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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 15, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)
[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, entitled “Enbridge's Line 5: An Interim Report”.

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POINTS OF ORDER

TAKING OF SCREENSHOT OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order with respect to the events that unfolded in the House yesterday during question period.

I would like to say that the conduct of the person who took the screenshot is not only extremely unfortunate, but it is mean-spirited and life-changing for one of our colleagues. Taking a photo of someone who is changing clothes and in the nude, and sharing it without their consent could very well be criminal. Did the person who took the screenshot give any thought to the ramifications of their actions? Did they think of the member's family, children, friends, or the fact that the Internet is forever? Are we really at a point in our politics where it is acceptable to try to destroy the reputation of and humiliate a colleague because someone finds a very unfortunate error and unintentional mistake to be funny? Our politics has taken a very dark and destructive turn, if this is the case.

It is difficult to accept that the MP for Pontiac, who has been such a champion for environmental protection and climate action, could be treated with such callous disrespect, so I would request that the Speaker commence an immediate investigation to determine who took the photo, so that the House can decide the appropriate action to take.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for his intervention. I will take it under advisement, look into the situation and get back to the House if necessary.

* * *

PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-285, an act to amend the Pest Control Products Act (glyphosate).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder and colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, who is always a strong proponent of protecting our environment.

Today I fulfill a promise I made to my constituents when I ran in 2019. It is an honour to present this bill with the important purpose of imposing a nationwide ban on the use of glyphosate, from our forests to our fields. The widespread use of glyphosate over New Brunswick forests and across Canada is a menace to human health and plant and wildlife biodiversity. There is a growing global consensus that glyphosate, deemed a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, has no place in our society.

Rather than allowing toxic chemicals to be sprayed in Canada until they are proven harmful, we should be exercising greater precaution and banning products until they can be deemed safe. Canadians have the right to breathe clean air, drink safe water and harvest healthy food from the land.

I want to thank the leadership of the tens of thousands of New Brunswickers who have bravely fought for years for this ban to be implemented in the hope of ensuring safer communities for generations to come.

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

* * *

● (1010)

HEALTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE USE ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-286, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce the health-based approach to substance use act. I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East, for seconding this proposed legislation and for her tireless advocacy for evidence-based drug policy.

We all know that the situation is dire. Nearly 20,000 Canadians have died of overdoses in the last five years, and in the shadow of COVID-19, the opioid overdose epidemic has rapidly worsened across Canada. In British Columbia, over 1,700 people died of overdoses in 2020 alone, the deadliest year on record.

Decades of criminalization, a toxic illicit street supply and a lack of timely access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services have caused this escalating epidemic. It is time to treat substance use and addiction as the health issues they truly are and to address stigma and trauma. This bill provides a comprehensive approach to do just that, by decriminalizing personal drug possession, providing for record expungement, ensuring low-barrier access to safe supply and expanding access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services.

I call on all parliamentarians to support these urgent and necessary steps to address Canada's overdose epidemic.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a mere four petitions this morning.

The first petition highlights the situation of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. It highlights the ongoing genocide, which includes birth suppression, arbitrary detention, separation of children from their families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour, forced organ harvesting, etc.

The petitioners call upon the government to do something it has not yet done, which is, as a government, to recognize that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China are being subjected to an ongoing genocide. The petitioners also call upon the government to hold those responsible accountable through the Magnitsky act and address the issue of supply chain legislation, Canada having among the weakest supply chain laws in the world, to prevent the importation of products that are made through slave labour.

• (1015)

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

The petition calls for various measures by the government to step up its engagement with that situation, including engaging directly with Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on the conflict and promoting short-, medium- and long-term support and election monitoring in Ethiopia.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is about Bill C-6, the government's conversion therapy ban.

The petitioners are in support of banning conversion therapy but are concerned about the definition of “conversion therapy” that is used in the bill. They highlight the way in which this definition would apply very broadly to practices that have nothing to do with conversion therapy. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to address this drafting error, this problem in the definition, to fix the definition and to put forward a conversion therapy ban that properly defines the practice, one that all members in the House would support.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final petition highlights Bill S-204, a bill currently in the other place, before the justice and human rights committee of the Senate.

Bill S-204 would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without consent. This deals with the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking that we see in other parts of the world and the risk that Canadians might be complicit in that practice.

