy and more on the president's whims, such as sending the National Guard to Chicago. Meanwhile, here at home, tariffs are going up, not down. Workers in industries like lumber and truck manufacturing are worried about their future. Today was a test for the Prime Minister.

Do the Liberals really think the Prime Minister passed that test?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand the anxiety these workers are experiencing, and that is why we have announced major action to defend our workers in the key sectors the member mentioned.

I should add that the Bloc Québécois seems to take pleasure in these things, whereas we are dealing with a trade regime the United States is forcing on the entire world. We have already achieved the best possible trade regime in the world. We hope to improve it, once again in the interest of our strategic sectors and our workers.

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all the parties voted to protect supply management in future trade agreements, but the Liberals seem to want to go back on their word.

The media has reported that they are discussing new concessions with Washington on the allocation of American milk import quotas. This is all the more worrying given that Donald Trump has just stated that an agreement with Canada would include dairy products.

Protecting supply management means protecting it in its entirety. It does not mean maintaining the system, but weakening it by giving the Americans a piece of the pie.

Will the government keep its word and refuse to make any concessions?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will say it once again. We voted for a law that prevents the government from negotiating on supply management. Supply management is not on the table, and spreading fear will not change that.

Supply management is not on the table.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the news coming out of the White House today for many Canadians.

Canadians put their faith in the Prime Minister because they believed that he would fight for them, for their jobs, for their paycheques and for their families. However, these were false promises.

Months after he promised a deal, we still have no deal. Instead, we have the fastest-shrinking G7 economy, we have 86,000 more people out of work, and now a trillion dollars is flowing out of Canada, with tariffs that are higher, not lower.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his broken promises have real consequences for Canadians?

**Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why we are working to protect jobs, to create jobs, and to keep and attract the best talent here in Canada.

*Oral Questions*

We have a number of responses. We have the strategic response fund that is working across sectors. We are building major projects with Canadian steel and Canadian lumber. Our Build Canada Homes project is bringing tens of thousands of homes across Canada, using Canadian products, Canadian workers, Canadian union labour. We will always be there for our workers and our—

• (1430)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, none of that is working, because 86,000 Canadians are out of a job today.

The Liberals must know that this is not about politics; it is about people, people who believed the Prime Minister when he said he would stand up for them. He danced around with his elbows in the sky, and he promised every Canadian that he would fight. This is about workers who have seen their shifts cut, their costs rise and their hope fade, all because there is a trillion dollars southbound instead of being invested here in Canada.

All they wanted was for the Prime Minister to keep his word. Why will he not do it?

[*Translation*]

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that this trade war was started by the United States. It was the United States that started it.

How are we responding? We are helping our businesses. Two weeks ago, I was at Hitachi in Varennes: 500 jobs. Before that, I was in Sorel: 300 jobs. We are hard at work.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the big day. The Prime Minister is in Washington begging with his elbows down, chasing a trillion dollars of Canadian investment jobs to the U.S.

He promised to sign a deal by July 21. It is October. Instead he caved to the president's demands on countertariffs and digital services taxes. Now Canadian workers, businesses, manufacturers and farmers all got hit with double U.S. tariffs, and the Prime Minister probably got stuck with the lunch bill too.

Will the Prime Minister stop begging and negotiate an actual win for Canada against U.S. tariffs?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were under no illusion that this was going to be easy, but they chose a Prime Minister who—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, my apologies, I could not hear.

The hon. Minister of Jobs and Families.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were under no illusion that this would be easy.

What they wanted was a leader who would be truthful with them, who would stand up for them and who would make sure that the government they selected would have their back in difficult times. That is exactly what we are doing, whether it is investing in our steel industry, supporting skilled trades or building major projects, this government has the back of Canadian workers, something I do not think they could say about the opposite party.

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were promised one thing, but the bait and switch left them a leader who is elbows and knees down now, and the Liberals cannot get their story straight on the economy. First they blamed Trump's tariffs for having the fastest-shrinking economy in the G7. Now they claim they have the best deal on tariffs with the U.S. It does not add up. Since the Prime Minister took office, he has doubled the deficit and chased \$52 billion of investment into the U.S., and now another \$1 trillion. Now 86,000 Canadians have lost their jobs.

Why? Is it because of the Prime Minister's failed trade diplomacy, his failed economic policy or both?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when Canadians compared leaders, they had a choice between a world-class leader with world-class economic business experience versus a leader with none. On November 4, we are going to table a disciplined budget that is going to create jobs.

If we want to talk about job creation, the only job the leader opposite has ever created was the one he left open for the member for Carleton in the last election.

**Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is a man of sharp contrasts. He vowed to deliver the strongest G7 economy, and we have the weakest. He promised thousands of new jobs, and 86,000 Canadians have lost theirs. He said he would negotiate a win with the United States; instead, weak negotiations were dressed up as a victory. Liberals talk a big game about having the best deal. It is quite the contrary.

Is this failure the result of economic mismanagement, diplomatic incompetence or both?

• (1435)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, talking about incompetence, for a member opposite not to understand why CUSMA gives us the best deal in the world is sheer incompetence in Canadian politics.

I will say that this government is solely focused on the success of Canadians, whether it is investing in the kinds of projects that will create great jobs, making sure people have the skills to be able to take those jobs or supporting Canadians in good times and in bad. Canadians know that the Liberal government has their back, and they are really not very sure about those guys.

[*Translation*]

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the day of reckoning for the Prime Minister. He is at the White House to deliver on the signature promise he made to Canadians a few months ago, which was to bring home a big win for Canada against the United States.

Let us remember that he promised to end the tariffs on autos, aluminum, steel, softwood lumber and the Buy American Act. They were all supposed to be eliminated. All that was actually supposed to have been done by July 21, but it did not work out. What actually happened? Concessions, concessions and more concessions.

Canadians deserve better. Can the government explain why the Prime Minister has not delivered?

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a very complex situation. Our best course of action is to not make a bad deal. We are not going to be hasty about anything with President Trump, who is unpredictable.

As of now, we still have the free trade agreement with the United States. Eighty-five per cent of our exports enter the United States tariff-free and tax-free.

We will negotiate the best deal in the interest of all Canadians.

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the deepest respect for the parliamentary secretary. When he was with the provincial government, he balanced the budget. Today, after only six months by the Prime Minister's side, the debt has doubled. That is his administration's record.

Yes, we want a good deal, but he was elected six months ago on a promise that we were going to get a real deal. He even promised to deliver it by July 21. Six months later, we have not made a single gain and new concessions keep being made.

What can Canadians expect from a government that does nothing but make concessions?

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can expect a government that is going to negotiate the best possible deal for all Canadians in every region and in every sector.

### *Oral Questions*

Right now, 85% of our exports enter the United States tariff-free. We are not going to rush into negotiating a bad deal. We are going to get the best possible deal in due time.

\* \* \*

### CANADA POST CORPORATION

**Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote postal workers: “Repeated government interventions in our dispute have completely ruined...negotiations. Every time the Government has stepped in, it has only made reaching new collective agreements that much harder. With every intervention, the Government has pushed the parties farther apart.”

Ottawa created this conflict and is solely responsible for the disruption of postal services.

Does the minister realize how much damage he has caused by trying to dismantle a public service?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I am absolutely flabbergasted by that question. This is not about dismantling a public service. It is about saving a public service that, right now and for the past seven years, has been operating at a loss to the point where Canada Post is currently losing \$10 million a day.

The labour dispute the member is referring to has been going on for 20 months. The serious, responsible thing to do is to act immediately to transform Canada Post in order to put this vital institution back on a path to financial viability. That is exactly what we are doing.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Government Transformation likes to remind us that there was a strike at Canada Post a year ago.

He keeps repeating that the government is losing \$10 million a day with Canada Post, but he forgets that during last year's strike, independent businesses criticized the government's inaction because the strike was costing them \$100 million a day.

By causing the postal services to grind to a halt, does the minister realize the damage he is doing to our small businesses, our regions, and our most vulnerable citizens?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that both the union and management are committed to the financial viability of Canada Post. Clearly, the Bloc Québécois is not committed to the financial viability of Canada Post. For the Bloc Québécois, it is acceptable for Canada Post to lose \$10 million a day. For us, it is not.

We are asking both the union and management to come to an agreement so that this institution, which is so important to the country, can find a path to financial sustainability. It is simply unacceptable for it to lose so much money and for Canadians to foot the bill.

*Oral Questions*

● (1440)

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a good deal for Canadians by July, but we have seen 86,000 Canadian workers lose their jobs. This includes 100 families in Maitland, as Invista sent its jobs down to the U.S. It includes 35 families in Brockville, as steel tariffs crush the operations at Douglas Barwick and put more jobs on the line.

Canadians cannot feed their families on the empty promises they are hearing across the way today or from the Prime Minister. When will he deliver that good deal for Canadians he promised by July?

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is slightly ironic that the Conservatives are lecturing us about protecting jobs. While the opposition leader fought all summer to protect his job, we were standing up to protect Canadian jobs. We have offered workforce re-skilling for 50,000 workers. A strategic response fund of \$5 billion will provide flexible financing to help firms adapt to tariffs. We have launched and moved forward on a buy Canadian policy, liquidity relief, a regional tariff response initiative and a remissions framework.

All of these things demonstrate to Canadians who is going to stand up for their—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes.

**Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 86,000 Canadians who lost their jobs, how is that going for them? I want to know. As Canada has the fastest-shrinking economy in the G7, with \$52 billion of net investment fleeing Canada, we want to know this: What is their plan?

Canadians cannot feed their families with these empty promises. The Prime Minister promised that deal. Instead, he is down in Washington, gushing over Donald Trump as investment flees our country at a record pace.

What are they doing for Canadians who are out of work?

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the famous words of Helen Keller, pathetic is the man “who has sight, but no vision”. I would suggest to Canadians that the Conservative Party has no vision for the future of Canada's economy.

This party got elected on a mandate to build Canada strong and protect Canadian jobs, and that is exactly what we are doing.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised he would negotiate a grand security and

economic deal with the Americans, and then went on to make concession after concession, with little to show for it. He cancelled the DST. He cancelled reciprocal tariffs. He withdrew complaints on softwood lumber. Now, he is gushing over the President of the U.S., calling him a “transformative” leader once again. What does Canada have to show for it?

When will the Prime Minister keep his promise to Canadians and secure a deal with the Americans?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative leader was busy this summer trying to get back the only job he has ever had, we criss-crossed the country, listening to Canadians. We got feedback from Canadians. On November 4, we are going to table a disciplined budget that is going to spend less, invest more and create thousands and thousands of good-paying jobs. This is what a government that is going to build Canada strong looks like.

**Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he said a “disciplined budget”. The deficit has doubled. Almost 100,000 Canadians are now out of work. The government still does not have a deal with the Americans. Auto plants are being mothballed, manufacturing is slowing, \$54 billion in investments have left this country and tariffs are higher today than when the Prime Minister took office.

When will he deliver on his promise to secure a deal with the Americans?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we on this side go door to door, what we are hearing back from Canadians is crystal clear. Canadians chose. They compared a leader with world class experience to a leader who has never had a job outside the House of Commons.

We stand with our Prime Minister. Canadians stand with our Prime Minister. We are going to build the strongest, most resilient economy in the G7 and make it an economy that Canadians can be proud of.

● (1445)

[Translation]

**Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister had promised to resolve the issue of U.S. tariffs by July 21. Today, not only did he fail to keep his promise, but the situation is getting worse. On October 14, Canadian softwood lumber will be hit with another tariff increase, bringing the total duty to 45%.

In Beauce and across the country, our market is struggling. Our businesses are suffering while the government sits on its hands. The Prime Minister himself said that he would score us a big win, but he just keeps losing.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise to get all U.S. tariffs removed?

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone in the House that 85% of Canada's exports to the United States enter the U.S. tariff- and duty-free. As for the other exports that are affected by specific tariffs, we are working on this.

We are protecting businesses and supporting them during this transition process. We will always be there to support businesses, particularly in the regions.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, residents in my riding of Oakville West want to see projects in this country built faster. The Prime Minister has made it clear that we have to build homes, build energy infrastructure, build up defence capacity and build Canada's economy so that it is the strongest in the G7, and we are doing it fast. Starting on November 4, the Government of Canada will present its budget in the fall, instead of in the spring.

Can the Secretary of State for the CRA and Financial Institutions please inform the House about what that means for construction season and building things in Canada?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the party opposite and its leader might have missed it because they were busy trying to get him re-elected, but our global economy has fundamentally changed. Canada needs to respond. That is why we are moving with a disciplined budget this fall to give provinces, municipalities, cities and businesses time for nation-building projects. It is so they can get ready for construction in the spring. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer agrees with this move.

It is time for the Conservative leader to get on board, stop the rhetoric and help build Canada.

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### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister bragged that he could handle President Trump. He promised to negotiate a win. He said he would have a deal done by July 21. Well, it is October, and not only is there no win, but the Prime Minister keeps losing.

Despite giving concession after concession to the Americans, softwood lumber tariffs have doubled since he took office. His failure to do what he said he would has already cost hundreds of forestry jobs and put thousands more at risk in B.C. alone.

Why has the Prime Minister abandoned our softwood lumber workers and broken his promise to get a deal done?

### Oral Questions

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always stand with communities and workers in the softwood lumber industry and across the forestry sector more broadly. We have made significant investments, including \$700 million in loan supports and \$500 million to diversify the sector to ensure that there are jobs not just today, but in the future, and we are entirely seized with this issue.

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a deal with the Americans by July 21. There is still no deal. In fact, softwood tariffs have doubled. A decade of Liberal failure has lost thousands of lumber jobs. Yesterday, the mayor of Grand Forks announced the indefinite closure of the Interfor mill because of these tariffs. That is 150 jobs lost in a small town.

On behalf of these workers, why have these jobs been denied by the Prime Minister? Why has he failed to get a deal?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we stand with the workers in rural communities. Forestry is the heartbeat of Canadian rural life. It provides the roads, jobs and community spirit, and we are there with investments to protect workers who have lost their jobs, as well as with investments going forward.

The government is also looking to use more Canadian lumber in more Canadian products, which is part of our build Canada strategy. Members can expect to hear more about that in the coming weeks, months and years.

**Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a win for Canadians with President Trump. He promised a deal by July 21, but there is still no deal. Now tariffs on lumber are set to increase from 35% to a whopping 45%.

On Vancouver Island, we have several mills that have curtailed operations until year-end. They face closing entirely if we do not seek change. That is thousands of lost forestry sector jobs.

When will the Prime Minister finally realize that mills will close and thousands of jobs on Vancouver Island will be lost without an end to U.S. tariffs on lumber?

*Oral Questions*

• (1450)

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we stand with the workers who are affected by these tariffs, which is why we are providing the supports we are providing. We are working at every level to resolve this dispute with our American friends, and we are making investments to support those communities and diversify markets going forward.

**Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a deal with President Trump by July 21, and he still has no deal. There have been lots of concessions on Canada's part, but there is still no deal.

What about lumber? Mills back home in places like Florenceville and Plaster Rock are contending with the challenges these tariffs bring. When Prime Minister Harper faced this issue, he got it resolved in 80 days.

After 10 years without a deal, does the Prime Minister realize that the longer he fails to get a deal on lumber, the more that thousands of jobs back home in New Brunswick are at risk?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it does not feel very resolved. This is a long-standing challenge, but it is one that this government is going to be working to resolve by making significant investments in the future in the forestry sector, as well as by supporting the workers right now while we work toward a deal.

Buy Canadian and Canadian procurement are significant parts of this component, which is why it is so important that we support projects like Build Canada Homes. I hope the members opposite will do just that and get on board.

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**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to break their promises. The Prime Minister claimed that he would make Canada an energy superpower, but refuses to put even one pipeline on his project list. He also told us he would create jobs, but Canada has lost 86,000 jobs since he took over. That includes 1,000 people let go in the oil sector in Calgary this last week.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his broken promises have real consequences for Canadian workers?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we should look at the comments from the Premier of Alberta. We should look at the comments from the Premier of Ontario. What we are seeing is a number of Conservative premiers who are very excited about our goals to make Canada an energy superpower, in both conventional and renewable energy.

Regarding the workers at Imperial, my heart goes out to them. The reality of the situation is that it is always a bad idea to bet against Canadian workers and the Canadian workforce. We are going to be there for them and to help them.

**Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member should be ashamed on behalf of all the constituents who have lost jobs in his riding. The Liberals are building bureaucracies, not pipelines. TC Energy has invested \$8 billion in the United States. Enbridge is building two pipelines there. Its CEO blames Canada's "keep it in the ground" policies. He is right.

Our deficit has doubled, we have the fastest-shrinking G7 economy, \$52 billion of investment has fled Canada and 86,000 people have lost their jobs. Does the Prime Minister realize that his "keep it in the ground" policies are keeping Canadians out of work?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, globally, in the last 10 years, oil and gas production has increased by 6%. In Canada, it has increased by 34%. At the same time, we have reduced our emissions by 15%.

The policies that the member opposite references have allowed our product to be competitive on the global market and open up new markets. This is how we make ourselves an energy superpower in both the conventional and renewable sense.

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**GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

**Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister is breaking his promises to Canadians.

He claimed that Canada would become an energy superpower, but refuses to put a pipeline on his list of nation-building projects. He promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet he has delivered the fastest-shrinking. He promised to create jobs, yet he has lost 86,000 jobs since becoming Prime Minister. To make matters worse, TC Energy is investing over \$8 billion in an energy infrastructure project, not in Canada, but in the United States.

President Trump has made it clear that he wants to take jobs and investment away from Canada. Why is the Prime Minister so hell-bent on helping him?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one would think this parade of members of Parliament from Alberta would know the basic facts. We have increased petroleum production over 30%, while getting our emissions down. We built a pipeline to the west coast, increasing our oil exports, which is something the member and Stephen Harper could never do. We are getting Canada's GDP up. We are creating opportunities in Canada's resource sector. MPs from Alberta should know the difference.

• (1455)

**Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The Liberals cannot get their story straight on the economy. On one hand, they say that tariffs are hurting us. On the other hand, they claim we have the best possible tariffs of anyone in the world. Both of these statements cannot be true, but that never stops a Liberal from saying them.

Here are the facts since the Prime Minister took office: The deficit has doubled; Canada has the fastest-shrinking G7 economy with the second-highest unemployment rate; \$54 billion of net investment has fled the country, and 86,000 people have lost their jobs. Energy workers cannot afford to wait for empty promises to materialize.

If the Prime Minister cannot get the job done, why will he not get out of the way so Conservatives can get back to work and build this country to what it should be?

**Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this crisis we are in, it is so important to work hard to protect jobs, to create jobs and to bring the talent we need to this country.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary can take it from the top.

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, we were elected to protect jobs, to create jobs and to foster the best job-creating situation in the G7, and that is exactly what we are doing. We have to defend ourselves in the United States, but meanwhile, we are working hard with Build Canada Homes, using Canadian steel and Canadian lumber, with the most aggressive buy-Canadian procurement policy this country has ever seen. There are new protections for workers with the strategic response fund. We will always be there for workers and businesses.

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#### OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

**David Bexte (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am another Alberta MP here, watching \$1 trillion going out of the country. The Prime Minister keeps breaking his promises. He said Canada would be an energy superpower, yet he will not green-light a single pipeline. He promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, but now we have the fastest-shrinking one. He said he would create jobs, but 86,000 are gone. Enbridge is calling out the Liberal anti-energy policy and is building two new pipelines in the United States.

Does the Prime Minister understand that his war on Canadian energy is sending good-paying jobs to the U.S.?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, it falls on the lowly old MP for Gatineau, Quebec, to point out some Alberta truths to the Alberta members over there.

We built a pipeline to tidewater. We are increasing Canada's GDP. We are getting the world price to benefit workers in the resource industry in Alberta. If the member does not believe it, I will get him Danielle Smith's phone number, and he can ask her.

#### Oral Questions

[Translation]

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our two official languages are a fundamental pillar of our Canadian identity. I am pleased to be surrounded by colleagues who care about the vitality of our francophone communities across the country.

Preserving our language and culture starts at a very young age and requires quality French-language education. That is why I would like to ask the minister what measures our government is putting in place to support and strengthen minority French-language education in Canada.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his commitment to our official languages.

Our government has already announced over \$732 million to support French-language education across the country, from preschool to post-secondary education: over \$13 million in Yukon, \$15 million in the Northwest Territories, \$43 million in Saskatchewan, \$523 million in Ontario and \$133 million in New Brunswick.

More announcements are coming. Bilingualism is central to our Canadian identity. It is a great source of pride for all of us.

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#### CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

**Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, people from the Saguenay aluminum sector are expecting results. As everyone back home knows, the Prime Minister was elected on a promise that he was the right man for the job of negotiating with the Americans.

Since his election, tariffs have doubled. Despite mounting concessions, companies are still adrift in uncertainty and Canada's in a more vulnerable position than ever.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to live up to his promise and put an end to all tariffs?

• (1500)

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we visited Saguenay and spoke to business owners there. The aluminum sector is indeed in a worrisome situation. We have measures and programs to help companies.

### Oral Questions

In the meantime, I would remind the House that 85% of Canadian exports enter the United States tariff-free.

**Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the deficit has doubled, that \$54 billion in investments has left this country and that 86,000 workers have lost their jobs. Canada is far from being the G7 country with the best economy. It is in last place.

We need to create wealth, but we are not competitive with this government in power. The Prime Minister promised to remove all tariffs on everything. Why is he not keeping his promises?

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the old saying goes, it takes two to tango. In other words, to remove the tariffs, we have to be able to negotiate with our counterparts. Until now, that has not necessarily been possible. We are not going to rush into trying just anything. We will get the best deal possible under the circumstances.

[English]

**Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a win with President Trump and get a deal by July 21. Three months later, there is still no deal. He promised elbows up and then he caved on countertariffs and more, getting nothing in return but higher U.S. tariffs. He promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7 but delivered the fastest-shrinking G7 economy, with the second-highest unemployment rate. For the 86,000 workers who have lost their jobs since he took office, time is up.

Will the Prime Minister keep his promise and negotiate an end to all U.S. tariffs today?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker after this entire question period, Canadians can be forgiven for thinking that it takes the Conservatives a little long to get out of their seat when it comes to defending this country. It looks a little too sneakily much like the Conservatives are happy to see a tough negotiation in the White House.

Canadians will not accept anything but standing four-square behind our Prime Minister and this government as we take Canada's hopes and Canada's dreams to Washington and get the best deal possible. That is what we will be doing, and the Conservatives should not look like they are settling for anything less.

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### HOUSING

**Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, many years of underinvestment in affordable housing for indigenous people and northerners has resulted in a serious gap in affordable housing for both of these groups. Can the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs tell the House how the new government is working with indigenous leadership to close the infrastructure gap, and how Build Canada Homes is turning that partnership into new homes for both northerners and indigenous people?

**Hon. Rebecca Chartrand (Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, through

Build Canada Homes, the new government is working with Nunavut Housing Corporation to deliver hundreds of new homes, including factory-built units to build more homes faster. We are working with indigenous partners. The homes are safe, culturally appropriate and not overcrowded. We are supporting Nunavut's goal of 3,000 homes by 2030. We are also applying this indigenous-led, northern-ready approach across the north, delivering homes and strengthening communities, because reconciliation means delivering results together.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister keeps breaking promises to Canadians. He promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7 but delivered the fastest-shrinking economy. He promised to create jobs, but Canada has lost 86,000 jobs. These failures have real consequences. Ontario has lost 38,000 manufacturing jobs because of the U.S. tariffs. In the London region, June's job losses pushed unemployment to 7.2%, the second-highest nonpandemic rate since 2016.

Does the Prime Minister realize his broken promises are having dire effects on Canadians?

● (1505)

**Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always be there to support the workers of London and the businesses of London and across southwestern Ontario, to protect jobs, to create jobs and to keep and attract the best talent in the world.

Maybe I will just share some facts for the House in terms of the investment that is coming into Canada: the second-largest FDI stock-to-GDP ratio among G20 countries in 2024 and the second-highest out of 25 countries in the current FDI confidence index. That is investment that is coming into the country.

With our ministers and our trade reciprocation strategy, we expect more jobs, more businesses and more FDI to Canada.

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the B.C. coast alone there are 900 vessels, 90 of them over 500 tonnes, at their end of life, posing an imminent threat to our environment if they are not recycled. Towing even one large B.C. ferry from Vancouver Island to Halifax to be recycled could cost millions. In Port Alberni, we are ready to build a ship repair and recycling centre of excellence in partnership with first nations.

Will the minister commit to European Union-style regulations to protect workers, safeguard the environment and secure this nation-building infrastructure?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my hon. colleague on this issue. We have had many interesting conversations and will have, I am sure, many more.

We are protecting the environment, of course. We are removing wrecked and abandoned vessels. For infrastructure like shipbreaking, for example, we work closely with our provincial counterparts. We are going to be taking action to protect our waters and our coasts.

Again, I look forward to working with my hon. friend on this issue.

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been telling Canadians the government will spend less and invest more while abandoning the Liberals' promise to make mental health a full and equal part of Canada's universal public health care system. It is estimated every dollar invested in mental health generates two dollars of long-term savings, while untreated mental health issues cost our economy more than \$50 billion every year.

In Mental Illness Awareness Week, will the government acknowledge that it is time to invest in the mental health of Canadians as a nation-building project?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Mental health is top of mind for this new government, and we will do everything we can to support the mental health of Canadians. In fact, we have a program in place for youth mental health called integrated youth services. This program is providing a great deal of support to young Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

## PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Todd Goudy, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

## Government Orders

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[*English*]

## COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will continue where I left off.

The draft legislation proposal for the commissioner was shared with over 130 modern treaty partners for their awareness, review and feedback. The partners consulted included groups negotiating a modern treaty, self-governing indigenous governments, sectoral agreement holders, national indigenous organizations and key partners, and provincial and territorial governments.

The reason for this approach was to ensure that all partners with interest in the commissioner's work would be consulted and engaged. The government engaged with partners through bilateral and multilateral meetings, and, using existing working groups, through negotiation tables and implementation committees, where possible. Consultations were originally scheduled to conclude on June 28, 2024, but based on feedback from partners, the consultation period was extended to July 19, 2024. This was to ensure that all partners that may have had an interest in the commissioner's work were consulted and engaged.

In total, the government received over 100 proposed changes to the draft legislation proposal. Over the summer and early fall of 2024, the government engaged with modern treaty partners to discuss the proposed changes and agree on a path forward. Partners that were engaged with and consulted on the proposal shared a diverse range of views and perspectives. Generally, they showed strong support for the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

### *Government Orders*

A news release from Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated stated, “The creation of a Commissioner of Modern Treaty Implementation demonstrates a real step towards genuine collaboration from Canada.” The Tlicho Government stated, “The Commissioner for Modern Treaty has been decades in the making. This is an exciting moment that our hard work together has paid off, and this important mechanism for accountability and oversight will be established.” Modern treaty partners are pleased with the bill before us, which was codeveloped with them. They have shared with us that the commissioner could help strengthen modern treaty relationships, as well as contribute to reconciliation.

After sharing the draft proposal with partners, the government received a number of insights and proposed changes, many of which shared similar themes and ideas. The legislation before us is the product of the work to integrate as many of the partner's proposed changes as possible from the engagement period in the summer of 2024. For example, the government heard that modern treaty partners needed to be involved in the commissioner's work at the same level as Government of Canada institutions. We made sure this would be the case.

We heard that stronger consultation requirements were needed throughout the legislation. We added those, including new consultation requirements within the independent review process.

We also heard that the commissioner's scope needed to include agreements that support the implementation of modern treaties, like associated self-government and fiscal agreements tied to the treaty. This is now strengthened. This important input was taken into consideration to create the proposed legislation before us today.

The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations held a meeting with modern treaty leadership on revisions made to the proposed legislation. They signalled their support for the proposal and urged Canada to move forward as quickly as possible to create the commissioner.

Modern treaty partners strongly advocated for the reintroduction of this bill. They are pleased with the bill and they want it to move forward.

The proposed legislation for the commissioner for modern treaty implementation represents a significant achievement in codevelopment and a major milestone. It marks a transformative shift in the modern treaty relationship. Codeveloping this legislation is an important step in the shared journey of reconciliation. The progress that partners have made so far shows just how powerful the collaborative work has been. It is clear the dialogue and input from indigenous partners strengthened the proposal for the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

• (1515)

Improving awareness, understanding and action in the federal government related to modern treaty implementation is crucial to building strong relationships based on trust, transparency and accountability with modern treaty partners. We will continue to codevelop approaches, and we will work with modern treaty partners to move past the painful legacy of colonialism and ensure that indigenous people have a voice in shaping their own future.

*Meegwetch. Marsi.*

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I have heard during the speeches is nothing new. The concern we have raised in the House specifically is that this piece of legislation would not give the new commissioner, whoever that person might be, the ability to hold government departments to account.

We have a slew of reports from the Auditor General already pointing out the failings of governments over the past decades. We have numerous departments set up to monitor modern treaties, among other things, yet government departments do not seem to respond to any reports that are tabled. Why will this be different?

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's job would be to check if the federal government is fulfilling its promises under modern treaties, working in good faith with indigenous partners and upholding the honour of the Crown. The commissioner would do reviews, audits and briefings to see how government programs are working and would share what they find with the minister, indigenous partners and Parliament. This is very important and crucial for accountability.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois welcomes this bill. This is a step in the right direction. I only hope that it will not be a repeat of the situation with the Commissioner of Official Languages. Although numerous complaints have been filed over the past 50 years, it seems like things are moving backwards instead of forwards.

In my colleague's opinion, what will make this position more effective, even though it lacks teeth?

[*English*]

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, I am in support of this commissioner because the legislation marks an important step in advancing reconciliation by promoting transparency, fairness and the implementation of modern treaties. If the bill were able to move to committee, where it could be hashed out and finalized, we would see a step forward in the right direction.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one thing I take issue with is that Conservatives do not recognize the true value of having an agent of Parliament who would be appointed for seven years based on the expertise and intelligence brought to that position. Instead, they somewhat believe that we should not worry; the Auditor General can cover it all, marginalizing the desire of indigenous leaders who are advocating for this.

I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts in regard to that. At the end of the day, the community would like to see this and other opposition parties are in support of it. It is only the Conservatives who seem to be in opposition to it.

*Government Orders*

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, there are over 30 organizations in support of this commissioner. Over 150 groups and communities have come together to support it. This is being done in partnership with any and all indigenous communities. I am sure this is the right step forward.

Treaties strengthen and reinforce self-determination by ensuring that indigenous people lead decisions that affect them in areas like land stewardship, cultural protection, resource development and participating in land management decisions. They are only as strong as their implementation, and I think we can see to that.

• (1520)

**Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, the long and short of it is that over six years, the Harper government signed five modern treaties, and over 10 years, the Liberals have signed zero. I can understand why indigenous leaders are calling for this. It is because the government continues to fail.

The member opposite talked about programs. The Auditor General addresses them, but nothing has been acted upon. What is different?

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the modern treaties that were introduced by Paul Martin and signed by Stephen Harper. Today, there are up to 27 modern treaties covering over 40% of Canada's land mass. Major development infrastructure projects depend on partnerships with indigenous modern treaty partners in—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong.

I rise today to address a matter at the heart of our nation's identity: the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples. The relationship is grounded not merely in history but in honour. Its strength is proven not by grand speeches or new offices but by actions, by the promises we keep and by the commitments we fulfill. For many years, we have preached reconciliation, yet without accountability, reconciliation remains a hollow promise, an unfulfilled vow that betrays the trust of our indigenous partners.

The Liberal government's proposed Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, is little more than a distraction. It is a bureaucratic shield to obscure a decade of broken promises to indigenous peoples. This new treaty commissioner would tell us nothing that the Auditor General and countless indigenous leaders have not already made clear: that the government continues to fail indigenous peoples.

Today, I will speak plainly about the state of modern treaty implementation in Canada, what progress we have seen, what failures persist and how we can address these challenges without piling on more costly bureaucracy at a time when Canadians can scarcely afford it. However, before I discuss implementation, let me clarify what is meant by modern treaties and self-government agreements.

A modern treaty is a comprehensive land claims agreement negotiated between a first nation, Inuit or Métis group and the Crown, meaning the federal government and sometimes provincial govern-

ments. These agreements resolve long-standing disputes over land ownership, resource rights and governance within a defined territory. The scope of a modern treaty includes land, resources, financial compensation and governance rights, and it often incorporates self-government provisions. However, not all modern treaties are full self-government agreements. Once implemented, modern treaties carry the weight of federal law, typically replacing or clarifying rights under historic treaties.

A self-government treaty, often embedded within a modern treaty, recognizes an indigenous government's authority to make laws over areas such as education, health, culture and local services, with powers akin to those of municipal or provincial governments. The scope focuses on political authority and administrative powers rather than on only land or resources. Legally, self-government provisions are binding and implemented under federal law. They can exist as part of a modern treaty or as a stand-alone self-government agreement. This distinction is vital. Implementation is not about creating new offices or adding layers of bureaucracy. It is about ensuring the Crown and its departments respect the legal authority already established in these agreements.

Consider, for example, the Whitecap Dakota self-government agreement, which passed with Conservative support in 2023. This is not a full modern treaty and outstanding issues remain, issues that I understand the government continues to delay. I ask, then, exactly how a future commissioner of modern treaty implementation would magically motivate the government to resolve these matters.

As we have heard before, we know progress is possible. Former prime minister Harper and the Conservative government negotiated five modern treaties in just six years: the Tlicho first nation's land claims and self-government agreement in 2006, the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement in 2009, the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement in 2009, the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Governance Agreement in 2013 and the Déline Final Self-Government Agreement in 2015. In contrast, over the past decade, the Liberals have not negotiated a single modern treaty.

Let me be clear. The Conservatives wholeheartedly support modern treaties. We stand with indigenous communities seeking to break free from the outdated Indian Act. What we cannot support is the misguided belief that spending more taxpayer dollars compensates for a lack of accountability within government bureaucracy. Who has been held responsible for these failures? How has the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations addressed this debacle internally? Would a report from a new commissioner's office change anything when dozens of Auditor General reports on the government's mishandling of indigenous affairs have been ignored?

*Government Orders*

• (1525)

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted regular audits on treaty negotiations, modern treaties, self-government agreements and treaty land entitlements. These include the 2005 report on meeting treaty land entitlement obligations, the 2006 report on federal participation in the British Columbia treaty process, the comprehensive 2013 “Audit of the Implementation of Modern Treaty Obligations” and the 2016 report 3, “Implementing the Labrador Inuit land Claims Agreement”.

Since 2015, the Auditor General has also produced 14 other reports on related issues facing first nations, Inuit and Métis communities. While the government continues to ignore the Office of Auditor General's reports and audits and continues to ignore treaty partners, it had the impertinence in 2023 to propose a collaborative modern treaty implementation policy. This might seem like progress, especially with 70 treaty negotiations currently stalled, but two years later, the policy remains unimplemented.

The critical point is this: Implementation is not about new policies, new offices or new spending. It is about whether current officials fulfill their responsibilities, whether existing departments are held accountable, and whether existing laws and commitments are enforced.

Now we hear of a new commissioner for modern treaty implementation, which would be a multi-million dollar bureaucracy tasked with monitoring, overseeing and reporting on implementation. It would not be accountable to Parliament. The commissioner, alongside the government and treaty partners, would decide when and how audits are conducted, leaving Parliament without the authority to initiate reviews of the government's handling of modern treaties. Reports would be tabled weeks after the minister receives them, further eroding accountability.

With respect, this is the wrong approach. To negotiate modern treaties, we do not need another commissioner, another office and more bureaucrats. The Liberals should learn from their past mistakes. Between 2015 and 2017, they created several new entities to address land claim implementation issues: the modern treaties implementation office, the assessment of modern treaty implications office, the performance management framework, the modern treaty management environment, the deputy ministers' oversight committee and the reconciliation secretariat.

Despite these six entities, no modern treaties have been finalized. The six entities are specifically designed to monitor, support and ensure the implementation of treaties. Are we to believe that a seventh entity, the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, would be the solution?

Perhaps the answer lies not in creating more agencies but in holding accountable those who failed to fulfill their existing duties. It is time to start firing those who fall short. What we need are ministers and officials who take on the responsibilities and obligations they already have, whether with respect to modern treaties, self-government provisions or historical agreements.

Since the 1970s, Canada has pursued modern treaties to move beyond the numbered treaties of the past. These comprehensive

agreements establish self-government, define resource rights and confirm judicial authority.

Today, over two dozen modern treaties are in force across Canada, from Yukon to Nunavut, British Columbia, Quebec and Labrador. These agreements represent some of the most advanced models of indigenous government in the world, yet the reality is uneven. Others remain mired in administrative barriers, forced to renegotiate and litigate rights they believed were secure. For many indigenous governments, treaty implementation has meant delays. Departments apply treaty commitments inconsistently, and fiscal transfers are often structured to preserve federal control rather than empower indigenous economy.

Last, what Canadians and first nations communities, Métis and Inuit have seen for far too long is that the government is great at building bureaucracy but is not really great at getting things done.

• (1530)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have consistently heard the spreading of false information, with opposition member after opposition member trying to give the impression that, for example, the Whitecap Dakota Nation does not have a treaty agreement.