The petitioners are in support of Bill S-204 and want to see it passed by both Houses as quickly as possible.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and privileged to rise in the House today to present this petition, which was initiated by Nicholas Martin. I am very proud of the fact that there are 36,600 signatures on this petition.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to reject Bill C-21 to save the jobs of thousands of Canadians; fully and unambiguously legalize airsoft and paintball so that citizens and residents can continue to purchase and use that sporting equipment; recognize that airsoft and paintball are safe activities that tens of thousands of Canadians participate in; recognize that airsoft and paintball do not represent any risk to public safety and banning them would not improve public safety; and not needlessly target law-abiding citizens who use airsoft and paintball for sporting purposes.

CHILE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition about the situation in Chile. The petitioners are Canadians who care deeply about what is happening in Chile. They observe that the social uprising in Chile, which started in October 2019, has led to massive detentions and other human rights violations in Chile and has continued during the pandemic.

Several independent international bodies have investigated and internationally denounced these violations, including a Canadian observation mission on human rights and an international human rights observation mission to Chile with Canadian participation, Amnesty International, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch. They have filed condemning reports calling for immediate action, citing extreme human rights violations by the Chilean government and the use of political imprisonment as an instrument of repression.

It is, therefore, important for the Canadian government to take a role as a peacemaker and protector of human rights and follow the lead of dignitaries from other countries, like Germany, that have denounced military and police repression since October 18, 2019.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on the situation in Tigray. Since some of that material has been covered before, I will just mention a few relevant facts. The war crimes that are purported to have occurred in that region include indiscriminate shelling of civilian towns and villages, extrajudicial killings, at least one large-scale massacre, looting and sexual violence. All of these are drawn to the attention of the House by the petitioners.

In addition to the proposals that were mentioned by my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, the petitioners call for an immediate international investigation into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights law.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of constituents here in Saanich—Gulf Islands, the WSÁNEĆ indigenous territories, which we acknowledge with gratitude.

The WSÁNEĆ nation, which when anglicized is pronounced “Saanich”, has a very critical ecosystem called the Saanich Inlet. As the name suggests, it is an inlet from the Salish Sea with very little flushing capacity. The petitioners are very concerned that sewage becomes a problem in the Saanich Inlet, primarily from recreational vessels and some other sources. The petitioners seek the designation of the Saanich Inlet as a zero-waste discharge area.

Another example that friends on the east coast will know where this applies is the Bras d’Or Lake, which likewise is an inlet from the sea and is protected by a zero-discharge area.

The petitioners humbly request that the government take action and designate the Saanich Inlet as also a zero-waste discharge area.

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have eight petitions to present today. Due to the possibility of an election, I want to make sure that they are in fact tabled.

The first petition is from constituents asking the government to take responsibility for creating a national unity crisis and ensure that there are no bureaucratic or legislative roadblocks for provinces that wish to exercise their constitutionally allowed measures of autonomy.

Routine Proceedings

• (1020)

FISCAL STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition today is that the government immediately increase and backdate the fiscal stabilization program and work with provinces to ensure that they fix the current inequities in the equalization formula.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the third petition today, the petitioners ask that the government formally recognize Alberta's place as an equal partner in the federation, remove any barriers to Alberta being able to develop its resources without interference and ensure unfettered international access to those resources.

THE SENATE

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next petition, the petitioners ask that the government take steps to establish equal representation in Canada's upper chamber, the Senate.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next petition, the petitioners ask that the government seek the agreement of the provinces to amend the Constitution to include property rights.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next petition the petitioners ask that the Prime Minister apologize for the actions of former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and his incredibly destructive national energy program, and ensure that provinces are able to develop and market their natural resources.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, I table two petitions regarding the government's Bill C-6. They are substantially the same, with a little bit of difference in the wording. Petitioners agree that conversion therapy should be banned but express concern about the definition referenced in Bill C-6 and ask that the government make efforts to ensure that this is fixed.

The Speaker: I remind hon. members that when they present petitions, they should be as concise as possible. I am not pointing to the last member because he did an excellent job at keeping it very brief. I compliment him on that.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

BILL C-15—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

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

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[*Translation*]

I invite hon. members who may wish to ask questions to rise in their places or to activate the “raised hand” function so the Chair has some idea of how many wish to participate in the question period.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

• (1025)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government is imposing time allocation, better known as a gag order.

This is an exceptional measure that should only be proposed on rare occasions and agreed to even more rarely. It is an exceptional measure that applies to exceptional circumstances.

However, the current government has made a habit of using this measure. It almost always imposes gag orders and time allocation motions. That has become the government's *modus operandi*.

Why is that the case? I think that the answer lies with the current government's management of its legislative calendar, which has lacked rigour and effectiveness. Even though the opposition parties often co-operate, the government is still not managing its calendar properly and always ends up imposing time allocation motions.