One just needs to take a look at the Manitoba Métis Federation. There are also three treaties that are waiting for consent in the province of British Columbia, the member's home province. When the member talks about the five Harper agreements, 2006 was the year Harper became prime minister, and that was the first agreement, so I can assure the member that Paul Martin had a lot more to do with it than Stephen Harper did. That is not to mention the other two treaty agreements that were signed off on just a couple of years later. The member knows full well that it takes time to get the agreements in place. There are another six agreements that are getting closer to being signed off on.

My question is related to Bill C-10: Why will the Conservatives not support an independent agent of Parliament to take care of and advocate on behalf of the agreements?

**Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, it really comes down to building bureaucracy versus building actually real things and getting real things done. I think there has been ten years' worth of examples. Even just recently, there was a supposed housing announcement in Ontario, but it was all a big facade. There was not anything actually there. It is something that the government created.

The government is great at building facades and building bureaucracy. Again, first nations, Inuit and Métis communities are looking for it to actually get things done.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, based on what I understand from this bill, the mechanism of tabling reports in the House and requiring the audited federal institutions to respond is similar to the mechanism for the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. It sounds like it will become increasingly more difficult for the government to avoid taking responsibility for its shortcomings.

What does my hon. colleague think of this?

[*English*]

**Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, all I would say is similar to what I said before. There are already agencies that have been established. The Auditor General has done many reports, as I said in my speech. There are already mechanisms in the country, in the government for that matter, and the bureaucracy to actually get the things done. Establishing a separate, whole other bureaucracy once again would only make it look like it is doing something when it really would not be doing anything.

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member from British Columbia had to say. He did an amazing job pointing out some of the concerns we have with the piece of legislation.

I do want to take issue with the member opposite, the member for Winnipeg North, who rose on his feet just a few minutes ago to talk about the treaties. He took issue with the number of the modern treaties signed by Stephen Harper. Whether he wants to say there were five or there were four, that is still four more than the Liberals have signed in 10 years, so I think we did a pretty good job.

The member opposite also talked about a Manitoba Métis Federation treaty. There is no treaty. There is no treaty on the Order Paper. Has the member brought legislation forward? Again, the Liberals are taking credit for things that still have not happened. That brings me to my colleague's point that everything is a facade.

**Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, the shadow minister and I serve on INAN together, the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. We have served on that committee for several years now.

We often see Liberals trying to look busy. They try to look like they are getting something done. Indigenous communities have heard only hollow and empty promises without any delivery. Then Liberals stand up today in the House as if they are finally going to get going on all the things they have been promising. They have been in government for 10 years, and still there is nothing, a big goose egg in terms of a modern treaty. Despite what the member said, talking endlessly in the chamber, there really is not much there in what he says.

I think what indigenous communities are looking forward to when a Conservative government takes office is that we will actually get things done.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague says that the commissioner position is a distraction.

Would he be willing to amend the bill to give the position more teeth? What would he be willing to do to exert more pressure for a real implementation of modern treaties?

[*English*]

**Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is a distraction. We have a terrible economy. Our resources are not getting developed. The Premier of the Northwest Territories was here today with some grand chiefs. They want to get economic development up in the territories. All we are seeing is a decline in the economy there.

We need to get real things done. That is going to be with a future Conservative government.

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and to speak to Bill C-10. The bill would create a new agent of Parliament, a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The commissioner's role would be to assess how the terms of modern treaties are being met or not met, as the case may be, and report to Parliament on their findings. I see that the agent would not really have the power to tell the government what to do, nor to control in any way its response to their findings, and we already have the Auditor General writing reports and highlighting the gaps and inadequacies of the Liberals' response in the area of modern treaties, so really the commissioner would just be another highly paid Liberal position that would have no power to direct the government to do anything. I am not in favour of creating additional bureaucracy.

That said, I want to start by laying out the premises from which I am speaking. First of all, treaty rights must be respected; this is absolute. Second, we must work with first nations, Inuit and Métis people to ensure that they are self-governing and prosperous, and to help address issues that need to be overcome. I think that is clear, and that is the path of reconciliation in our country, but whenever the Liberals are failing to accomplish anything, which is what has happened over the last 10 years, they create a bureaucracy.

We have seen this pattern of behaviour in the housing crisis, for example. We know that far too many people were allowed into the country for the number of housing starts. The former housing minister had said we had to build 550,000 units per year in order to catch up over the next four years, and housing starts are down, so not only did the Liberals create one housing bureaucracy, but they are on their fourth bureaucracy and still there is no progress in terms of actual results.

There is the same problem in defence. We have been trying to buy F-35s since I was elected, and there is still nothing, so instead of fixing the existing procurement process, the Liberals decided to create a new defence procurement bureaucracy, and there is no proof yet that it will accomplish anything.

### *Government Orders*

It is the same thing with major projects. The government has all kinds of infrastructure departments that could be building in our country. It put together an infrastructure bank full of high-priced Liberals who have not built much of anything, and \$35 billion went out the window there. Again, it is a bureaucracy that accomplishes nothing and that is not helpful for anything.

There is the fentanyl czar, at a moment when the fentanyl crisis is an issue in terms of trade with our southern partners. It is definitely something that Canadians care about. It has killed 50,000 Canadians from fentanyl overdoses. We have 400 fentanyl super-labs, according to the RCMP and CSIS. The port of Vancouver is receiving shipping containers from China that are not scanned and are sent down to Washington state. What has the fentanyl czar accomplished in the months that he has been in place? Absolutely nothing. That is the reason I do not support adding additional bureaucracy to try to achieve something.

When it comes to truth and reconciliation, let us look at the Conservative record versus the Liberal record. It was Stephen Harper who commissioned the truth and reconciliation report that brought to the House 92 recommendations of how we could move towards reconciliation, and in 10 years the Liberal government has implemented 14 of them out of 92. That is a failing grade. When it comes to negotiating modern treaties, the Harper government finished five, and there have been zero out of 70 for the Liberal government in 10 years. Again, that is a failing grade.

When the Liberals brought forward the building Canada act, it was the Conservatives who brought forward the need to consult with indigenous peoples, when the Liberals were ready to exempt from everything every project that they wanted to go forward. Therefore it is the Conservatives who have sincere support to ensure that we move towards reconciliation and that we turn our indigenous peoples, first nations, Inuit and Métis into a prosperous self-governing part of our Canadian entity.

● (1540)

In my riding, I happen to have four first nation reserves, and they are not receiving a lot of assistance from the government. With regard to Kettle & Stony Point, these are very entrepreneurial individuals. In fact, their current latest project is to put in place a solar panel path. There is technology to do this that will power the entire reserve. This is green technology. This is an excellent initiative and they are struggling to get support.

We can talk about the Walpole Island folks. Bkejwanong, which is the name that was added to the riding, has the only ferry to the U.S. in my riding. There was another ferry but the guy who is currently trying to negotiate with the U.S. is the guy who let the Coast Guard, while it was under his watch, speed, break the existing ferry, lose \$4 million a year in revenue for the CBSA and get sued for more money than it would have taken to fix the thing and keep the border crossing in place, but that is another story. The Walpole Island ferry needs infrastructure upgrades in order to be able to take the heavier trucks, to increase the economic trade that we are doing with the U.S. Again, the federal government is not there for it.

I understand that this is the Conservative record and the Liberal record. I could add to that a couple of other things for the Liberals. I was here in 2015 when they pledged \$8.4 billion to eliminate boil

water advisories on reserves, and here we are. I can say, as a chemical engineer, that if someone gave me \$8.4 billion for 129 boil water advisories, 10 years ago, and asked me to get that fixed, the job would be done now. In fact, after Jane Philpott left, we made next to no progress on this. We still have indigenous people who do not have clean water in this country, and I do not know how we can talk about trying to do anything positive if we do not give them basic rights to clean water.

Let us not forget that the Liberals brought lawsuits against indigenous children. They brought lawsuits against indigenous people trying to get dental care. That is the record of the Liberals. It is no wonder that indigenous people in Canada are concerned. However, because they are concerned, and because the Liberals think we are approaching an election, it is the perfect time for the Liberals to virtue signal that they are going to do something, but they are not really going to do anything. They are just going to introduce another bureaucracy. It is not like they should know better, honestly.

Between 2015 and 2017, here are the bureaucracies that they created to try to deal with the modern treaty issue. The first one was called the modern treaty implementation office. The next one was called the assessment of modern treaty implications office. The third one was called the performance management framework. Then they had the modern treaty management environment, the deputy ministers' oversight committee and then the reconciliation secretariat. After all of that bureaucracy and all of those highly paid people, I am sure they created lots of paper reports but nothing was accomplished.

That, in fact, is the key issue when we look at Bill C-10, that nothing is really going to be accomplished through the bill, yet there are serious issues that need to be addressed. Treaties need to be modernized. I think we need to move forward at a faster pace on reconciliation. It is not happening. When I look at even the language that is in Bill C-10, it is so hypocritical.

If we talk about the preamble, it states, "Whereas the Government of Canada is committed to achieving reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis". It is committed, but it has only done 14 out of 92 calls to action in the truth and reconciliation report.

It goes on to say, "Whereas the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal and treaty rights are at the core of reconciliation". What about the latest gun confiscation, where they want to take hunting rights away from indigenous people by removing their firearms? It is unbelievable.

*Government Orders*

It also says, “Whereas modern treaties are intended to strengthen the health, dignity, well-being and resilience of Indigenous peoples”. In terms of health, we could talk about boil water advisories, or talk about taking them to court over dental care. How is that in any way lining up with what this bill is proposing?

• (1545)

It talks about the “resilience of Indigenous peoples, to create enduring relationships between modern treaty partners and to advance national socio-economic objectives that benefit all—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has elapsed.

Questions and comments, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that we can all agree as parliamentarians that there are better ways we can find efficiency within the civil service, when I talk to indigenous communities across this country, they noticed a marked difference from the Liberal government about how we approach the issues and how we have invested in these solutions versus where the Conservative Party was 10 years ago when it was in government.

There is more work to be done, but what I really picked up on is that the member talked about energy and clean energy on reserve. I found it refreshing because I have not heard much from the Conservative opposition benches about climate change and about doing things to reduce emissions. I am curious about whether the member could opine a bit on her view.

We have not heard a lot about what the Conservative Party would do with respect to the environment. Is the position that the Conservatives would spend more money than the government is currently spending on renewable energy? What is their position?

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question because the Conservative Party has a great plan that would help reduce the global footprint not just by providing LNG and small modular nuclear reactors to supplant coal and heavy oils in China, India and the emerging world, but also by supporting green technology here at home and making Canada a leader in that, so that we could export that and create jobs here in Canada.

Certainly I do not believe in subsidizing something that is not sustainable, but I absolutely believe that there are green energies that would be effective. The one I talked about is one where the cost of the project is a very few million dollars, and it is actually sustainable to provide all the energy for the reserve, which costs nearly \$1 million a year. This project has a payoff time that is very short and that is the way we should go.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the proposed commissioner will not have the authority to enforce compliance, as my hon. colleague pointed out. Their role is to point a finger at the federal government's shortcomings and failures to comply with modern treaties. Their limited powers will only permit them to conduct performance reviews and audits.

Would the hon. member like the commissioner to have an enforcement role or does she think that would still be too much red tape?

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, I think we need someone who will have authority over the government. The proposed commissioner would write a report with recommendations, but we already have that right now and the government has not moved. We need someone who can compel the government to act.

[*English*]

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today, our colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes mentioned that Conservatives support modern treaties. Bill C-10 would establish an independent commissioner and office.

Could my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong please expand on whether the commissioner would help resolve disputes over treaty interpretation?

• (1550)

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this would be an agent of Parliament, not an officer of Parliament. This person would have no power to do anything other than write reports to the government, which the government has already shown it would not act on. Certainly, I am sure this individual, whatever high-paid Liberal friend they choose, would have some expertise in modern treaties, but at the end of the day regarding the recommendations that would come forward, I have no confidence that they would be followed up on any more than those from the Auditor General and the officers of Parliament who previously made recommendations that have not been acted on by the government.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague was consistent. She said she would support amending the bill to give the commissioner more power to force action. Could she give us an example of how that might be worded?

[*English*]

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, if this position has no power over the government, then the government has just created a bureaucracy. If this person is actually able to force the government to take action or to act on the government's behalf to actually close the treaties and get agreement on the 70 that are still outstanding, that would be progress.

[*Translation*]

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill C-10.

*Government Orders**[English]*

It is also an honour to stop, especially given the content of the legislation, to recognize that we are all on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation. To them, we say *meegwetch*. We recognize in this country, and it is quite a stunning thing when one starts diving into it, how many nations and language groups there are, how many peoples whose lands we live on without noticing or thinking about the thousands of years they stewarded Turtle Island, took care of and, in many cases, welcomed and protected European settlers and allowed them to survive. I say that today because it is critical that we not just recognize the need for reconciliation on the one statutory day per year that this Parliament created a couple of years ago, which we observed on September 30. It was once known as Orange Shirt Day because of Phyllis Webstad's story, which breaks our heart, of the wonderful orange shirt that her grandmother bought for her being taken away; she never saw it again.

On that day, I know my colleagues on all sides of this House went to events in their own ridings. Many of them were here in Ottawa for the event that took place on Parliament Hill, which was very moving. If we have said it once, we have said it a million times: Reconciliation is not just one day a year; it is how we conduct ourselves, what we do and how we show that we understand the project of reconciliation.

*[Translation]*

The project of reconciliation is truly a whole-of-society project, with indigenous peoples and members of settler cultures, like the vast majority of members here.

*[English]*

It just about breaks my heart to have heard most of the debate in this place today as Bill C-10 comes forward. People who have been watching, any of the viewing audience, I just want to tell them that there is a story here that they are not hearing. It is likely some later-day insomniac watching CPAC.

Yes, it has taken a long time to negotiate the modern treaties. Yes, we now have 26 modern treaties, and that represents an enormous effort of the comprehensive nature of the modern treaties. In 2003, just to give a sense of history, that is obviously 22 years ago, a group called the Land Claims Agreements Coalition came together. It recognized that it was different from the treaties that took place back in the 1700s, 1800s and into the early part of this century. They recognized that modern land claim treaties were different, and they came together despite the fact that we are talking about vastly different language groups and experiences on the land and relationships with the land. They were groups as different as the Carcross/Tagish First Nation; the Council of Yukon First Nations; the Gwich'in Tribal Council, way up on the border with Alaska, where the Gwich'in need and rely on the porcupine and caribou for their sustenance, just as the Tsawwassen First Nation's modern treaty relies on the salmon and a different ecosystem altogether, with a completely different language group; and significantly, of course, the Nunavut Tunngavik, which represents an enormous chunk of Canadian territory.

Just to give a sense of what it means to have a modern treaties coalition, that work is not done by just some kind of stakeholder

group; they are people who have come together, chiefs from nations that are as vastly different as if the people of my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands sat down with folks from downtown Toronto to decide what our priorities would be for grocery shopping for a potluck. We're different people from different places. It is a tribute to these first nations and peoples that they came together and formed this modern Land Claims Agreements Coalition.

● (1555)

The coalition is co-chaired by an extraordinarily gifted group of dedicated people. One current co-chair, Jeremy Tunraluk, is the president of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., which has a huge land base. The other co-chair is the president of the Nisga'a Lisims Government, Eva Clayton. They work together. They came to Ottawa this week, and I met with many of the people who were in the leadership of the modern treaties agreements, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition.

What they came together to tell us about was how long they have worked to achieve what Bill C-10 proposes. How long have they worked for that? They worked, first, to get their land claims agreements put together, to have modern treaties established and to have them accepted by the Crown. Then, over a 20-year period, they consulted about how we were going to enact this and make it happen. These first nations, Métis and Inuit people, over a 20-year period, decided that what would work would be to have an independent auditing function embodied in the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

This is something first nations, Métis and Inuit people decided, and they have been working to try to get the government to act upon it. They felt they were finally making progress on October 10, 2024, when Bill C-77, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, was tabled in this place.

I am not going to go back, because one thing that has been consistent through the day-to-day across the aisle is one party pointing at the other and saying it is the other's fault that nothing has happened so far. I am not going to go there, but I do remember why Bill C-77 did not get past first reading. We were rather stuck for a while. I am not going to discuss who was to blame for that, but Bill C-77 died on the Order Paper on January 6.

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We are talking about what the peoples and the nations are asking us to do. If we are serious about reconciliation, then we must live up to the promise of 20 years of consultation in which the Government of Canada, under at least a few different prime ministers, said it would get this thing done and it would bring in, as a legislative priority, a commissioner of modern treaty implementation. It was a tool that was codeveloped over decades. It was brought forward for first reading almost a year ago now.

Bill C-77 died on the Order Paper when the House was pro-rogued by former prime minister Justin Trudeau, along with 25 other bills that died that day, and it has come back to us now. It was tabled for first reading on September 25, almost a full year after it started as Bill C-77, and it is now back word for word as Bill C-10.

There are the first nations and the leadership from the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, as well as all the different partners, such as the Déline Government and the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun. I mentioned some of the first nations, such as the Kluane First Nation, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, the Toquaht Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council. To all these people, if they have been watching Parliament today, all I can do is tell them how very sorry I am, because the last thing they expected to see was settler culture people saying that this is just a waste of time and that this will be a Liberal appointee.

This must be a commissioner who has the trust and faith of the indigenous people of this country and of the modern land claims agreements, the modern treaties. The peoples who entered into these modern treaties are saying, “If you're not serious about reconciliation, you might as well tell us now, because we've been patient.” What we were asked to do directly by the people in these land claims modern treaties is to pass Bill C-10 and to pass it quickly, as it does not need amendments.

I beg my colleagues on all sides of the House to take this small step for reconciliation. I ask them to pass the bill quickly and to not make it a political football. I ask them to be proud of themselves when they look in the mirror, so they can say they did their part to make up for the horrors of abuse. This is what we do: We pass Bill C-10.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the bill represents concrete, transformative progress in Canada's legal relationship with indigenous peoples. It would institute a long-term parliamentary accountability mechanism that is the product of genuine collaboration.

Can my colleague tell us today why our colleagues opposite are refusing to support this bill?

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we have some bad habits here.

No particular party is to blame. There are five parties here. We are at our best when we work together.

What we all need to do right now is ignore campaign sign colours. We just need to consider what is best for everyone.

[*English*]

Members should forget their party colours and do what is right.

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to take a second to thank my colleague for her speech. I think it is the kind of speech that sets the tone we need to hear in the House of Commons.

Bill C-10 is an important piece of legislation. It represents a significant milestone in modern treaty implementation and monitoring.

Not long ago, we celebrated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. I admit that this day always makes me a little uncomfortable, because in my riding, like many others, situations arise, including environmental situations, that lead people to call on the federal government the other 364 days of the year, yet it never answers. After families are left in insecurity and people are abandoned to environmental harm, then people are expected to celebrate reconciliation.

I wonder whether my colleague has any comments on that situation.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Mirabel, a member of the Bloc Québécois, is right. There are other problems in his riding, like environmental justice or environmental and toxic threats. I know them well.

Bill C-10 is not the answer to every problem facing indigenous peoples, but it is certainly a vital step in that direction and I would ask all of my colleagues to vote for it.

[*English*]

**Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when my kids were younger, they used to sing a song that went, “Your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks”. It feels to me that this member has a lot of experience in the House, certainly a lot more than I do. Does she feel truly confident that this is not just more talk from a bureaucracy that will do absolutely nothing to truly help create these treaties in the way they should be?

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for a very fair question.

What I put my belief in is what the people who asked for this think, those who have co-created this proposal, this creation of a commissioner with audit and reporting powers and the ability to push and report to Parliament. It might not be what I would come up with, but who cares? I am a settler member of Parliament, and I work for first nations in my own community.

*Government Orders*

The modern treaty nations and the coalition worked on these issues day and night, and they have been patient. This is what they want.

• (1605)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on this idea of having a commissioner, someone who is appointed for seven years. When we look at the appointment process itself, I suspect we are going to see someone with an immense amount of real-life experience, who brings a lot of knowledge to the table that even the Auditor General would not be able to reflect on when it comes time to present a report. I wonder if she could provide her thoughts on the potential of the individual taking the position and the many attributes he or she might be able to bring to the table in coming up with recommendations.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that it is not for me to imagine the attributes.

I asked the leaders of the Land Claims Agreements Coalition whether they had been thinking about what attributes the commissioner would have, what kind of person it would be. Yes, they are confident they will be consulted. Yes, they are confident this person will have the kind of wisdom and the attributes that come from an indigenous world view to bring forward, to hold to account any government, the current government or the next government, through audit, pressure, transparency and the first word, of course, of the late Murray Sinclair in his work as commissioner, “truth” and reconciliation. This commissioner could get to the truth and report it back. That is an essential step in reconciliation.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, again, what I am looking at is the idea of an investment. One of the criticisms of the legislation from the Conservatives is the cost factor. I would ultimately argue that the cost is easily justified by looking at what the commissioner is going to be able to do, not only from within indigenous communities, but in Canada as a whole, especially if we factor in the need for reconciliation.

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I would, again, ask colleagues to consider what we have before us as an opportunity in this country to reimagine ourselves. Canada is the best country in the world, there is no question, but could we not, as the Order of Canada's slogan says, desire a better country? This does not mean somewhere else; this means here. Becoming a better country means facing a legacy of abuse and recognizing that this will cost some money, but it is a pittance. It is crumbs off the table compared to what we owe indigenous people across Turtle Island for taking their land, stealing their culture and banning them from speaking their own languages. Land back is an essential part. These modern treaties are progress, but if they stall, they are not progress; they are just another broken promise.

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague across the way's thoughts on this topic. I think one of the greatest frustrations I have had throughout the debate today is the fact that nothing is stopping the current government, the Liberal government, from moving forward on modern treaties today. It is creating another officer of Parliament in this legislation, to presumably hold it accountable, but we have seen, time

and time again, the government not listening to reports from the Auditor General, whose job it is to hold the government to account and shed light on those areas and those gaps right now.

I am wondering if the member shares my concern and the concern from this side of the aisle that this could turn into just another situation in which the Liberal government is ignoring the recommendations and the information brought forward.

• (1610)

**Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, again, this is a very fair question. No one in the opposition parties is going to say it is a good idea because it belongs to one party or another. If the Conservatives had formed government, I would say the same thing: It could just be something they say they are going to do. With the Liberals there is also a track record.

I do not want to make this partisan. All I know is this: I am humbled by the extraordinary patience of the peoples and the chiefs. The Land Claims Agreements Coalition has worked for more than 20 years now to get to this point where, through consultation and co-operation, it came up with this proposal. It will not solve all of the problems, and we will have to hold it accountable too, but right now, if this dies or if it takes too long to pass, I do not know why first nations, Métis or Inuit people would believe a single word out of our mouths ever again, any of us, from any party.

**Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to participate in the debate through questions and comments today, and it is an honour to finally be able to rise and deliver my remarks on this important topic. Before I get into the substance of that, I would like to mention that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington. He is a great colleague, and he has a wealth of knowledge on a number of subjects. I look forward to hearing his comments very shortly, but before that, members will have to endure my own comments, so I apologize for that.

We are here discussing Bill C-10 respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. Before addressing the substance of Bill C-10 directly, I want to state unequivocally that, for myself and for the Conservative Party of Canada, we support the treaty rights of all indigenous peoples and the process of reconciliation. We also know that more needs to be done to support self-determination and self-government for first nations and indigenous communities across the country. There has been progress, and steps have been taken along the way, but there is much more that needs to be done when it comes to fostering that self-government.

As mentioned a few times in debate and in discussion on this piece of legislation, I am very proud that the last Conservative government got five modern treaties done within a six-year time frame. That is something that brings me great pride. Of course, I was not around for that government. I was not voting yet; I was not of age to do that at that point, but nonetheless, it is something that brings me some pride. If we contrast that with the record we have seen from the Liberal government, it has been in power for a decade and has achieved zero modern treaties. That is definitely a cause for concern, which has been mentioned many times in the discussion today. That is why so many people across the country, particularly indigenous leaders, are calling for change.

I want to talk a bit about the history. I think it is important to note that this has been a long process, this modern treaty process. It goes all the way back to 1973 when the Supreme Court decision recognized indigenous rights. In fact, it was the first time indigenous land rights were recognized in Canadian law. Modern treaties were a result of that, and these treaties enabled indigenous people to build their nations and communities on their own terms, addressing matters from use of land to resources and from economic development to environmental protections, and many more important aspects of their nations.

It is one thing to sign these treaties. It is another thing to honour them. I think that goes for the historical treaties as well. I come from a district in northwestern Ontario that includes, with the redistribution, 38 first nation communities across the territories of Treaty Nos. 3, 5 and 9. I live in Kenora, Ontario, which is part of Treaty No. 3. I hear constantly from indigenous leaders and non-indigenous residents about the need to honour the treaty and honour the intent of the treaty. That is something the government is still not living up to when it comes to those historical treaties, never mind the modern treaties.

I just wanted to put that out there, because I think it is easy for politicians to talk about and it is easy for the government to say the right thing, but it is the follow-through and actual honouring of the treaties that is of utmost importance.

That brings me to the Liberal record. We have heard lots of promises and seen very little action over the last 10 years. When it comes to drinking water, something the government made big promises on, if memory serves me correctly, 2019 was the year all the drinking water advisories were supposed to have been eliminated. We know that many persist today, and many are in northern Ontario.

We have heard big promises on infrastructure beyond that, in first nations and in indigenous communities, that the government does not live up to. We have had discussions today about the TRC calls to action and the fact that the vast majority of these calls to action remain incomplete. I believe, within the scope of what the federal government can control, by my count, only 10 of the federal calls to action have been completed.

• (1615)

Another issue is that which we will be getting into at the indigenous and northern affairs committee shortly, and that is first nations policing, by no doubt an essential service but something that has not been designated as such. It was in the fall of 2022 that Marco

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Mendicino was the minister of public safety; he said it was just around the corner and that there would be legislation coming that fall. That was three years ago, and we have seen nothing since.

It has been crickets from this government in terms of recognizing the essential work that first nation police services do, and I have heard so many stories from the first nations police services in my riding about the fact that they are hamstrung and stuck in a box where the federal government is dictating where dollars can go, sometimes toward things that they do not necessarily need. That money could be repurposed for something much more useful, but the bureaucrats in Ottawa are prescribing where those dollars should flow, and that makes it much more difficult for them to do their work effectively. That is not to mention the restrictions placed on first nations police officers in terms of the roles, responsibilities and authorities they have.

Whenever we see these issues, it does not really seem to matter what the topic is. The government's plan is to throw money at it, to create a bureaucracy, to create more jobs in the government service in Ottawa and to walk away. We have seen that in a lot of cases, even from members of the Liberal government today, speaking in the House and talking about how much money they have spent, as if that is their measure of success: "We spent this much money, so look at us; we are doing great, and we care." That is nice, but what are those dollars achieving? That is the most important thing, and what we are seeing right now is that the dollars are bloating the government bureaucracy and not getting to the communities and the folks who need it.

Unfortunately, I fear that this legislation will be more of the same, because the Liberal government can agree to modern treaties now. They do not need this extra layer of accountability, as they call it. They do not need this commissioner to do any of that work. They have that authority, and I believe that this is just a distraction from the fact that they have done nothing over the last 10 years.

In extension of that, this is a time when our deficit is soaring. Canadians are struggling. It is certainly not the time for more bureaucracy and more government spending. It is clearly time for action.

On top of that, we already have accountability mechanisms within the government. The Auditor General has completed nearly two dozen reports since 2005. The auditor does this important work, holding the government accountable and shining lights on the issues that exist and the gaps that exist, but I cannot think of a time that the Liberals have actually accepted a report and put it into action. Report after report is getting put up on the shelf and collecting dust. We have the Auditor General doing this work already.

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We also have additional federal offices that were created to work on land claim implementation issues, like the modern treaty implementation office, the assessment of modern treaties implications office, the deputy minister oversight committee and the reconciliation secretariat. There are many mechanisms, offices and bureaucrats in place to hold this government to account. Creating one more and expecting that it is the one that the government is finally going to listen to does not give me a lot of hope, and I can assure members that when I talk to the first nations leaders across northwestern Ontario, no one is saying that the answer to their problems and the concerns they are facing is going to be more bureaucrats in Ottawa.

In conclusion, we do not need more bureaucracy and deficit spending from the Liberals. I suggest, if this Liberal government wanted to honour its commitments and be accountable, it should actually consider doing the jobs it can do right now and that it has the power to do. Another officer highlighting what the Liberals are doing wrong would not compel them to act. Only they have the power to act, and first nations across the country and indigenous communities across the country are hoping to see that action from the government right now.

• (1620)

**Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I sit with my colleague on the INAN committee and appreciate his views and questions.

The member talked a bit about some of the rights that the previous Conservative government promoted, but he did not once mention the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Stephen Harper and Conservatives voted against at the United Nations, whereas we as a federal government implemented it, turned it into action and ensured that we followed up with the implementation of UNDRIP.

I know the member just went through training yesterday with the KAIROS blanket exercise, as did I, and we heard from youth in his riding. I wonder if he can share a bit of what he heard from the youth and what he learned during that KAIROS blanket exercise that can help us with the debate we are currently having.

**Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate working with the member opposite as well at committee. We have done some great work together. Of course, we do not agree on everything, as everyone will know, but I appreciate the opportunity to work with him.

Yes, it was great to have the blanket exercise yesterday, at which there were youth from the Mishkeegogamang First Nation in my riding, a community I have had the opportunity to visit quite often. It was great to hear their perspective on issues that they want addressed, from education to supports for mental health and addictions. It was an incredible opportunity to hear first-hand the concerns they are facing. I appreciated the opportunity, as did the committee, to have that local context as well and to share a piece of my riding with the rest of the members.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives often talk about accountability, but only when it suits them, it seems. For them, reconciliation seems to be nothing more than a slogan, used only when it suits their vision.

They are telling us that Bill C-10 creates too much bureaucracy. Real bureaucracy is when the federal government announces, promises and repeats things without ever delivering results. That is real bureaucracy.

We understand that the bill is not perfect. We would like the commissioner to have more power to enforce. People have been calling for this for the past 20 years, even when the Conservatives were in power under Stephen Harper.

Will my colleague support Bill C-10 today, or will he once again turn a blind eye, claiming that this involves too much bureaucracy and that, ultimately, it does not suit their interests?

[*English*]

**Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, very clearly, as I said in my remarks, what Parliament and, I suggest, the government need to do is move forward on modern treaties, first nations policing, clean drinking water and infrastructure. All of these issues help support self-determination and self-government. We do not need more bureaucrats, departments and offices to tell the government to do that. We have an Auditor General who has done great work holding the government to account. I hope the government listens to all of the reports and recommendations and puts them into action.

• (1625)

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as repeated throughout the day by my colleagues, Conservatives support modern treaties. There are concerns that with Bill C-10, the establishment of an independent commissioner and office would create additional government bureaucracy.

I would ask my colleague from Kenora—Kiiwetinoong to please expand on whether the commissioner would duplicate the work of the Auditor General.

**Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the great work of my colleague in this chamber. He has been a valuable addition to our team, and I look forward to serving with him over the course of this term and, hopefully, beyond.

I agree completely with the member's assessment of things. The commissioner would duplicate work that is already being done by the Auditor General and other officers of Parliament, as I have already alluded to. This is just more bureaucracy. It is not more accountability. The Liberal government is trying to distract from its failed record. It is time it gets to work and stops distracting.

**Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this place.

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I rise today to speak to Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. While the Liberal government claims this bill would improve accountability and help with reconciliation, my Conservative colleagues and I must oppose it.

Let me very clear from the outset. Conservatives fully support treaty rights, negotiations and the ongoing process of reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We recognize the importance of advancing self-determination and self-government. This is a priority we all share. However, this bill would miss the mark. Instead of addressing the real issues, it proposes creating another layer of bureaucracy, an expensive new office here in Ottawa that would audit the government's performance and report to Parliament.

What would that really accomplish? The answer is very little, because the government already has the tools for oversight. The Office of the Auditor General conducts regular audits into treaty negotiations, modern treaties, self-governance agreements, implementation and treaty land entitlements. It has completed nearly two dozen audit reports, including six audits on indigenous treaty implementations, since 2005. These reports clearly show where the federal government has fallen short.

What the Liberal government is saying through the introduction of this bill is that it prefers to audit itself as opposed to having the independent Office of the Auditor General do the work. Why spend more taxpayer dollars at a time when Canadians are struggling with affordability, inflation and growing inflationary deficits in order to create another bureaucracy, a new one, to tell us what we already know? We do not need that. We need action.

This is not a structural failure of oversight. This is a failure of political will and leadership. The ministers and the departments that they lead are responsible for ensuring that treaty negotiations and implementation happens effectively and transparently. This is what Canadians deserve of their government. On that note, under the Conservative government led by Stephen Harper, we negotiated five modern treaties within just six years. What about the Liberals? They have been in power for nearly 10 years and have negotiated how many? They have negotiated zero.

For almost a decade, we have been bombarded with flashy announcements. The Liberals tell us they are in negotiations with 70 indigenous groups and we are supposed to believe they are doing something substantial, but here is the truth: It is nothing but a public relations exercise. These are announcements designed to impress the public, with no real outcomes. It is 10 years and there is not a single modern treaty deal.

Now, the Liberals want to create a commissioner for modern treaty implementation and present it to the Canadian public as a new office, a new title and a new bureaucracy. However, do not be fooled. This is not about achieving results; this is about avoiding scrutiny. This is not about the heart of the problem. The government does not want transparency. It does not want accountability. It wants to create another office that looks good on paper but does nothing to ensure that the indigenous communities see the benefits of real, concrete treaty implementation. It is all about appearance, not action. This is a failure, plain and simple, and it is the indigenous peoples of Canada who pay the price.

I know reconciliation is not easy and we do not claim that it will ever be so, but it does require honest, transparent communication and mutual respect between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. It requires the government to stop standing in the way with secrecy and indecision.

Let me elaborate. My riding includes the Caldwell First Nation, which, incidentally, is located within a kilometre of where I presently live, and I recently joined the first nation for its first annual competitive powwow this past August. Caldwell First Nation concluded a settlement agreement, which culminated a decades-long process. In 1998, the Liberal government reached a settlement agreement in principle with Caldwell, but never followed through. It was the Conservative government led by former prime minister Stephen Harper that returned to the table in 2006 and finalized that \$105-million settlement by 2010, which was then ratified by the community.

The Caldwell First Nation officially secured reserve status in November 2020. This settlement did not hand over land directly, but set a 30-year timeline for the community to purchase properties at market value, from willing sellers to willing buyers, and then go through a federal additions-to-reserve process. This, too, is reconciliation in action: willing buyers and willing sellers working together, not a top-down Ottawa mandate.

• (1630)

Unfortunately, the current Liberal government is not living up to that standard of transparency or respect for local municipalities and first nations. In July of this past year, a status report on claims by the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs was provided to a neighbouring municipality that had inquired about the status of a second claim made by the Caldwell First Nation. The information presented to the public regarding the status of that claim clearly stated that the second claim was not accepted for negotiations. However, behind closed doors, it has been revealed that this claim is considered open and is actively being used in land acquisition negotiations.

It is this uncertainty that has caused tensions and concern for both Caldwell First Nation and the neighbouring municipality, which found themselves negotiating with the Government of Canada over the same piece of property. It is this type of inconsistent communication and lack of transparency that has caused first nations and neighbouring communities to have strained relationships due to misunderstandings.

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When information cannot be trusted, relationships between first nations and neighbouring communities are broken, stopping the advancement of reconciliation for everyone involved. This secrecy does a disservice to all Canadians. It hinders reconciliation. It undermines the ability of indigenous communities and their neighbours to work together on the basis of mutual respect. Both first nations and non-indigenous communities require clarity to plan their futures responsibly.

This is a failing of government to do its due diligence of communicating to all parties in a treaty or settlement process. This is not something that will be fixed by adding another layer of bureaucracy within which the information has another chance to be lost, confused or misplaced from the public record.

Reconciliation cannot be forced or imposed by Ottawa. It cannot be a one-sided declaration or a hidden agenda. It requires honest, open and transparent communication by all parties: indigenous and non-indigenous communities and the federal government itself. The current government seems more interested in creating new bureaucratic offices to audit and then report on itself, rather than rolling up its sleeves and getting the job done. Reconciliation must be built on mutual respect, open communication and transparency. It requires all sides to have a seat at the table and, most importantly, to know what is on the table in the first place.

Bill C-10 would do nothing to fix these problems. It proposes yet another office, another layer and another report, all while the government continues to withhold basic information about the status of existing claims. That is not reconciliation; that is obstruction.

Let me be clear: My comments are not about opposing oversight. They are about opposing wasteful and ineffective oversight when existing tools, offices and audits are being ignored or sidelined. Bill C-10 risks spending more taxpayer dollars on bureaucrats who will audit the government's own failures without addressing the underlying issues. Rather than demanding accountability from the "Ottawa knows best" bureaucrats, the Liberals propose creating more new layers of bureaucracy and spending more money at a time when Canadians can ill afford it.

What Canadians need is political will and action. They need ministers who take responsibility and provide direction, and departments that follow through on commitments and the direction provided.

If the Liberal government is serious about reconciliation, if it truly wants to honour the treaty process, then it must stop hiding behind additional bureaucracies and start doing the hard work, and it is hard work, that these audits have already identified and that reconciliation demands.