Bill C-15 is an extremely important bill. Today is the second day of debate. The first day, we debated this bill for only an hour and now the government is already moving a time allocation motion.

Of course, Bill C-15 is very important for first nations, but it is important to understand that the debates in the House are also very important, and the government needs to respect that.

My question is simple. Why does the government want to stop debate at this particular point in time?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Obviously, I agree with him about the importance of Bill C-15.

First, there are no surprises in the bill. It is based on a previous bill introduced by our former colleague Roméo Saganash, so members are familiar with it and it has already been debated in the House of Commons and studied in committee. We therefore need to move forward.

With regard to the work of the House, the Conservative Party's strategy is to filibuster all of our legislation. That is what it did to the bill on medical assistance in dying, the 2020 fall economic statement and the net-zero legislation. The Conservative Party always tries to stop bills from being examined and passed by filibustering.

That is why I want to thank the NDP and the Bloc Québécois for their co-operation on the bill on medical assistance in dying. As a result of that co-operation, we are able to move forward and pass very important bills that represent progressive measures in the history of our Parliament and our country.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we move on to questions, I would ask members to keep their interventions to no more than one minute.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it kind of ironic that the government continues to use time allocation on a bill that purports to provide indigenous Canadians with free, prior and informed consent and that the Prime Minister has chosen to ignore the multitude of indigenous leaders who have yet to have their voices heard.

We support the aspirations of UNDRIP, we have been perfectly clear about this, but there are significant issues that need to be addressed with this legislation. We need to get this right, we need to define “free, prior and informed consent” before it moves through the legislative process. For example, it has taken over 10 years to gain clarity from Canadian courts on section 35 rights enshrined in Canada's Constitution.

The lack of clarity, that lack of understanding of key concepts of Bill C-15, threatens to turn the clock back on economic reconciliation and dismantle the hard work of indigenous leaders. How does the government actually justify ignoring the legitimate concerns indigenous leaders and communities have on Bill C-15?

Government Orders

• (1030)

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I will not challenge the hon. member on his sense of irony, given his party's dilatory tactics every step of the way with every piece of government legislation.

What I can say is that this bill is built on a previous bill, Bill C-262, brought forward Romeo Saganash. There are no surprises. These discussions have been had in the House of Commons and are continuing to be had with indigenous leadership in all its forms across Canada, in all its diversity across Canada.

With respect to FPIC in particular, it is a contextual process that will often have a study at committee stage, and that will happen. I know INAN has already done a pre-study largely focusing on that point. There is more than adequate discussion thus far, and that discussion will continue through the rest of the parliamentary process.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it concerns me because we had the first half of debate for second reading a couple of months ago yet the government continues to stall debate, and now once again we are forced into time allocation.

I am wondering why the government has put off this bill knowing that in the last session of Parliament this bill ended up not being passed through the Senate because it did not have enough time. Why are we now at the 11th hour again, forcing the government to put in place time allocation?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for her work on this issue and her leadership on this issue, as well as the leadership of her party in hopefully supporting this time allocation motion.

We are here because of the dilatory tactics of the Conservative Party on other measures, such as the fall economic statement which was debated. Those debates were repeated ad nauseam even though the content of that bill was meant to help Canadians in facing the worst pandemic we have faced in 100 years.

We are here because this bill is known to the House of Commons. As the hon. member points out, it went through the previous Parliament in its previous form when it was brought forward as a private member's bill by Romeo Saganash. It only died in the Senate because of, again, the blocking and dilatory tactics of Conservative senators to let it die on the Order Paper.

We are moving because this is a bill that needs to be passed. We need to get to the next stage, which is the action plan co-developed with indigenous peoples across Canada, in order to get us all to a better place. It is a bill about indigenous human rights. We are very much supportive of that and we very much wish to move this forward.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard an earful from the Minister of Justice about why we have to do this here today. I do not know how much of that is actually verifiable, because I have been in this House many times. Today is the first day that I will get to speak on this bill. I have spoken to many indigenous organizations in my riding and in my province in developing resources across Canada. They all want a say in this matter. They all want to make sure that what we are doing here is the right way to move forward.

I know there are many voices across this House, in all parties, that want to make sure that we do this correctly as we move forward here and this requires actual reading. I hear the Minister of Justice say that Conservatives have been dilatory in this, but this has just arrived here. If we need to choose this to move forward here, let Parliament sit, let us get these things heard and let us move good legislation forward in this House.