• (1635)

**Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused. I have been hearing the Conservatives talk about how many modern-day treaties they signed under Stephen Harper. On the one hand they are bragging about how many treaties they have signed, and on the other hand, they are saying that they are not going to vote for oversight or for someone to ensure that implementation and education around the modern treaties are in place.

I am wondering how it is that Conservatives can brag about the treaties, but when it comes to actually implementing those treaties and having oversight and a commissioner to do so, they vote against it, just like they voted against UNDRIP and just like they voted against clean water for first nations communities. How can the Conservatives stand up with any credibility and talk about indigenous issues?

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member. I know that his heart is in first nations communities and indeed all of Canada.

The Conservatives support accountability. They support oversight. In fact, we go through an exercise here on a daily basis at two o'clock where we hold the government to account. That is part of our democratic process.

The process of implementation and holding the government to account for the treaties negotiated should be done through the mandates instructed to the ministers. Then the House has the function, the duty, to hold the government to account for the implementation of the very treaties the government negotiates. What we do not need is another bureaucratic process where the government looks at itself.

We have the opportunity to do this right now through ministerial mandates and through the accountability mechanism right in this chamber.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his rather nuanced speech. He says that he agrees with continuing the reconciliation process and implementing modern treaties, but that he views the commissioner position as bureaucracy.

In that case, there are two options. The commissioner could be given more of an enforcement role and more powers so that the position is not just bureaucratic. Otherwise, what mechanism does the member propose to facilitate modern treaty implementation?

[*English*]

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I will discount the first option, because that is another unneeded layer when the mechanisms exist. As I outlined in my first response to my colleague across the way, the ministers have this authority. The Auditor General has already done the job, and I can list the six audits that have been provided.

Why can the minister not empower and direct the departments to implement? That accountability mechanism exists, and the oversight of the minister exists through the processes we go through here on a daily basis, at two o'clock every day and 11 o'clock on Fridays.

I will go with the expanded second option from my hon. colleague from the Bloc.

**Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a theme emerging with the government, and that theme is the expansion and creation of more and more government bureaucracy.

I wonder if my colleague could highlight one more time for the House why, at a time when the Parliamentary Budget Officer has raised the alarm about the government's spending, we do not need any more government bureaucracy when the checks and balances already exist in government.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my speech, we are not opposed to oversight. We are not opposed to the effective functioning of government.

We will see, on October 35, what exactly the state of our nation's finances are in. Additional spending that does not lead to meaningful outcomes for the benefit of Canadians in both indigenous and non-indigenous communities does not perform anything other than add to our inflationary debt.

What we do not need is another function that can audit without the authority to compel. Those two things, the combination of the Auditor General's office and the ministerial functions that have the authority to compel, are the two ingredients we need in order to address the shortcomings of these treaties. We are not there yet; I acknowledge that, but we have the tools. What we are missing is the political will to enact those tools.

• (1640)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, Public Safety; the hon. member for Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, Public Safety; and the hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot, Housing.

[*Translation*]

**Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with the Member for Yukon.

*Kwe kwe. Ullukkut. Taanshi.*

I would like to say hello to everyone.

To begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation, who have been the custodians of these lands since time immemorial.

It is with deep respect and a sense of responsibility that I rise today to support Bill C-10, which seeks to create the role of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation, an initiative that is essential to advancing reconciliation in our country.

### *Government Orders*

This initiative is part of a commitment to advance reconciliation and hold the Government of Canada accountable for its relationships, objectives and obligations under modern treaties. To build a better future, we must first look back, learn from the past and acknowledge the wrongs that have marked our history.

For too long, relations between indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada have been marked by colonial and paternalistic policies that have caused harm and left a legacy of injustice. Recognizing this truth is a first step toward reconciliation. That said, reconciliation must be followed up by deliberate, sustained and adaptable measures.

Governments and associations must work in true partnership with indigenous peoples to address systemic inequalities and uphold indigenous rights. Only through meaningful change can we begin to rebuild trust and move forward together.

The Government of Canada is committed to working in partnership with indigenous peoples to advance shared priorities such as health care, food security, housing, education, economic prosperity, environmental protection, climate change and emergency management.

The importance of meaningful partnerships with indigenous peoples is also recognized in the One Canadian Economy Act, recently passed by the House of Commons. Given that indigenous peoples have been stewards of the lands and waters of Turtle Island since time immemorial, economic strategies anchored in collaboration and partnership with them will be essential to ensuring lasting prosperity for all.

We are making real progress, but there is still work to be done to strengthen our partnerships and advance reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action are the foundation of all our work. These calls to action provide a road map for addressing systemic inequalities, supporting cultural revitalization and honouring treaty obligations, including modern treaty obligations.

By committing to the calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are working to ensure that indigenous peoples have the means to make decisions affecting their lands, rights and future.

### *Government Orders*

Concretely and more specifically, establishing a commissioner for modern treaty implementation is consistent with action 9 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples action plan, which calls for the establishment of an independent oversight mechanism for modern treaty implementation. This is part of a broader commitment to work with indigenous partners to strengthen how treaties are upheld and implemented through better oversight, greater transparency and closer collaboration.

The commissioner would not be just an observer. They would be the embodiment of real change, one that would see Canada keep its word, deliver on promises and honour modern treaties as pillars of our democracy.

Beyond the principles, let me provide real examples of the progress that has been made, such as entering into a self-government treaty with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. This is a decisive step toward ensuring that indigenous rights are upheld. This agreement affirms the inherent right of first nations to self-government, so they have a say in decisions affecting their communities under its self-government treaty.

• (1645)

This self-government treaty is really about unique self-governance. The Whitecap Dakota First Nation can continue to build on its success and improve the well-being of the community in the future. Agreements like these are transformative. They aim to improve the living conditions and livelihoods of indigenous peoples, establish an enduring framework for reconciliation agreed upon by all parties, and foster ongoing relations between the Crown and indigenous peoples.

We all know that more needs to be done to ensure that we keep our promises and commitments. The creation of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation represents a decisive step toward reconciliation between indigenous peoples and the federal government.

This measure would help advance reconciliation in three ways: by bringing to light systemic problems in modern treaty implementation; by promoting the full, effective, and timely implementation of modern treaties; and by fostering better relationships with modern treaty partners. The commissioner's work would have a ripple effect, particularly by raising public awareness of modern treaties and addressing systemic implementation issues that hinder indigenous self-government and economic development.

However, reconciliation cannot be limited to policies or institutions; it must also reside in our country's collective conscience. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada wrote the following in its final report: "Too many Canadians still do not know the history of Aboriginal peoples' contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people."

We all have a responsibility to take action to promote reconciliation. By providing public reviews and reports to Parliament and making the treaty implementation process more efficient and transparent, the commissioner can contribute to society's commitment to education and reconciliation in general. However, awareness only goes so far. We know that the Government of Canada has not up-

held some of the commitments made in modern treaties. This legislation would help address those gaps in a more specific and targeted way.

For example, some indigenous communities have had trouble accessing the resources, lands or land management promised in modern treaties. Other communities have faced delays in moving forward on essential infrastructure, education and health care initiatives. By actively overseeing modern treaty implementation, the commissioner would help address persistent systemic inequality and advance reconciliation.

Indigenous languages and cultural practices are essential to indigenous spirituality and identity, as well as to the preservation of traditional knowledge. The Government of Canada recognizes this and has already taken steps in this area, as evidenced by the passage of the Indigenous Languages Act and the appointment of the indigenous languages commissioner.

However, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada stated in its call to action 14, the preservation, revitalization and strengthening of indigenous languages and cultures are best managed by indigenous people and communities. To that end, Canada must fulfill its commitments through effective implementation. By ensuring that Canada keeps the promises it has made under modern treaties, the commissioner would support the long-term growth and vitality of indigenous cultures and languages.

Strengthening relations with modern treaty partners through improved engagement and consultation is central to this approach. That is what we have done in developing this bill, and that is what we intend to do in the future. Once this bill is passed, the commissioner will encourage continued collaboration and consultation on the implementation of modern treaties. The commissioner will help us uphold the principle of "nothing about us without us" by recognizing the distinct experiences of first nations, Inuit, and Métis partners, including partners—

• (1650)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member's time has expired. We will move on to questions and comments.

The member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*English*]

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, between 2013 and 2023, federal employment surged by 36%. By contrast, the private sector grew by 13%.

How big is this new bureaucracy, this new office, going to be? How many new public sector employees does the government plan to hire?

## Government Orders

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I think the issue is much more important than bureaucracy, but I would answer the question in the negative. It is an accountability mechanism. No, the position of commissioner will not create red tape. It will ensure that commitments are kept and that resources are used effectively and efficiently. That is what our government is aiming for.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep saying that they want to advance reconciliation. However, four months ago, not four years ago, they passed Bill C-5, which deals with nation-building projects, without consulting first nations. This was criticized by the Assembly of First Nations and by Inuit and Métis communities.

Today, the Liberals are proposing Bill C-10. They would create the position of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation without giving the commissioner any real powers. The commissioner would have no teeth. They would be able to examine the situation and make recommendations, but their hands would be tied. They would not be able to make binding recommendations.

Are the Liberals afraid of actual accountability, which would force them to face up to their unfulfilled promises to first nations?

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by answering the last part of my colleague's question. Are the Liberals scared? Obviously the answer is no.

Establishing this commissioner means establishing a mechanism for transparency and oversight. I hope that members across the way will vote in favour of establishing this commissioner. Contrary to what my colleague is saying, I think that by establishing this commissioner, the Liberals are taking their transparency responsibilities seriously and will thereby earn the trust of all Canadians, including indigenous peoples.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think of Bill C-10 as definitely warranted. It is before us today because of a great deal of effort by indigenous community leaders in response to needing modernized treaties, which will ultimately build a stronger and healthier social and economic society. I see having an agent of Parliament that reports to Parliament as a positive thing.

I wonder if my colleague can provide his thoughts on how important it is that we recognize the true value of these agreements. They help us build a stronger Canada.

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, of course, it is very important to recognize the agreements. As I said, it is a matter of moving from agreement to action, but these are actionable variables that must be monitored and supervised. Ultimately, what we are putting in place is not simply an administrative measure. It is a renewed promise, that of a Canada where we do not just talk about reconciliation, but where we truly live it. We want to experience this reconciliation, with a strong economy and also with the oversight of a commissioner. I hope that the entire House will support implementing this process.

• (1655)

**Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, why did the government choose not to place the new commissioner under the independent oversight of the Office of the Auditor General, where accountability and transparency are already well established? This would give first nations, Métis and Inuit partners greater confidence in the commissioner's impartiality.

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, which is a very good one.

I would simply say that we want to give this commissioner the freedom to pursue intergovernmental relations and relations with the regions. My colleague's proposal would complicate the process, and that is what we want to avoid.

[English]

**Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *kwe kwe, ulaakut, taanshi* and hello. I would like to start by acknowledging that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded, unsundered territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin people.

I am honoured to be speaking here today about the critical role of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation would play so that Canada lives up to the promises we have made in modern treaties. By living up to our promises, we can help secure a better future for modern treaty partners and all Canadians.

Modern treaties are a distinct expression of reconciliation between indigenous peoples and the Crown. They create enduring intergovernmental relationships that improve the lives and livelihoods of indigenous people and advance national socio-economic objectives that benefit all people in Canada.

In the 50 years since the first modern treaty was signed, the number of modern treaties has continued to grow. Since 1975, the Government of Canada and indigenous partners have worked together to negotiate 27 modern treaties that have positive and long-lasting impacts on socio-economic outcomes for indigenous people and all people in Canada. Many more are being negotiated. I am talking about positive effects like economic and infrastructure development, sustainable land management and more control over the affairs of indigenous communities by indigenous governments.

The work overseen by the commissioner for modern treaty implementation would pave the way to help future generations achieve the successes that today's generations are working toward.

*Government Orders*

Modern treaties can drive greater economic development and encourage indigenous businesses ownership. For example, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement made it possible for the first nation to acquire a significant stake in Air North, Yukon's airline. This investment provides economic sustainability for the first nation, jobs for its citizens and a transportation lifeline for the Vuntut Gwitchin people in Old Crow, which is Yukon's only fly-in community. This investment also benefits Air North's hundreds of employees and those who fly in and around the Yukon.

In Nunavut, a landmark achievement through the Nunavut Agreement has recognized Inuit rights, granting Inuit ownership of about 350,000 square kilometres of land. It provides for the establishment of Nunavut as a territory, which spans nearly two million square kilometres, one-fifth of Canada's total land mass. It has also granted mineral rights for over 35,000 square kilometres.

This empowers Inuit to participate in decision-making regarding land, water and wildlife management, ensuring sustainable resource use. More importantly, it provides Inuit with a means of participating in economic opportunities in these areas. These are examples of how modern treaties can strengthen the social, cultural and economic fabric of indigenous communities while providing benefits to surrounding communities.

We know that a strong economy, more jobs, improved infrastructure and support for clean energy can only be achieved through a full partnership with indigenous people. Economic prosperity will not come from participating in the process alone; it must include ownership and leadership. That is why we have doubled the indigenous loan guarantee program from \$5 billion to \$10 billion.

We recognize, however, that access to capital remains a challenge, especially for smaller and remote communities and those seeking to fund the initial stages of credit. That is why we are working to make equity pathways, procurement opportunities and direct investments in community-led projects more accessible and transparent.

• (1700)

Another example of a promising project is being led by the Nisga'a Nation. It is seeing booming economic development, including taking on the role as a proponent for major projects. For example, the Nisga'a Nation is codeveloping, along with its partners, the Ksi Lisims LNG project, which is a proposed floating liquefied natural gas export facility located on a site owned by the Nisga'a Nation near the community of Gingolx in British Columbia. The project will have a capacity of 12 million tonnes of LNG per year. The Nisga'a Nation is also codeveloping the Prince Rupert gas transmission pipeline. As a codeveloper of these projects, the Nisga'a Nation has meaningful input in all aspects of the project, reflecting the Nisga'a Nation's commitment to stewardship of their land and people.

Along with driving economic development, many modern treaty partners have implemented training and education programs tailored to their community needs. For instance, the Nisga'a Lisims Government has invested in vocational training programs, leading to higher employment rates and more skilled labour within the community. Its bilateral agreement with Canada—

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

The interpretation is not working.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am told that the interpretation is not working right now.

[*English*]

Interpretation is good now.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre is welcome to restart his time. He has just under four minutes left.

**Aslam Rana:** Mr. Speaker, the Nisga'a Lisims Government's bilateral agreement with Canada for the delivery of the indigenous skills and employment training program for Nisga'a citizens has resulted in the opening of the Nisga'a employment, skills and training program, which helps Nisga'a citizens thrive and succeed in a rapidly developing economy by helping them find meaningful and demand-driven employment.

Along with supporting training and skills development, modern treaties can also lead to more infrastructure development, which is critical to communities. Modern treaties also emphasize the importance of environment management and stewardship, which can lead to greater stability and control over resources.

One example of this is the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board. This board promotes the sustainable use of land and resources while preserving traditional practices, and it plays a leadership role in ensuring that the fish, forests and wildlife of the Gwich'in area remain healthy and sustainable. Its mandate is to work in the public interest, representing all parties to their modern treaty: the Gwich'in, the people of the Northwest Territories and all Canadians. This is an example of how modern treaties can support communities in finding new ways to protect, conserve and manage renewable resources.

The benefits of modern treaties in Canada are evident in improved social outcomes, building infrastructure and economic development for indigenous peoples. It is clear that these arrangements are making a real difference in people's lives. However, while significant progress has been made, there is still more to be done in implementing the commitments made in modern treaties. These successes are the good-news stories that show us what we can accomplish when we work together, but they occur against the backdrop of a persistent and crucial issue. There is an ongoing lack of awareness, understanding and action in the federal public service around modern treaty objectives, obligations and relationships. Sometimes, we still get it wrong.

*Government Orders*

When I say “costs”, I do not just mean the significant financial expenses. The biggest cost is losing chances to work together, because when implementation fails, it leads to conflict instead of partnership. When this happens, opportunities to achieve the kind of successes I spoke about earlier pass us by. This is why we need the commissioner, to give us a chance to take action today for a stronger, more resilient and more prosperous Canada tomorrow.

The proposed commissioner for modern treaty implementation would hold the federal government and future governments accountable for the implementation of modern treaties so that modern treaty partners and all Canadians are not made to bear the costs of opportunities missed because we did not live up to our promises. By living up to our promises, we can help secure a better future for modern treaty partners and all people in Canada. Modern treaties are already delivering results and making a difference; that is clear, but there is room to do even better, and the commissioner will help us do that.

• (1705)

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the hon. member about responsible and accountable government. Does he feel that this piece of legislation is trying to mask the issue that the Liberals, over the last decade, have failed to secure any modern treaties across this country and have failed to live up to the modern treaties that have been signed over the last number of years? When Stephen Harper was prime minister, we signed five modern treaties, and we worked very hard to enable the relationship between Canada and first nations.

Would the member not agree that this bill is an admission of failure on the part of the Liberal government?

**Aslam Rana:** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member. The commissioner's main job would just be to check if the federal government is fulfilling its promises under modern treaties, working in good faith with indigenous partners and upholding the honour of the Crown. The commissioner would not settle disputes or give legal advice. Instead, they would do reviews, audits and briefings to see how government programs are working and share what they find with ministers, indigenous partners and the department.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of the bill. However, we see that nowhere does it provide for authority to compel the government to do anything. The commissioner will have no power.

We worry that it will be a bit like the Commissioner of Official Languages, whose office was established 50 years ago. For 50 years now, French has been in decline and francophone assimilation has been going up. Year after year, the commissioner has expressed concern about violations of the Official Languages Act. Recently, in the latest iteration of that legislation, the commissioner was given some enforcement powers.

If the commissioner position is established, does my colleague agree that the commissioner should have the authority to compel the government to implement new treaties?

[*English*]

**Aslam Rana:** Mr. Speaker, with 27 modern treaties covering over 40% of Canada's land mass, major development and infrastructure projects depend on partnership with indigenous modern treaty partners and compliance with modern treaty obligations.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I respect what the member is saying and wanted to amplify that having a commissioner to deal with modern treaties is something that has been desired for a number of years now. We have the legislation before us. It would have a very positive impact to have an agent of Parliament who reports to Parliament in terms of the modern treaties and how modern treaties benefit Canadian society. I see it as a win-win-win.

I wonder if my friend can just comment on why he believes it is important for us as parliamentarians, on no matter what side of the House, to recognize the value of legislation and at least support the legislation going to committee and beyond.

• (1710)

**Aslam Rana:** Mr. Speaker, these treaties strengthen and reinforce self-determination by ensuring that indigenous people lead decisions that affect them in areas like land stewardship, cultural protection, resource development and participation in land management decisions, but they are only as strong as their implementation.