There are so many issues presented in this legislation that need to be addressed by this House openly by all members of this House, discussed so we know exactly what is on the table here and what will change going forward. To rush this bill through, as opposed to anything else the Liberals have put on the table to use as delay tactics in this House, is insincere.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member is generally supportive of UNDRIP and that he is in dialogue with indigenous leadership in his province. It has been clear in this session of the House of Commons that the Conservatives will resort to dilatory tactics. We saw that with respect to MAID when they refused every single attempt to prolong debate, despite the fact that outside of the House of Commons the justice critic was saying precisely that he would debate it in extended hours. Every time we brought forward a motion for extended hours, they refused.

We are here today simply because the Conservative Party will use every dilatory tactic in its book in order to slow down the progress of progressive legislation, such as this piece of progressive legislation. We have debated a previous version of this bill in the House. A committee has studied it. The INAN committee has done a pre-study of this bill. We will continue to move forward in dialogue with indigenous leadership across Canada and in dialogue with members in this House who are sincere about the ideals in this bill and moving this bill forward.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to pick up on the idea of the importance of UNDRIP. This is an issue that has been before the House, in one form or another, for quite a while now. When we speak about reconciliation, we talk about issues, such as reforming justice legislation and doing what we can in dealing with systemic racism. UNDRIP also plays an important aspect in reconciliation.

Can he take a broader approach in terms of why it is so important that we pass Bill C-15?

Government Orders

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, UNDRIP is 25 years old. It was developed at the United Nations with a great deal of indigenous leadership from indigenous peoples in Canada, such as former Conservative MP, Chief Wilton Littlechild and Sákéj Henderson, along with others.

The contents of UNDRIP are well known. Romeo Saganash then took up the torch in the last Parliament, brought in a private member's bill, which was studied and which went through all three debates in the House of Commons and through committee, but sadly died on the Order Paper because of dilatory tactics by Conservative senators. We also have the example in British Columbia, which has implemented UNDRIP legislation at the provincial level.

There is a great deal of knowledge about what the potential for UNDRIP would be. Fundamentally, this is a human rights document about the human rights of indigenous peoples and this is a good piece of progressive legislation that needs to move forward.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with the justice minister that getting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples passed is a fundamental human rights issue. I am concerned that we are once again at the 11th hour. We had so much opportunity to discuss these issues and now we are having to use time allocation. To me, this reflects a larger problem: The Liberals talk about working with indigenous people, but continue to ignore their legal obligations.

For example, I would like to ask the minister about the issue of St. Anne's Indian Residential School, where the justice department lawyers suppressed evidence, presented false narratives, lied at hearings and had cases thrown out. They are ignoring Justice Glustein, who has ordered them not to destroy the documents. They have set up this so-called process that is actually excluding over 160 survivors and will make no effort to even include them.

The minister has not even talked to the survivors, so how can he come to the House and talk about how the Liberals are going to work for reconciliation when they refuse to even speak with Edmund Metatawabin and the leaders of St. Anne's about the crimes that were committed in those hearings by justice department lawyers?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question allows me to correct some of the misconceptions in the public domain.

In 2016, Department of Justice lawyers went to the Supreme Court of Canada arguing precisely to maintain the records from St. Anne's and other residential schools because of their importance to Canadian polity and our sense of history, as well as to the justice that would be possible for survivors, and we lost. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that those documents had to be destroyed.

We are in a process of trying to work within the parameters of that decision to maintain documents for as long as possible, so that survivors will have access to them to the extent that it helps their claims. Our lawyers are working in good faith to try to preserve those documents for as long as possible, notwithstanding the order from the Supreme Court of Canada. I welcome the recent ruling by the Ontario Court of Appeal that we are studying carefully, which

hopefully will give us the continued wiggle room not to destroy any documents.

● (1040)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, there is so much to say here and so much to clarify. The arguments are extremely nuanced. The implications of this bill are profound. There are voices that must still be empowered through this process. This is for all of Canada. Canadians deserve a fulsome debate. MPs deserve the opportunity to contribute to that fulsome debate.

Would the minister agree that even good, progressive legislation has to go through the parliamentary process? We need to have these conversations out in the open. There are many voices, on either side of the bill, who should have their day in the House of Commons. Would the minister agree?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the hon. member in principle. We need to hear voices and we need to move legislation through, but I remind her that this is a process that began 25 years ago with the passage of UNDRIP at the United Nations. It is a process that was picked up in Canada by Romeo Saganash in the previous Parliament. It is a process in which we will continue to be in dialogue with other parliamentarians and continue to be in dialogue in a distinctions-based fashion with the myriad forms of indigenous leadership across Canada.

This is just a way station in the process. It will continue through the development of an action plan for the implementation of UNDRIP afterward. I would suggest to the hon. member that is really where the heavy lifting is going to be done with respect to our relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada. I agree with her, but we have to be careful to not let perfection be the enemy of the good. We need to move this legislation forward in order to get to the next step and—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to go to the next question.

The hon. member for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister referred to the pre-study at INAN and all the work that has supposedly been done on this legislation already.

Government Orders

I do not want to let the facts get in the way of talking points, but at the pre-study at the INAN committee, we had numerous requests from individual leaders of first nations, groups of people representing first nations, and indigenous business groups that had not had the opportunity to have their say and give their input on this important piece of legislation, because the minister's party limited the amount of debate we could even have at the pre-study at INAN. I understand it has also been forced to have a pre-study in the Senate.

My Bloc colleague pointed out, very clearly, that at this point we have had one hour of debate on this bill. As a new member of Parliament, I am not privy to all of the history and all of the stuff that has happened in prior Parliaments. I have the opportunity and the responsibility as a member of Parliament to speak to this legislation, and to speak on behalf of the many stakeholders who have reached out to my office and who have concerns about this legislation.

For the government to now invoke closure after one hour of debate, before we even get into the second hour of debate, is unconscionable in my opinion. Could the minister explain why he does not want to hear the voices of indigenous leaders who are asking to speak on this piece of legislation?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

I have been in constant dialogue with indigenous leadership in its myriad forms across Canada. I continue to be. I did not stop when the bill was tabled in the House of Commons, and I continue to speak to industry groups. We had a specific consultation targeting industry groups across Canada, led by NRCAN. We have had a very intensive consultation process, which continues.

I would point the hon. member to experiences in this Parliament, where we debated a fall economic statement for much more time than we would have debated a budget. Speaker after speaker from the Conservative Party got up and said the same thing. It was the same on MAID: Speaker after speaker got up and repeated the same arguments ad nauseam.

It is the Conservative Party and its dilatory tactics that have forced us into this position today.

• (1045)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was going to bring up the fall economic statement when trying to highlight what has been going on in the House.

The fall economic statement was introduced on November 30, and we still have not gotten to vote on it because the Conservatives have been dragging their feet.

I actually do not think they have anything against this piece of legislation and that they are going to be supportive of it. What I feel is that, unlike the Bloc and the NDP, the Conservatives are trying to prevent any legislation from getting through so that they can somehow declare a victory, in the sense that we are not able to accomplish anything.

We could look at MAID, which the minister brought up, as well as conversion therapy, which we are supposed to be debating. I have a feeling, based on practices I have seen over the last five

years, the Conservatives will not let these issues be voted on unless we come forward with a motion like this.

Would the minister agree with that?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. On this particular day, I also salute our common Italian-Canadian heritage, given our announcement yesterday.

It is critically important to look at the dilatory tactics of the Conservative Party. The fall economic statement is a perfect example, as was MAID: a very important piece of legislation that Canadians wanted and that courts were requiring. Thankfully, in that particular case, the Bloc Québécois stepped up and supported a time allocation motion.

I do not like time allocation any more than the next member of Parliament. I would like to see everything debated fulsomely. However, there is a responsibility, and I know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has brought this up on a number of occasions, to debate responsibly, not just with prepared talking points but with new arguments. We are not getting those from the Conservative Party. We are getting arguments repeated ad nauseam for the purposes of delaying.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about the reality today. I would remind the minister that it is actually the government House leader who sets forward what we will be debating.

I am in total agreement. I want to get this through the Senate this time. I was part of the last Parliament. I saw this bill go through. I fundamentally believe that the need for legislation that is going to help us build a framework to acknowledge indigenous rights and title in this country is imperative. However, doing it this way is really a choice of the government.

When we look at the long history that we have here, we still have indigenous communities without clean drinking water. We still have indigenous communities trying to take steps forward, and we have the government blocking the way at every step. I am really disappointed that this is the only way that the government sees the bill being able to go through.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her dedication to this process. I am glad that she brought up the process last time for Bill C-262, under the leadership of Romeo Saganash, where we did get it through all three readings in the House and then it died in the Senate. We do not want this bill to have the same fate. The composition of the Senate is different now. In particular, thanks to our government, there is a great deal of indigenous leadership within the Senate itself, which is absolutely fantastic and a wonderful point in Canadian history.