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for answering my last question about accountable government and acknowledging that the commissioner is indeed needed because the Liberals have failed to live up to all of their hype and rhetoric. Once again, will the member answer a simple yes or no question? Will he admit that this bill is merely an admission of failure on the Liberal government's part?

**Aslam Rana:** Mr. Speaker, not at all. This is not a failure; this is even progress that we have been making for the last 10 years in the Liberal government. Even before that, it was being done in the Harper government, so this is a continuity of that. There is not a failure happening in government.

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be up here today to talk about accountable government and speak to Bill C-10. The government has put forward this piece of legislation, and I think it is a total admission of the Liberals' failure to keep first nations included in the Canadian economy and ensure first nations are part of the Canadian conversation. Therefore, one of the trinkets they are putting forward is the commissioner position, to acknowledge that they have been a failure over the last 10 years.

*Government Orders*

I want to talk about accountable government more broadly. People back home always say, “Arnold, you are part of the government,” but I say no, I am part of the opposition. The government is generally considered to be the front bench on the government side of the House. That is the government that lives inside of our legislative chamber. Unlike in the United States, where the administration lives outside of the legislative process, in Canada, in a parliamentary system, the government lives in the front bench, and that is the Prime Minister and his cabinet.

They direct the administration of our country, and they answer directly to the legislature. They are right here, and one of the key functions of this place is to hold the government to account, principally through question period. That is probably what people see the most. That is the Government of Canada. It then branches out from there to all the ministries, the ministry offices across the country, and the folks who work for those ministries would also be part of the government. Very soon, I hope to be part of the governing party of Canada, if not part of the government, Lord willing.

I also want to inform the House that I will be splitting my time.

When we talk about accountable government, this is an important part of Canadian history. This is something that this particular place fought vehemently for at the founding of Canada in response to being a colony of Great Britain, asking and pushing for our own responsible government. I would also point out that the responsible, accountable government that was fought for at that time was immediately put to the test in the riot reparations act that the brand new Canadian Parliament passed. It then ran out to ask the Governor General to not sign it into law, because the government had suddenly realized the ramifications of the riot reparations act. The Governor General at the time asked if we wanted a responsible, accountable government or not. He signed that into law, and the negative implications of it came to fruition. Parliament then reversed itself on that particular bill.

I tell that story just to point out that the things that happen in this place have an impact on Canadian society. I hope that is the case, and I know that to be the case. The point is that the Liberal government is the government of this country, and it has duties it has to implement. The Liberal government is classic in terms of causing a problem or failing to address a problem and then, rather than fixing the problem, coming back here for another piece of legislation and saying that this is the one that will fix the particular problem. In reality, it generally has the tools and ability to fix the particular problem or manage the particular issue or maintain the relationship around the world that it currently has.

We hear from the Liberals often that a particular UN document is demanding that they do something. Maintaining the relationship with first nations across this country, ensuring they are full participants in our economy and living up to the treaty obligations this country has signed onto are just basic functions of the government. We do not need a UN document or a UN declaration to tell us to do these things. The Government of Canada should be doing these things because we are upholding the honour of the Crown and we are upholding the things that make us this country.

• (1715)

In the case of the current government, it is the Government of Canada, and it should live up to its obligations. This means treaty obligations, keeping the peace in this country, working on maintaining our borders and reducing the crime. On all of these things, many times, we see total mismanagement, and then the Liberals come in here and say, “If we only had this piece of legislation.” We see this in front of us over and over again, with bills such as Bill C-2, Bill C-8 and Bill C-11, where the government is trying to solve problems it could already solve and is the cause of.

With Bill C-10, we see a classic case of Liberal mismanagement. We failed to sign new treaties across the country and failed to manage the relationship. We have seen the resource industry stalling out because of our inability to build major projects across this country, and now the Liberals are bringing this forward.

The other thing I find very interesting is that, although I say it is the tired old Liberal government, this is a “new” government, but we have yet to see any major new pieces of legislation. This is not a new piece of legislation from a new government. It is something that is long sought-after. The Liberal government has introduced this idea over and over again. This is not something new.

We are looking forward to the removal of Liberal bail. That would be a new piece of legislation. The reversal of Liberal bail in this country would be an impressive thing in order to get crime under control. That would be new, but this is not a new idea. This is something the Liberals have talked about for a long time, and now, because their legislative agenda is kind of empty, suddenly they are going to put it forward.

I am going to turn my attention to the Bloc. I always find it interesting when I agree somewhat with the Bloc. Bloc members are saying that this commissioner would not achieve anything, that it would not do anything, which is also kind of our position on this. It would not do anything and is just spending money for the sake of spending money, which, I acknowledge, is generally the Liberal test of success: Success is how much money it spends on a particular thing.

I point to the border. When we say the Liberals are failing to maintain our border and are allowing people to run across our border and things like that, their response is not that they are doing a good job managing the border; it is that they are spending more money managing the border than the Conservatives did and are therefore being successful. They are not. The problem is that the border is porous and unmanaged by the Liberals. If we could spend zero dollars to manage the border, I would be in favour of that as well. The amount of money the Liberals spend to manage the border is irrelevant if we are not getting the results we are looking for. Fundamental to an accountable government is who is responsible.

This commissioner is a distraction from the responsibilities of the government. The government is responsible for maintaining these relationships and cannot outsource it to a commissioner. It cannot outsource it. I guess the same goes for the Parliamentary Budget Officer, for example. Does his advice get followed by the Liberal government? No, not at all. Will this commissioner's advice be followed by the Liberal government? Maybe, or maybe not. The fundamental issue is the results the government has caused.

We see it over and over again, whether it is with the Liberals' bail system, which they totally made a hatchet job of, border security or cybersecurity. Over and over again, the Liberals fail to be responsible for the issues the government is supposed to be responsible for in this country. We see a failure, and then suddenly the Liberals will say we need a particular piece of legislation in order to fix it. When we then look at that piece of legislation, it generally does something other than what they say it will do, or it fails to change anything.

I just want to put on the record that, in some weird way, we agree with the Bloc on this, that the commissioner would not do anything. I also want to close by stating that the bill is an admission by the Liberal government that its inabilities over the last number of years have led to failure.

• (1720)

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that some Conservative members in the past have delayed indigenous legislation.

Seeing that there are certain modern treaty partners in Conservative ridings, like the Manitoulin Island first nations, the Tsawwassen First Nation and the Whitecap Dakota Nation, can the member opposite confirm that the relevant members have talked to or will talk to the modern treaty partners? What assurance will he provide that his party will work to pass the bill quickly, without any unnecessary delays, to help modern treaty partners in their respective ridings?

**Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member listened to my speech; however, I would remind her that the previous Conservative government signed five modern treaties over the course of the Conservative tenure of governing this country. Our relationship with first nations was managed. Our relationship to get major energy projects built in this country was a success. We look forward to the day when a Conservative government rules this country once again.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, throughout the day, we have heard a lot of misrepresentation of reality, if I can put it that way.

The Conservatives say that Harper signed five treaties. Well, he was elected prime minister in 2006, and one of the treaties was signed in 2006. He does get the credit; technically, he did sign it. Then the Conservatives say that the Liberals have not done any. That is not true. We have signed treaties. The Conservatives just have not done their homework, or they are intentionally trying to mislead the House. I suspect they have not done their homework.

### *Government Orders*

My question to the member is this: Would he not agree that having an independent agent of Parliament who is supported by indigenous community leaders is something that all members should be supporting? It appears that just the Conservatives in the House are opposing it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the member, the use of the term “intentionally misleading the House”, in almost all situations, is dangerously close to the line. I invite members to be careful when they respond to not do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

With that being said, I recognize the member for Peace River—Westlock.

**Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Speaker, I would point out again that it is estimated that the commissioner would cost the Canadian government \$2 million. That is deficit spending, I would point out. The fact is that first nations communities, along with all communities across this country, are struggling to put food on the table and to pay their heating bills.

Saying that we should do more deficit spending and deflate our money more does not, I think, help anybody.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives boast about being the best at reconciliation. This is what we have heard today. However, four months ago, they supported the Liberals' Bill C-5, a bill dealing with nation-building projects that went against consultations with first nations.

Today, they are telling us that, in the Harper era, they signed more treaties than the Liberals, so they are the best. Today, they are telling us that they do not really agree with Bill C-10, using bureaucracy as an excuse. They may be the best at accountability, but only when it suits them.

My question for my colleague is simple. Are the Conservatives not afraid that, in the event that they return to power, they would have to be accountable to a commissioner who we hope will have real teeth?

[*English*]

**Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Speaker, that comes just after all the nice things I said about the Bloc.

I would point out that, particularly on Bill C-5, we made significant amendments to ensure that, for example, the Lobbying Act would not be undermined by the bill. I understand that the Conservative members on committee for that bill made sure the projects would still be subject to conflict of interest and lobbying guidelines, and a number of other acts that apply. It would exempt them from Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, the anti-pipeline bill and the anti-tanker bill, respectively, because we think that those two pieces of legislation are standing in the way.

*Government Orders*

If the Liberals are willing to make an exemption from their own pieces of legislation again, an admission of Liberal failure, we would be happy to support that.

**Brendan Hanley (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge first of all, with respect, that we are gathered on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people, and that these territories, unceded and unsurrendered, have been a place of meeting and exchange for centuries.

I am pleased to speak today to the proposed legislation to establish a commissioner for modern treaty implementation and what the next steps in the process would be. The bill is a priority for each modern treaty nation in the Yukon, and I am pleased to say that we have in the Yukon 11 self-governing nations with modern treaties.

The proposed legislation is timely, even on its reintroduction, because we should be reminded that the bill was introduced a year ago as Bill C-77 and died with prorogation. The need, though, is even more pressing now than before. The world is changing. Canada needs to be ready, and that means building an economy that can withstand whatever comes our way. We are doing that by creating more space and opportunities for indigenous leadership, innovation and economic inclusion.

The rights and collaboration of modern treaty partners are top of mind in all this work, so the bill represents a meaningful step forward in the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation and to the full and fair implementation of modern treaties.

Modern treaties are not just legal documents; they are foundational agreements that affirm indigenous rights, support self-government and build a framework for respectful nation-to-nation relationships, and they must be honoured with both word and action.

Setting up and rolling out the commissioner's office and making sure it works well are key. The next steps in how we build this office would shape the trust, effectiveness and lasting relationships needed to keep Canada's modern treaty promises.

My colleagues have highlighted the ways in which we have worked with modern treaty partners to codevelop Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy, as well as an independent oversight body and the role of a commissioner tasked with holding Canada accountable for the implementation of modern treaties, and to shine a light on how federal programs and policies are or are not supporting their implementation.

The bill is about more than oversight, though; it is about trust. It is about ensuring that the commitments made in modern treaties are not only respected but also actively upheld with transparency, with accountability and with the full weight of Parliament behind them. This is especially important to the Yukon, where, as I stated, 11 of the 14 first nations have signed modern treaties and self-government agreements. Even in the Yukon, challenges persist when it comes to federal implementation. Too often, progress is slowed, and the bill would respond directly to those concerns.

We have worked closely with indigenous partners every step of the way to determine next steps. Codeveloping the proposal and legislation together was essential, not only to create a mutually

agreed-upon process but also as a reflection of what Yukon first nations and others have long called for: a dedicated independent body to ensure that Canada lives up to the spirit and intent of its treaty processes, and a meaningful part of our journey toward reconciliation. As we go forward, the collaboration would continue.

Given the importance of the proposed new role, the appointed commissioner must have the confidence of both Parliament and modern treaty partners. That is why the appointment process would include direct consultation with modern treaty partners, going beyond the usual steps for other agents of Parliament. After receiving the recommendation from the minister following consultations, the Governor in Council would consult with the leader of every recognized party in the Senate and in the House of Commons. It would then seek the approval of the appointment by resolution of the Senate and the House of Commons. Once this is complete, the commissioner would be appointed under the Great Seal.

The steps I have outlined today are extensive and robust, and this is by design. These steps have been specifically requested by modern treaty partners to cement the credibility of the commissioner. These steps are in line with the appointment process for all other agents of Parliament, with the addition of the consultation of modern treaty partners.

Once the proposed appointment process happens, the next step would be standing up the commissioner's office. The commissioner would have the discretion to design and operationalize their office as they see fit. This step in the process would include the designation of the location of the head office by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. In engagement sessions, modern treaty partners asked for confirmation of funding to support the commissioner. It is integral that commissioners would be appropriately funded to carry out their work and mandate.

Once fully operational, the commissioner and their office would begin working to fulfill the mandate in the proposed bill by conducting reviews and/or performance audits of any activity carried out by the Government of Canada that relates to modern treaty implementation. The commissioner would determine the procedures, terms and methodology to be followed for each review or performance audit, after engaging with the relevant modern treaty partners. Consistent with other agents of Parliament, all final reports of reviews and performance audits would be submitted directly to the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament for tabling.

• (1730)

It is anticipated that the commissioner would complete their first audit or review report in the third year of the office's operation and would continue to complete reports of reviews or performance audits in subsequent years. Additionally, each calendar year, the commissioner would be required to prepare an annual report to Parliament. The annual report would be provided to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, who would submit it to the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament for tabling. This is intended to give Parliament a direct line of sight into the operations of the commissioner and their office in the same way as with other agents of Parliament.

The work of the commissioner and the processes I have just shared have been specifically designed to, first and foremost, provide credibility, transparency and independence for the commissioner and their office. I hope the summary of the next steps, including the appointment of the commissioner, the standing up of their office and the completion of their first reports, has shed some light on our plan as we go forward.

Before I conclude, I want to highlight how important codevelopment has been in working and in moving the initiative forward, and I want to stress how vital it is to keep working closely with indigenous partners as the legislation moves ahead. As former AFN Yukon regional chief Kluane Adamek has said,

The creation of a Modern Treaty Commissioner marks a step forward in honouring the commitments Canada has made to First Nations and upholding the spirit and intent of these agreements. I commend the parties for this important work and strongly urge the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure this body is fully independent, adequately supported and resourced, and has the necessary powers to effectively fulfill its mandate.

The new role would create a significant shift in Crown-indigenous modern treaty relationships so that future governments are held accountable to Parliament for our modern treaty relationships, objectives and obligations.

It is essential to establish the commissioner's office with care and transparency, working closely alongside modern treaty partners. Doing this would help build trust so that the office can effectively carry out its important mandate. Getting it right means honouring the promises made and strengthening relationships based on respect and partnership.

We are hopeful that this important and transformative step will help Canada become a better modern treaty partner, one that is more trustworthy, accountable and transparent in its modern treaty relationships.

*Meegwetch, qujannamiik, gunalchéesh, shâw nithän, sógá sênlá', marsi cho.*

• (1735)

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as repeated throughout the day by me and my colleagues, Conservatives support modern treaties.

Bill C-10 would establish an independent commissioner and office, but the creation of this new office would add an extra layer of bureaucracy and costs by the government, and not a guarantee of meaningful change.

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With regard to Bill C-10, on behalf of indigenous people throughout Canada, my question is as follows: What happens if a department continues to ignore treaty obligations?

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question.

Modern treaty partners across the country are looking forward to the passage of the bill. It is important, as it is a way to ensure that there would be accountability. They have been let down many times by many governments on the implementation of modern treaties.

We all stand to be accountable for implementation of modern treaties, including the signing of modern treaties as we go forward. This would be the role of the modern treaty commissioner.

**Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member is from the Yukon, and I cannot help but notice that there are so many communities from the Yukon that would be helped by the legislation.

I am sure the member has heard advocacy from Yukon first nations leaders over his time as a member of Parliament. I wonder if the member would share some of the information and advocacy from the first nations leaders of the Yukon who have been asking, over years and maybe generations, for this kind of legislation to move forward.

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations for his tireless work on this file, including during the last Parliament, and for his advocacy.

The piece of legislation before us is an incredibly important one for Yukon first nations. I have heard repeatedly, in my four-plus years of holding the privileged position as a member of Parliament, from every self-governing first nation, about how important it is, not just for the position of commissioner but for robust and timely implementation of treaties. This is ongoing work in progress. It is often frustratingly slow from their point of view.

However, we are making progress. We need to continue to be held accountable and to commit, for whatever government, as we look forward in the decades to come, is in power, to ensuring that the commitment is sustainable and is sustained.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain how we can possibly trust the Liberal government and take it seriously right now.

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This is the same government that totally betrayed first nations four months ago when it failed to consult them on a project in the national interest. Members will recall Bill C-5, which was passed on closure with the support of the official opposition, the Conservative Party. The Conservatives do not brag too much about that, especially since it was a new government that was four weeks old. It was really unprecedented.

To come back to my question for my colleague, I wonder how we can trust people who did not consult first nations four months ago and who are also telling us today that they are going to establish a commissioner who will be an observer with no teeth.

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. Perhaps my colleague has overlooked the fact that the relationship with indigenous partners is part and parcel of Bill C-5. This partnership is essential for projects in the national interest, and this government has committed to it. I hope that is something that all parties in the House will support.

[*English*]

**Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Guelph.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the traditional, unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

I am pleased to speak about the proposed commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The creation of this new position represents a commitment to transparency, to accountability and to building trust with modern treaty partners and Canadians at large. As my colleagues have mentioned, the legislation before us today would establish an independent agent of Parliament charged with holding the Government of Canada accountable for living up to our modern treaty obligations, objectives and, most importantly, relationships.

The "agent" status is significant. The agents of Parliament each focus on protecting vital principles of our country. For example, the Auditor General conducts audits of government departments and agencies to check if public funds are used effectively. The Privacy Commissioner protects Canadians' personal information. The Information Commissioner upholds the public's right to access government information, and the Commissioner of Official Languages protects the rights of Canadians to use either official language within federal institutions.

There are currently six agents of Parliament in Canada, and each one plays a crucial role in upholding democratic principles, accountability and protecting the rights of Canadians. However, despite the work that these agents of Parliament do, we know that there is a gap. We know that the rights of indigenous peoples in this country are not always protected or respected. Canada's new government is trying to do better on this front. We have been working together with indigenous peoples to build and strengthen nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown and government-to-government relationships based on respect, the recognition of rights and the creation of partnerships to build a better future for all people in Canada.

Modern treaties recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, resources and governance. What is more, modern treaties create the kinds of meaningful relationships that are fundamental to advancing reconciliation and shared prosperity. It is fitting then that the next agent of Parliament should be dedicated to strengthening these vital constitutional relationships.

This legislation would put us on a new pathway. We would be establishing a parliamentary institution focused on oversight and accountability for federal modern treaty implementation. The commissioner would lend a critical eye to Canada's actions in this space with the aim of advancing systemic change to improve implementation effectiveness. In practical terms, this means it will create transparency. The commissioner would shine a light on areas where the Government of Canada is not addressing persistent structural modern treaty implementation issues. By doing this, it would make Canada's actions in implementing modern treaties visible to all people in Canada, helping to hold the government to account.

In this way, the commissioner would help reduce process inefficiencies, supporting modern and effective modern treaty implementation and the positive economic, social and cultural impacts that it would have. The bottom line is that the commissioner would help Canada become a better treaty partner.

I will explain.

At its core, transparency is about clarity and openness. A commissioner dedicated to oversight of modern treaty implementation would make sure that indigenous partners, Parliament and all people in Canada have access to essential information regarding modern treaties. This is not for us to point fingers at one another, but to point us toward a better future for all treaty partners.

The proposed legislation before us today includes the same statutory access to power as granted to the Auditor General. This is the gold standard for access to information. This would give the commissioner open access to the information they will need to do their job, including information that is necessary to fulfill their mandate and carry out their duties and functions. Giving the commissioner this level of access to information will make the role more transparent, credible and trusted. It will also go a long way to fostering an environment of trust and mutual respect with modern treaty partners.

Members can imagine a scenario where all people in Canada, and indigenous communities in particular, are actively informed about how Canada is implementing its treaty commitments. This visibility is crucial. It supports communities so that they can meaningfully participate in the process.

*Government Orders*

● (1740)

Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency. The commissioner would be responsible for providing oversight of government activities related to treaty implementation by reporting these findings to Parliament in the form of reviews and performance audits. Reporting measures increase accountability by tracking performance and making government modern treaty processes more visible.

Reporting also allows us to see where the government is excelling and, crucially, where we are coming up short. As an agent, the commissioner would have a direct reporting relationship to Parliament. Parliament can then hold the government accountable, helping turn the promises made in modern treaties from words on paper into living commitments that reflect our dedication to reconciliation.

In this context, the commissioner is not an expense. It is an investment in Canada, in trust, in accountability, in efficiency and in a more just and prosperous future for all Canadians. Strong accountability measures promote responsible government. They promote credibility and results-oriented action. Together, they translate to trust, and trust is what will enable us to build a future that is not bound by the failures of the past.

By prioritizing transparency and accountability, the commissioner would help to build a foundation of trust between the government and modern treaty partners. In fact, a strong foundation of trust has already been established in the codevelopment process for this legislation. The proposal for the commissioner was codeveloped with modern treaty partners from the ground up. As my colleagues have mentioned, more than 130 partners engaged on this proposed legislation. This proactive engagement and collaboration not only demonstrates respect but makes sure that government action is reflective of community priorities.

When this legislation passes, we will continue to work hand in hand with modern treaty partners to support the success of the commissioner. The trust we have built throughout this process will serve as a strong foundation for the future. By facilitating regular consultations with modern treaty partners, the commissioner can make sure their voices are not just heard but actively integrated into the decision-making process.

This partnership approach means that the perspectives of modern treaty partners would be captured in the work of the commissioner and that their stories and experiences with federal implementation would be shared with all of us as parliamentarians.

There is a long road ahead of us to live up to our commitments to modern treaty partners. It is clear to me that we cannot get there without building and nurturing a relationship based on transparency, accountability and trust. That is what makes this legislation so important. Oversight, accountability and transparency measures have upfront costs, but they are key to supporting effective implementation, the kind that reduces long-term risks and prevents disputes and litigation over the medium and long run.

A commissioner for modern treaty implementation would promote transparency with access to information. They would hold the government accountable to Parliament and indigenous partners by

conducting investigations and publishing reports. They would also play a vital role in fostering trust with modern treaty partners through engagement, so that our commitments to indigenous peoples are honoured with integrity. I would ask the House to pass the bill without delay.

*Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.*

● (1745)

**Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the hon. member's speech, she said, at one point, that the commissioner for modern treaty implementation would provide a critical eye and help hold the government to account. First, I believe, in Parliament, it is the opposition's job to hold the government to account.

Second, if the government does not even respond to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's critical eye, why would Canadians believe it would respond to the commissioner's critical eye?

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed the opposition's role to ensure that the government is held accountable, but these agents of Parliament actually help all parliamentarians fulfill their roles. They help the government. They help the opposition. They help us find non-partisan ways of sharing information within government. They hold governments across mandates to account and provide us with the kind of institutional knowledge we should have as parliamentarians on the biggest issues of our day. When it comes to looking at our budgets, when it comes to implementing modern treaties or when it comes to considering privacy and information, that is what our commissioners are for.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, five years ago, we learned about the shocking death of Joyce Echaquan, a 37-year-old wife and mother of seven. Five years have passed since she filmed and broadcast her experience with racism in a deeply tragic, but also infuriating, form. We remember her and what she went through. We stand with the Atikamekw nation and indigenous peoples in the fight against racism in all its forms, including within our institutions, as evidenced by so many personal accounts from first nations people.

Bill C-10 creates the position of commissioner. It is a small step in the right direction, but should this position not be accompanied by the ability to make binding recommendations?

● (1750)

[*English*]

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my concerns about many of the instances across our past in which Canada has fallen short in terms of the safety, rights and protections that are owed to indigenous peoples. It is one of the reasons our government has prioritized reconciliation and the journey that this is over the course of years and decades.

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I thank the member for his comment that the legislation is a step in the right direction. I think it adds to work that continues to be done on UNDRIP, as well as work that continues to be done around indigenous languages and culture, indigenous health and education, infrastructure and economic opportunity. These are all areas that we need to continue to build on our path.

**Brendan Hanley (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent speech and her commitment to seeing the legislation supported and passed.

I am a little distressed by what I heard from some of my Conservative friends, who have called the bill a distraction. Perhaps they do not realize that this has been called for over many years, really going back to the beginning of modern treaty nations, and that this is codeveloped legislation.

Could my colleague comment on whether she sees the bill as a distraction or whether she sees it as a key to economic development and a link to some of our other major pieces of legislation?

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree that the legislation is fundamental to prosperity for all Canadians. We need to have stability. We need to have predictability. We need to understand the treaties that underpin the relationship we have with indigenous peoples. When we have that transparency, when we have that predictability, it actually lets us all move forward toward greater prosperity and a stronger economy.

I think about the work we are doing at the moment around building major projects and building affordable homes across Canada. These pieces do not just touch indigenous communities; they have indigenous communities as a central part of the work that we need to do together. Treaty implementation is a fundamental part of that, and we need to continue to prioritize it.

[*Translation*]

**Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *kwe kwe, ullukkut, taanishi*.

I acknowledge that we are gathered today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

I also acknowledge that I represent the riding of Guelph, which is located on the traditional territory of the Attiwonderonk and Haudenosaunee peoples and that the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation are signatories to Treaty No. 3, where this territory is situated.

Today, I am honoured to rise to speak in support of Bill C-10, which seeks to establish a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The commissioner for modern treaty implementation act gives us an opportunity to strengthen our ties, propose solutions to affirm rights and improve the quality of life for modern treaty partners. It is also vital to upholding Canada's commitments to indigenous peoples by implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Our country is taking steps to fully embrace true nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-Crown and government-to-government relationships based on the recognition of indigenous rights, respect, co-operation

and partnership, as well as the fulfillment of our promises and commitments.

Modern treaties are agreements that form part of Canada's constitutional framework. They represent a distinct expression of reconciliation. The 27 modern treaties between the Crown and indigenous peoples cover more than 40% of Canada's land mass. The Supreme Court of Canada has stated on many occasions that modern treaties are essential to reconciliation between indigenous peoples and the Crown. Modern treaties define specific indigenous rights as legally distinct rights, and they have been painstakingly negotiated and agreed to by Canada and indigenous peoples.

Modern treaties are, therefore, a unique and intersectional element of the distinctions-based approach, which includes first nations, Inuit and Métis, as recognized in Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act action plan.

Upholding the honour of the Crown by quickly and effectively implementing modern treaties is an ongoing process, one that can and should be supported and advanced by the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and our action plan. As many members know, UNDRIP is one of the elements that guides our work, particularly since the act was passed in 2021. We have worked with indigenous partners to respect and uphold indigenous rights, advance indigenous visions of self-determination and put UNDRIP into action. Together, we are entering a new era of indigenous relations and building genuine nation-to-nation, Inuit-to-Crown, and government-to-government relationships.

Pursuant to article 37 of UNDRIP, it is imperative that the Government of Canada and indigenous peoples work together to co-develop legislative and policy processes, tools, and mechanisms to ensure that modern treaties are recognized, observed and enforced, or in other words, implemented.

The announcement of Canada's collaborative modern treaty implementation policy in February 2023 marked an important milestone in implementing the declaration. The policy was developed in accordance with the declaration and set out a commitment to continue working on shared priorities, including the establishment of the intergovernmental leaders' forum, and to co-develop an independent oversight mechanism, namely the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

Indigenous modern treaty partners have been calling for a mechanism like this for over 20 years to hold the federal government accountable for fulfilling its modern treaty obligations. The establishment of an oversight mechanism was also included in the UNDRIP action plan. The commissioner is directly linked to the ninth item in the list of indigenous modern treaty partners' priorities in the UNDRIP action plan, which states that one of the key priorities is to “[c]o-develop recommendations to establish a credible, effective, sustainable and independent Modern Treaty oversight mechanism to hold the federal government accountable to Parliament by September 2023”.

• (1755)

This is exactly what we are proposing. The commissioner is a response to these calls and an indicator of the government's progress in implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The commissioner would be an impartial agent of Parliament tasked with ensuring that the government is held accountable for the commitments made in modern treaties. Our promise became a reality thanks to the successful co-creation of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. Today, we have an opportunity to keep this momentum going and embody the spirit of UNDRIP and our action plan by enshrining the commissioner in law.

If passed, this bill would significantly contribute to guaranteeing that the Government of Canada complies with article 37 of UNDRIP, as well as with its commitments and responsibilities under modern treaties. In accordance with section 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, this bill was developed in partnership with indigenous peoples in order to ensure that it is consistent with UNDRIP.

Meeting the Government of Canada's legal obligations to indigenous modern treaty partners and working together to renew relationships are critical to addressing some of the persistent and systemic injustices faced by indigenous peoples in Canada. The work of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation will drive a significant shift in the implementation landscape, ensuring that Canada is held accountable for its modern treaty obligations, objectives and relationships. These efforts align with UNDRIP.

By ensuring that the Government of Canada is accountable for its modern treaty commitments, the commissioner will enable modern treaty partners to unlock the full potential of these agreements as drivers of economic, social and cultural growth. This will create the kind of strong relationships with modern treaty partners that we all need in order to advance shared priorities.

This bill can help indigenous peoples achieve their goals and aspirations by fulfilling Canada's promise to support their rights, in accordance with the UN declaration. We all know that there is still much work to be done to fulfill our commitments. Passing this bill will help to ensure that this happens and that our priorities reflect the realities and current needs of indigenous peoples.

The Government of Canada will continue to work as a partner to promote the prosperity and well-being of indigenous communities, advance reconciliation, and renew our relationships. This bill will greatly contribute to strengthening relations between Canada and

### *Government Orders*

indigenous modern treaty partners. This bill will help us continue to build a strong future for indigenous peoples across the country.

As I have pointed out, the jointly drafted bill is consistent with a solid cornerstone of our commitments, and that cornerstone is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is in this spirit that I invite hon. members here today to vote in favour of this bill. We owe it to all indigenous modern treaty partners, who are counting on us to fulfill our commitments and promises.

*Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.*

• (1800)

[*English*]

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is really fascinating to hear the revisionist history from members across the way. It is very clear what the record of the Conservative Party is: We signed five modern treaties in a six-year period. I am sure it is quite embarrassing for them that they have been in government for 10 years and have been unable to get a single one completed.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** That is not true.

**Grant Jackson:** Mr. Speaker, it is true. The member for Winnipeg North is leading this revisionist history, but those are the facts. One of them is in my constituency, with the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation.

Why do the Liberals prioritize a list of cycled-through ministers on this file? Some of them have failed upward. Others have left in disgrace. Meanwhile, nothing has been done on this file. Why is the Liberals' only solution to getting anything done that they need to add another bureaucracy? That is a typical Liberal tradition. Why can they not just get the job done and get the treaties signed?

**Dominique O'Rourke:** Mr. Speaker, the language being used in this context, frankly, is offensive.

What we are trying to do is show transparency and accountability on treaty obligations. It is long overdue. Indigenous partners have been asking for this for 20 years. The consultations have been extensive. We are going to meet our responsibilities to the United Nations and to all our treaty partners.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, with whom I have the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. I congratulate her on her speech.

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I would like to raise an important question. Naturally, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-10, whose implementation is crucial. That said, Liberal MP Robert Falcon Ouellette expressed some concerns about Bill C-5, which was passed last spring. He called it “a dangerous step backward”. He also said, “For indigenous peoples, this bill is not a step forward. It is a modern version of the Indian Act.” He opposes that.

What can a commissioner with no power to enforce compliance do against a government that passes a law violating the basic rights of indigenous peoples, under a gag order, and with support from the Conservatives? It is not an easy question, but I am putting it out there.

**Dominique O'Rourke:** Mr. Speaker, we enshrined in Bill C-5 respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and extensive consultations with first nations, who are the rights holders in these areas.

The creation of this agent of Parliament position, which we are proposing today, also includes a review by indigenous peoples after five years and after seven years. This would help ensure that indigenous peoples are satisfied with the commissioner and with our transparency.

• (1805)

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the temptation is to challenge the Conservatives when they say, “zero”. I suggest that the Whitecap Dakota Nation is one they might want to do a little research on, not to mention things such as the Manitoba Métis Federation, which, technically, is signed off. They can talk to President Chartrand, and I am sure he would be more than happy to give a full update on it. There are others, as well, where consultations with indigenous leadership in terms of reserves and other things need to be approved before it can be brought in.

The essence of what we should be talking about here is the fact that we have indigenous community leaders from coast to coast who recognize the value of Bill C-10 and want it to be passed. It is only the Conservative Party in Parliament that seems to not value Bill C-10.

**Dominique O'Rourke:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's clarification.

Let me be clear: The commissioner could do reviews, audits and briefings to see how government programs are working and share what they find with ministers, indigenous partners and Parliament, including members opposite. Earlier in this conversation, one of the members opposite said that we could do this in question period. How many questions have we had in this session of Parliament on our obligations to our treaty partners? Any audit in any government would have a follow-up like this to make sure that the organization was meeting its audit findings.

**Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the member of Parliament for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge and as a proud Métis Canadian, one who wants to see first nations, Métis and all Canadians thrive and prosper. The opposite has in fact happened under 10 years of Liberal govern-

ment. Crime is up, the cost of living is up, food bank usage is up, and hopelessness is up. The economy is down, opportunities are down, and employment is down. The malaise that is felt in Canada from the Pacific to the Atlantic and Arctic oceans is felt by all communities. It has been experienced among indigenous and non-indigenous people alike.

Bill C-10 is the latest example of what the government does best: announce, reannounce, repackage and then do nothing. It proposes a new bureaucracy, a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. This is something that sounds nice and reads nicely in a press release, but when we open the box, we see nothing. We see no real powers, no real accountability and no tangible outcomes, just more process and delay.

Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, are right to be frustrated. The government has had 10 years to act but has delivered zero new modern treaties. That is a fact.

In contrast, the Conservative government under former prime minister Stephen Harper produced five modern treaties that were signed in six years. Therefore, I ask what exactly the commissioner is supposed to do that has not already been done or that should not already be happening. Would the commissioner build new homes? Would the commissioner provide clean drinking water? Would the commissioner hire police officers or ensure that indigenous policing is treated as the essential service it is? No, the commissioner would not, because they would have no power. The mandate would be to strengthen relationships and uphold the honour of the Crown, but the commissioner could not compel action, enforce treaties or even table reports to Parliament without waiting for the minister's permission. In fact, Parliament itself could not direct what they should review or audit. Who would this office report to? It would be the very people it is meant to oversee. This is not oversight; it is a public relations exercise.

Let us be honest about what is really happening. The government knows that it has failed indigenous people again. It knows the Auditor General has issued dozens of reports, not just one or two, but over 14 just since 2015, detailing how the government has been failing indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples in everything from housing to clean water and treaty implementation. What has the government done with these reports? It has ignored them. Now indigenous peoples, many of them rightly frustrated, are calling for more oversight, not because they believe that Ottawa will suddenly fix things but because government has refused to deliver on its own obligations. I do not blame indigenous leaders for their frustration. I do not blame them for trying every option. I do blame the Liberal government. Instead of fixing the real problem, which is that its own departments are not doing their jobs, it decided to create another layer of bureaucracy to give the illusion of progress.

*Government Orders*

We already have systems in place: the courts, the Auditor General, parliamentary committees, deputy ministers, performance frameworks, oversight committees, secretariats and internal audits. The government does not need another reminder that it is failing. It needs to start doing its job. The Auditor General has already laid out how to fix this, going back two decades. In 2005, there was a report on the treaty land entitlement obligations. In 2006, there was a report on the B.C. treaty process. In 2013, there was an audit on modern treaty implementation. In 2016, there was a report on the Labrador and Inuit Land Claims Agreement.

• (1810)

The Liberal government has had a map, but instead of following it, they got lost in their own maze of offices, titles and press conferences. While they were doing that, the communities were suffering, treaty rights were not being honoured, fiscal transfers were delayed, infrastructure was crumbling, the police were underfunded and housing was inadequate. Why do they think one more office will suddenly change anything? What might actually change something is accountability. This is what we should be asking: Who has been fired for all these failures? Who has been demoted? Which departments have been reorganized? What consequences have been imposed on those who have failed to implement the treaties that have already been signed? None. Zero.

As my colleague, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, himself a former treaty negotiator, said, why would anyone believe a powerless commissioner will get results when years of direct negotiation with the government haven't? He is right. The root is not oversight. The issue is a government that refuses to be accountable, that prefers symbolic gestures over real results. Let us remember what these treaties mean. Modern treaties are nation-to-nation agreements. They are not symbolic. They are legally binding. Indigenous governments negotiated hard for them. They traded undefined rights and titles for legal certainty under the laws of Canada. This is paramountcy. They came to the table in good faith. It is Canada that has not been holding up its end of the bargain.

Now, the Liberals are proposing a commissioner whose job would be to watch the government break its own promises politely. This is not reconciliation; this is theatre. Under the current government, and now under the new Prime Minister, we have seen more bureaucracy than ever: a defence investment agency duplicating what the DND already does; a \$13-billion housing bureaucracy while no homes are built; and now this, a modern treaty commissioner with no teeth.

This is all for what? The Parliamentary Budget Officer just called this government's spending unsustainable. Canada now spends more on interest payments than it does on health care. Our economy is the slowest-growing in the G7, with the highest unemployment. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, who took office in March, has not even tabled a budget in seven months. Two-thirds of the fiscal year is already gone and we have no budget, but somehow they are going to find money for another office, another round of talking points and another layer of bureaucracy that accomplishes nothing.