Government Orders

Again, I do not want perfection to become the enemy of the good. We have had a robust consultation process. That robust consultation process will continue through the rest of the parliamentary process and through the Senate process. In particular, that robust engagement and collaboration process will be part of the bill once it is implemented in the action plan. This is a positive way forward. This is long overdue. There are no surprises in the bill, and this is the time to do our best as parliamentarians to move this forward and engage in those substantive debates as we move forward through the action plan.

The Deputy Speaker: For those keeping track, we are going to try to get three more questions in.

We will go next to the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing the blame game that the minister tries to put forward. I do not think anyone is buying it. We all know it is the government House leader who controls the House schedule and decides what we vote on.

The minister earlier alleged that the Conservatives keep bringing up the same things. Here is some new information that was brought forward since we last met. Treaty Six first nations chiefs utterly reject Bill C-15. That came out just a week or so ago. They are asking the government to begin a process of engagement with them. We have heard from elders from a number of first nations who wrote to us because they flatly reject and refuse to accept Bill C-15. Many others have been talking about it.

What does the government have to say to these indigenous communities and leaders? Why will the government not practise what it preaches?

• (1050)

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, indeed I have spoken to indigenous leaders across Canada, including the leaders of the treaty peoples in western Canada. A large number of indigenous leaders have expressed concerns. I recognize that, and we are in dialogue with them. There is also a greater number of indigenous leaders from the myriad leadership structures, and in particular traditional structures across Canada, and we are engaging with as many of them as we possibly can. We will continue to engage with them in order to move this process forward in a positive way.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, going back to my last point, the government promised to put forward the bill last year. Now, in the eleventh hour, it is being forced to put in a time allocation. I question if the bill really is a priority for the current government in the way that Liberals keep pushing the date back. We are in the eleventh hour. We are now putting in place a time allocation. I wonder how sincere the government is in actually getting the bill through, if it will stop playing games and get this process going properly.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, this is precisely what we are doing. Since I was renamed after the 2019 election, I have been working hard to develop the bill. We were sidetracked by COVID, quite frankly. I will be honest, it was around the time we were considering tabling the previous version. In that case the consultation process had a very different flavour.

We quickly shifted gears with COVID. We began to consult with indigenous people over the summer as a pre-consultation precisely not to lose the time that we had. I can assure the hon. member that much of my summer was taken up by those consultations. We moved to table it in the House of Commons as soon as we could incorporate the suggestions made in that pre-consultation period. We are serious about this. We have done this diligently and we are going to get this through.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, my colleague from Kingston and the Islands said we were trying to stretch debates out for as long as possible. I just want to point out that the government is responsible for the parliamentary calendar and that there was a prorogation that cost us a lot of time.

With respect to time allocation motions, I also want to point out that, when we realized that we were wasting our time, not to repeat myself, on the MAID issue, we were in agreement.

Parts of the preamble to the bill before us now are utterly unintelligible. We have talked about this bill for just one hour, and now here we are with a time allocation motion. I think that is irresponsible of the government and that the government itself is partly responsible for delays in the legislative process.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We want to ensure that this bill gets passed. It is very important. The bill guarantees the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples across Canada. We are in contact with indigenous leaders across Canada, including Quebec. I met with several chiefs and leaders in Quebec, virtually of course, individually or in their communities, or through federations of associations.

It is very important that this bill gets passed. I thank the hon. member for his support on the MAID legislation. I would like to assure him, and my colleagues from Quebec, that we are working very hard to make sure this bill passes.

• (1055)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

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

[English]

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1140)

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

(Division No. 91)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Bratina	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duval
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney

Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Saini
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Trudeau
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Weiler
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 175

Government Orders

Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Monsef
Murray
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Spengemann
Tassi
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Zann

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Atwin	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent

Government Orders

Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Manly	Marcil
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Simard
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 153	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Debate.

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from the outset I would like to say that it is an honour to speak in the House to Bill C-15. This is a historic bill and I hope we will be able to adopt it swiftly.

My colleagues know that I represent a northern riding and the majority of its population are members of the Innu or Naskapi nations. I rise in the House with my brothers and sisters from the North Shore and the Nitassinan in mind. I speak for the communities of Essipit, Pessamit, Uashat, Maliotenam, Unamen Shipu, Kawawachikamach and more. It is for these communities and the entire North Shore, which is also in favour of this bill, that I rise today.

This bill comes in the wake of great moments in our history in Quebec, including the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, which forged the alliance between our adoptive ancestors. My own ancestors were not on Quebec soil at that time, but that is what happened between the French and the indigenous peoples.

I will talk about three things today, one of which is extremely important to me because there are many myths about Bill C-15 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We must deconstruct these ideas, comments and opinions, which lead our reflections on the issue in the wrong direction.

Before speaking about self-determination, the third point of my presentation, I would like to remind members of the positions and actions of the Bloc Québécois that are in line with what we are doing today in the House.

The Bloc Québécois has promised on several occasions to be an ally of first nations. Whether in my work as an elected member or in the case of the entire Bloc Québécois, we have never wanted to speak for first nations. On the contrary, we want to be a conduit. These are nations. Quebec is a nation. To have a respectful relationship, we must let the other speak. Today, I hope that my words and those of the Bloc Québécois demonstrate that we wish to convey the words, wishes and desires of first nations.

It will not come as a surprise if I say that we support the bill. The Bloc Québécois has stated its support for the declaration many times. Even in the previous Parliament, we were in favour of Bill C-262, which was introduced by one of my former colleagues. I cannot name him in the House, but he knows who he is. I thank him.

We have always been an ally to first nations, and we support the declaration that was signed over 15 years ago as well as the previous bill. Despite introducing private members' bills about this over the past 15 years and pressuring the government, we still have not managed to pass a bill. That is why I want to emphasize that passing this bill is urgent. This is just the first step, and there will be more to follow, including the implementation. It is very important that this be done quickly for first nations.

● (1145)

I now want to talk about the concerns that have been expressed by different communities. Although the concerns are shared in different ways, they all come down to the feeling of a loss of control. I always find that surprising, since we are talking about first nations' rights. I do not think we should even be asking these questions, on principle, since these are their rights. These rights belong to them.

There are nevertheless some concerns that may play on fear, whether consciously or subconsciously. Sometimes these concerns are born out of a lack of understanding, which is why we need to dispel the myths.

The first has to do with free, prior and informed consent, known as FPIC, a topic that has evoked some strong feelings in almost all of the speeches. We hear so much about FPIC, as though it were the only key to adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and enshrining it in law.

However, we are told that FPIC is a veto right, which blurs the line between two completely different notions, but what we hear is that consent is a veto. The first point I want to make in my speech is that these two notions are completely different. Consent is not a veto. FPIC is a notion all on its own.

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we have an obligation to co-operate in good faith with indigenous peoples in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent. We are therefore not talking about a veto.

There is no significant difference between such consent and the duty to consult established by the Supreme Court. This is nothing new, and it is something that should always be done. I agree with the declaration. I agree with obtaining the consent of a people or nation living in a territory with regard to activities that will have a direct impact on them and on their lives, culture and health. In my opinion, we should all agree on that.

I have lots of things to say, but I will move on to another point people often raise about how there is some uncertainty regarding the legislative intent. The Minister of Justice said that the legislative intent was not to grant veto power. He said so clearly during his speech at second reading of Bill C-15. I do not have the minister's exact quote here, but I am sure it is in the official report of the House of Commons Debates.

Now I would like to talk about the legal definition of consent. Consent was already required in the past, though it was not called that. It already existed. Now it is being named and made mandatory. Examples from history are the James Bay project in the 1970s, the Oka crisis and the Grande Baleine project. First nations were being asked for consent back then.

• (1150)

In any case, the first nations are rallying and mobilizing. We have seen it over the past couple of years. Political pressure is being exercised on many fronts and it is warranted. There is a desire to be consulted and to be able to provide free and informed consent.

There is another concern regarding the revenues generated by resource-related activities. I think the issue of royalties is simply ridiculous, and I believe the British North America Act is clear on the matter: Quebec and the provinces are owners of their own land and the resources therein. In the case of Quebec, this is an absolutely indisputable interpretation of the Constitution. There is already an agreement on the sharing of revenues from these resource development projects. That already exists.

When it comes to wealth sharing, I do not see how anyone could have a problem with sharing the revenues with the first nations who

Government Orders

live on the land, creating jobs for those first nations and promoting wealth creation in remote areas like mine. The Bloc Québécois believes that sharing resources is patently obvious. It is necessary, and it goes without saying any time there is an agreement, a deal or a consultation with first nations.

I will address another point, but first I would like to conclude my thoughts on Quebec's jurisdictions, as I was talking about earlier.

On Bill C-15, the Minister of Justice said the following:

Let me be clear: Bill C-15 would impose obligations on the federal government to align our laws with the declaration over time and to take actions within our areas of responsibility to implement the declaration, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples. It would not impose obligations on other levels of government.