Canadians are tired of it; indigenous peoples are tired of it, and Conservatives are tired of it. We do not need a commissioner to tell

us the government is failing; we already know that. We do not need another office to report on reports that are already gathering dust on bureaucratic shelves, and we certainly do not need a Prime Minister who refuses to lead.

Here is what we do need: We need the department to do its job; we need ministers who are accountable; we need indigenous peoples to be respected as equal partners, not clients of the state; and we need to uphold the honour of the Crown by fulfilling the promises we have made, not creating new positions to tell us we did not.

Reconciliation is not measured in how many offices we open in Ottawa; it is measured in homes built, water cleaned, treaties honoured, safety delivered and prosperity shared. Let us stop the charade. Let us scrap this hollow bill and get back to doing the hard work of government. Common-sense Conservatives will continue to stand with indigenous Canadians, with treaty partners and with all Canadians, believing in results, not reports; in leadership, not lip service; and in a government that does its job instead of just expanding itself.

• (1815)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we start to wind down the debate today, it has become apparently clear and somewhat sad that the Conservative Party has taken the position to vote against Bill C-10. This is legislation that puts into place an independent agent of Parliament that will be a strong voice in dealing with modern treaties. The Conservatives, for political and partisan reasons, have decided that only they believe this is a bad idea. We have indigenous leaders from coast to coast to coast who want to see the legislation pass. We have every other political entity inside Parliament wanting to see legislation of this nature, but the Conservatives have made their decision: They do not like the legislation.

Does the member feel any guilt at all in terms of rejecting what indigenous leaders across Canada want to see made into law?

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, I think indigenous leaders are responding to the lack of action and respect regarding them and treaties. That is what they are responding to. They are grasping at straws, asking, "Let us do something." Why? It is because the Liberals are not doing their job. What is the Liberals' solution here again? It is to build another bureaucracy to do something and to report not to Parliament but to the minister. That is not accountability; that is just another way to give plum jobs to their friends.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague, with whom I served for a long time on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

When the Conservatives criticize and say that this is nothing but red tape, we have reason to be concerned.

The Bloc Québécois supports the principle of the bill. However, we see that it does not provide for the power to enforce compliance. It kind of reminds me of the Commissioner of Official Languages, as I said earlier, whose office was established over 50 years ago in 1970. Since then, French has been in decline and the assimilation rate of francophones has been going up. Year after year, the commissioner has expressed concern and criticized the government, but the government is not doing any better. It seems like things are only getting worse.

If a commissioner position is established, does my colleague agree that the incumbent should at least have the authority to compel the government to comply with the early treaties?

• (1820)

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. We served together on the committee.

I truly believe that we do not need this position. It is a new position created to produce reports like the ones already being produced by the Auditor General and the courts. We do not need yet another thing that will make everything more complicated and slow the processes down even more.

[English]

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was nice to hear the thoughts of my colleague from Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge regarding Bill C-10. This bill would establish an independent commissioner and office. The Conservatives support modern treaties, but our concern is that the proposed legislation to establish an independent commissioner and office would add another layer of bureaucracy and cost to the government.

Does the member's opposition to Bill C-10 reflect the unwillingness to have accountability and/or oversight?

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are not at all in opposition to accountability. We are for accountability, oversight and respecting treaty rights. We just have not seen this. We are concerned about another level of bureaucracy slowing things down. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, the one thing the Liberals are great at is gumming things up with red tape.

We are feeling it with projects. On the topic of resource projects, many first nations communities need resource projects, and what are the Liberals doing? They are strangling the prosperity of first nations. That is something the Liberals could address that would make a difference.

**Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to share some thoughts on something that has been a lifelong passion for me, and that is ensuring the implementation of treaty rights and inherent rights in Canada.

In fact, besides studying treaties in law school and being a professor of aboriginal and treaty rights at Cape Breton University, I was honoured to be given the opportunity to be the first-ever treaty education lead for the province of Nova Scotia. While doing that job, I was honoured and privileged to be able to do some work with some of the treaty commissions that are already set up in certain provinces across Canada. We have the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan. We have the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. We have the B.C. Treaty Commission. I had the chance to meet with all of them and hear about the important work and the successes they are having across this country.

In fact, last week, or two weeks ago, I was in Treaty 4 territory in Manitoba, where treaty commissioner Loretta Ross told me that one of the best things the treaty commissioners were able to do there was to ensure treaty education was offered in all schools across Manitoba. Largely championed by Premier Wab Kinew, we have been able to see treaty education become mandatory in the province of Manitoba.

These treaty commissioners are doing some amazing work. I would invite the Conservatives who have been saying they are not going to support this legislation to reach out to them and hear about that important work in advancing reconciliation through building trust, through ensuring collaboration as treaty partners and through educating the public on the importance of sharing that we are all treaty people in this country.

The overall purpose and objective of this important piece of legislation is to ensure oversight and accountability to ensure the treaties we have signed are implemented. There are more than 27 modern treaties in this country, covering more than 40% of the land mass across this country.

Indeed, what we have heard from stakeholders and leaders is quite simply that we need to implement these treaties we have signed and made promises on. All we are asking, and they are asking, in the most simplest of terms is that we honour and obey, and if we make a promise we keep it. I think if we asked any indigenous nation across this great country what is important to them, they would ask us to honour the treaties, implement the treaties and be treaty partners.

I am troubled by what I am hearing from the Conservatives and the narrative that we are creating some sort of bureaucracy and that it would cost too much money to implement what we have signed on to in the 27 modern-day treaties. They talk about bureaucracy and they talk about money, but what they are not going to talk about is that when they go home tonight to their children, they are going to quite simply tell them that if they make a promise, they should keep that promise. That is what we are talking about.

This is not a surprise to me. I am the son of one of the original drafters of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, who went to the United Nations for decades. When they finally got a declaration that all nations could sign on to, Canada, led by Stephen Harper then, rejected it and said, no, we would not vote for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thankfully, as a Liberal, as a member of Parliament for my riding, I was able to help ensure that the Liberal government said it believed that first nations people should live without racism and was going to ensure that these rights were implemented. That is why we passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, when it came time for the Conservatives to decide whether they would support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, they once again voted no.

Twice last year, I got up in the House of Commons and asked for unanimous consent to give first nations clean water legislation, protecting their source waters. Twice I got up here. Twice I heard nays from the Conservatives. Twice I was shouted down and not even allowed to get the words out of my mouth on the protecting first nations clean water legislation. It would appear the Conservatives are showing their true colours again in delaying, denying and obstructing any legislation that benefits indigenous people.

• (1825)

Currently in my riding, there are land protectors in the Cape Breton Highlands who are protesting the decimation of the moose population and moose habitat. I went to see them, and while this matter is primarily one of provincial jurisdiction, what was required was a treaty partner that would show empathy, that would create education and awareness, that would look toward collaboration to resolve this. However, the Conservatives decided and believed that fines and jail were more appropriate.

I am proud to stand on this side of the House, which believes in taking steps toward reconciliation and treaty implementation and believes in education, empathy and collaboration.

I have heard from other members of the House that they want to see this legislation pass. They have said that we need to move forward, and not only on advancing reconciliation. Last week, we celebrated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, but I have not heard much from the Conservatives on what we need to do to implement and advance them.

In this House, I have heard a number of times that, while the Conservatives support modern-day treaties and indigenous reconciliation, they are going to vote no on this legislation. I ask the Conservatives quite simply, in the few minutes I have here, to get on board, stop delaying this important legislation and allow us to move forward with unanimous consent.

Over the years, we have seen that the Conservatives are intent on delaying, denying and obstructing indigenous legislation. I am asking them tonight, the week after the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to stand with us to implement modern-day treaties and support this legislation.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*English*]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to rise in this chamber and ask the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime about the rampant crime on the streets in my community and across this country. At the time, Vaughan had seen seven shootings in just three weeks. Since I asked my question, there have been three more shootings, one of them as recently as yesterday in the early morning hours in the area of Thornhill Woods. It was just another day in Vaughan, where gunshots rang out while families were asleep in their beds.

We know that so much of the rampant criminality on our streets is a direct consequence of weak Liberal soft-on-crime laws and catch-and-release policies that keep repeat violent offenders out of jail and on our streets. People are afraid. They are scared and they are frustrated. They are frustrated because of the lack of action by the Liberal government.

It is not just the Conservatives who have been raising the alarm for years about the Liberals' failed bail laws. It is the everyday person at the local bakery in my riding, or the mother and father shopping at the grocery store. Even the mayor of Vaughan said this about yesterday's shooting: "These instances are a direct result of a broken criminal justice system that catches and releases repeat offenders instead of keeping them behind bars.... We need stronger and tougher laws and real bail reform from the Federal government immediately."

Everyone, and I mean everyone, wants the Liberal government to act. Police chiefs, police associations, provincial governments, victims' groups and municipal governments are all begging for action, and what do we keep hearing from government members? They tell us not to worry as bail reform is coming. When? We have yet to hear of a date for this bill.

There are also zero details about what is actually in the bill. Will the government get rid of the principle of restraint from Bill C-75, which compels judges to release offenders under the least onerous conditions at the earliest opportunity? Will the Liberals finally admit that their ideological approach to criminal justice is flawed and that it prioritizes violent criminals over victims?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

If this truly was a priority for the Liberals, they would have introduced bail reform in the spring or, at the very least, right at the start of this fall session, but they did not. We have seen their priorities. We have seen them prioritize banning people from buying cars from one another for \$10,000 in cash or more, prioritize lowering the threshold for what constitutes hate speech and prioritize confiscating firearms from law-abiding citizens, all in the name of combatting gun crime, despite the fact that police tell us 90% of gun crimes are committed with illegal firearms coming over the border with the United States.

Everyone seems to know what the problem is, except for the Liberal government. That is why we introduced our jail not bail act. We can end the principle of restraint, create a new category for major offences and bring in the bail reform this country so desperately needs.

Given how important it is that we fix this mess quickly, yesterday we tried to pass a motion to fast-track our jail not bail act and send it to committee. We committed to working extended hours. We will do whatever it takes. Unfortunately, the Liberals voted against our motion, once again prioritizing criminals over victims.

Just last week, we heard from the Prime Minister that they want to get tough on crime. If that is the case, why are they standing in the way? Why does the government pretend to be tough on crime while standing in the way of our plan to prioritize victims over criminals and keep repeat offenders behind bars?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the issue of crime and safety in our communities, we have a new Prime Minister who has made a solemn commitment to Canadians. Along with the Prime Minister, we had 340-plus candidates canvassing the entire country, dealing with important issues for Canadians. The issue of crime and safety was a priority. That is the reason the Prime Minister of Canada made that solemn commitment in the last election to bring forward bail reform legislation.

I listened to what the member is saying, and he is of the impression that we should have brought forward the legislation the moment after the election. There is an obligation of the Prime Minister and the government to work with the different stakeholders who are out there to build consensus in terms of how and in what form that bail legislation should be presented. That is the way it was done previously, and that is the way it needs to be done, because the judicial system is a shared responsibility. Ottawa has a role to play, the provinces have a role to play, and municipalities have a role to play.

Before we can actually present the legislation, it is critically important to work with the other stakeholders, along with the provinces, municipalities, territories and indigenous communities. The Conservative Party knows full well that the legislation is coming this fall. Yes, there is no hard and fast date, because the commitment from the Prime Minister was to give that legislation and present it this fall. That means we have to wait for the legislation to get here, and once it is here, I hope we will get the same enthusiasm that the Conservatives like to portray to Canadians on the issue in the form of their wanting to see the legislation actually pass.

When we have provided legislation, such as Bill C-2, which would make communities safer in Canada, the Conservatives' response has been to filibuster. We are still debating Bill C-2, and it was introduced weeks ago. Now we have the Conservatives jumping up, saying they want bail reform legislation, and the government and the Prime Minister are doing the background work to ensure that we have bail reform that is widely accepted and that we have a consensus based on the feedback we are getting from provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders, because it is a shared responsibility.

We will bring in the legislation to change the Criminal Code to ensure that we have the bail reform that is going to make our communities safer. This is a commitment our newly elected Prime Minister made, and I can assure the member that we will deliver on that commitment. I hope he and his caucus will get behind it—

• (1835)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

**Michael Guglielmin:** Mr. Speaker, I was on the member's website, and it reminded me of a simpler time in this country, one that made sense, when criminals were kept behind bars and repeat offenders were kept in prison. We hear from the member nothing but excuses for the delays.

Crime is not a new problem in this country. The rise in crime has been going on for years at this point, and we have heard, as I said in my earlier remarks, from police associations; we have heard from police chiefs; and we have heard from municipal and provincial governments. We have heard from every stakeholder. The only stakeholder that has been committed to delays is the federal government. The only stakeholder that does not want to move and get this done so citizens can feel safe and secure in their own homes and their own communities seems to be the government.

There has been enough delay and obstruction. If they do not want to introduce the legislation, they can get out of the way and we will do it for them.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Liberal Party, in particular the Prime Minister, sees the issue of crime and safety in our communities as an issue on which we need to reflect the interests of Canadians. We are putting Canadians first. That is our motivation. We will bring forward that bail reform legislation.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Unfortunately, it would appear, and I can clearly demonstrate it if members would give me leave to provide more detail, that the Conservative Party of Canada is motivated by political, partisan reasons. One of them is to generate funds. Another one is to be able to portray this false impression that the Government of Canada, in particular the Prime Minister, is not doing anything, but nothing could be further from the truth.

We will continue to pursue and present that legislation—

• (1840)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order. The hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot.

## HOUSING

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is good to be here for an adjournment debate.

Some time ago, I asked the Minister of Housing about the terrible track record of his government, in that the cities that received significant funding from the so-called housing accelerator had collapsing housing starts. The response I had from the minister was quite astounding. In his answer, he said that they are at near-record housing starts, and he questioned the whole premise of my question that there was anything wrong with the situation for housing. It was quite astounding.

We have watched, over the last 10 years, as the government presided over the collapse and evaporation of the dream of home ownership for Canadians, where young people despair over whether they will ever become homeowners. We have seen, in this country, that we have descended and become a country with two kinds of families: those who already own real estate, wherein the parents can share the equity in their home one way or another, through mortgages, selling the home or flat out letting the kids live in the home; and families who do not own real estate. The gap between the two is getting larger, and the despair among young Canadians is growing. However, the answer I got from the minister was extraordinarily tone deaf.

On Monday, we had a finance committee meeting where we had experts testify. I would bring this to the minister's attention or to the parliamentary secretary who may debate me during this late show. We were told, so that Parliament now knows, that in the GTA and greater Golden Horseshoe areas, preconstruction condo sales are down 89% and ground-oriented home sales are down 70%. If buyers cannot afford homes, they will not be built. This is testimony from Mike Moffatt of the Missing Middle Initiative, which is hardly a Conservative voice or go-to Conservative witness. He outlined brutal statistics on housing starts. Now, this is on pre-sales, which are the housing starts two years from now. We also heard testimony from Richard Lyall of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, who corroborated this testimony: Housing pre-sales are down 90% in Toronto. This is a complete collapse of housing starts.

The alarm bells are ringing loud and clear. The minister and the government are completely out of touch with reality when they take credit for the current housing starts. Housing sales and housing starts are in collapse amid a crisis over access to home ownership and the affordability of rent.

I would invite the parliamentary secretary who is going to engage to familiarize himself with the testimony we heard at the finance committee if the Liberals are going to take credit for housing starts.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognize, as the government and the Prime Minister have, the needs that Canadians actually have, in a very real and tangible way. In fact, the Prime Minister, who was just elected six months ago, has taken a number of initiatives to support home ownership into the future.

We could talk about the legislation that has enabled first-time homebuyers to be exempt from having to pay the GST. We can talk about the Build Canada Homes agency, which is going to be there to ensure that we are able to meet the future demands on housing. It is in a relatively short time span that we have seen initiatives of this nature.

We could do a contrast, not only in terms of the actions to date of this government and this Prime Minister but also including the last 20 years, taking a look at Justin Trudeau or Stephen Harper. Actually, we could go even further back. We could talk about Jean Chrétien. We could even talk about Brian Mulroney. The worst government in the last 40 or 50 years, to deal with the issue of housing was actually the government in which the leader of the Conservative Party served. He sat around in cabinet when the Conservatives did absolutely nothing on the issue of housing. In fact, when the leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible for housing, get this, he built six houses, six.

I would actually contrast the type of housing that we have been able to put together, working with municipalities and working with provinces to ensure that we could increase the housing stock, not to mention the many non-profit housing organizations that are out there that we are trying to support.

We have support for housing co-ops and so much more. We recognize and, in particular, the Prime Minister recognizes, that the federal government does have a role to play in encouraging and being in the housing sector. Contrast that to when the leader of the Conservative Party sat in government and sat around the cabinet table. In fact, when he was the minister of housing, there was virtually nothing. When I say virtually nothing, I am being generous.

At the end of the day, the member makes reference to the condos in Toronto. I would suggest to the member to take a look at the condos in the city of Winnipeg. Depending on the region and depending on the marketplace, if there is a surplus of condo development, which has been acknowledged in Toronto, I suspect that has something to do with the stats. In some areas, it might be weaker. In other areas, it should be greater.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

If we talk about Toronto's downtown versus what is happening in other communities around the city of Toronto or even in Toronto, we have seen some downward direction taking place in the prices of homes in Canada.

There is a genuine concern. We are concerned. It is not to downplay it. We will continue to be on top of this particular file of housing affordability.

• (1845)

**Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, the member invited me to contrast the government with previous governments, and I would be delighted to. The government has been in power for 10 years and has presided over the collapse of home ownership and the doubling of the cost of rent. The crisis of access to housing that Canadians can afford is entirely of the government's making.

When the leader of the Conservative Party was minister, we had a healthy and functioning construction, home and real estate sector, where private sector builders built, supply and demand were in balance, and wages were rising.

I know that the Liberals love The New York Times. The New York Times said that Canada had the wealthiest middle class in the world that could afford homes. That was during the tenure of the previous government. This government has blown it.

• (1850)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member wants to use a contrast. He should contrast the last number of years,

particularly the last six months, to when the leader of the Conservative Party had the hands and the ability to use tools to do more and chose to do absolutely nothing. Had the Conservatives done something back then, maybe we would not have the current situation we have. It is as if it was okay for the Harper government to do absolutely nothing and leave it up to the provinces and municipalities to do all the work and give government assistance. Contrast that to a federal government today that recognizes that not just the cities and provinces have a role; it also has a role.

I will use that contrast any day. At least we have a government that is concerned and cares about Canadians and the issue of affordability, and yes, we will do better.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley not being present to raise during Adjournment Proceedings the matter for which notice had been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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