The notion that this would infringe on Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions is yet another myth and another concern that I want to debunk. This is not true. The intent seems quite clear in this legislation. The Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of the bill precisely because our interpretation is that the bill does not infringe on the provinces' exclusive jurisdictions.

I want to talk about the notion of self-determination under the declaration, since that is exactly what it does. The declaration recognizes that indigenous peoples and nations have the right to self-determination. Members will know that a nation's right to self-determination is something that we in the Bloc Québécois hold dear. I do want to point out that this right to self-determination is an internal one. It has nothing to do with a state's borders, and this is made clear in several articles of the declaration. This right to self-determination can simply be interpreted as an inherent right to self-government within a sovereign state's legal framework. There is autonomy, but within the legal framework of a sovereign state, within Canada. I hope that one day this will apply to Quebec.

On top of that, international law has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is a lesson to be learned from what has been done internationally.

Canada has also taken a position in support of UNDRIP. We agree, but there is one more step to take. We must follow through and finally pass Bill C-15. Then we need to implement it, which we hope will be done swiftly. There is talk of a three-year time frame, but we would like to move quickly and see that shortened to two years. My first nations brothers and sisters have been waiting long enough.

Government Orders

• (1155)

In closing, I would like to quote a few passages from UNDRIP that I think are clear examples of why we should pass this bill very quickly. These are points that everyone agrees on and, again, I have a hard time understanding how anyone could not support this. I will now quote a few articles all at once. Article 10 states the following:

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories.

I do not know how anyone could be against that. The declaration also states the following:

Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

These are fundamental rights. Who is against that? I will continue:

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights....

I would ask the same question. The declaration also states the following:

Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining....

Who is against that? I will continue:

States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Once again who is against that? This is my last quote:

States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:

...

(c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;

(d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;

...

There are many other articles I would like to read, but they are all along the same lines. They speak about rights, integrity, freedom, essential needs and respect; in the end, they are about human beings.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois obviously supports Bill C-15 because we agree with the principle of it. We would like to see the bill be implemented quickly. With regard to all the misconceptions surrounding Bill C-15, I would like people to learn more about the bill and for us to talk about it, because we need to clear up those misconceptions. We must not vote based on impressions or opinions, but on facts, and we always need to remember that we are talking here about the rights of nations.

At the same time, since the Bloc Québécois obviously seeks to speak on behalf of Quebec, I would like to remind the House that, on Tuesday, October 8, 2019, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion:

THAT the National Assembly acknowledge the conclusions of the Viens Commission, expressed on 30 September 2019, as regards the responsibility of the Québec State with regard to the overwhelming and painful findings set out in its report;

THAT it recognize, as the leaders of all the political parties represented in the National Assembly have affirmed, the importance of taking concrete actions, now, to put an end to discrimination against the members of the First Nations and the Inuit and to forge egalitarian relations with them;

THAT it acknowledge that the report from the Commission Viens calls on the Québec Government to recognize and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a recommendation also made in the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls tabled last May;

THAT the National Assembly ask the Québec Government to recognize the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and commit to negotiating its implementation with the First Nations and the Inuit.

The will of Quebec, which I am expressing today, and the will of first nations are clear.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like members of the House to think in terms of reconciliation. I want to emphasize that Bill C-15 is about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. UNDRIP is an international call for action that was adopted by the United Nations back in 2007.

I will quote from one of our Canada websites, dated November 12, 2010. It states:

Canada joins other countries in supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In doing so, Canada reaffirms its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples at home and abroad.

I believe that all members of the House of Commons recognize the importance of reconciliation. Would the member provide her thoughts in regard to the timing and how critically important it is, after years of certain types of delays, which I will not go into, for the House of Commons pass the legislation?

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments and his question.

This bill certainly is timely, and much of it makes sense. As I said several times in my speech, we are behind the times. I would not want to shut down this debate or these discussions, but I would like things to move ahead quickly so the bill can be passed and brought into force.

I often talk about my personal life. We are members of Parliament, but we are also people, and that shows in what we do. I like when we are proactive and decide to step up and do the courageous thing. I am a Bloc member, obviously, so for me, respect for human rights is a given. We have to pass this bill. Given everything that has been said so far, I do not see how anyone could oppose it.

Yes, this is an opportunity we must seize, and I hope the government will expedite the process and put this bill on its legislative agenda so we can pass it quickly.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very dynamic and very clear speech.

Government Orders

For members from regions where many indigenous peoples live, the fight for justice for them is particularly important. These peoples are very resilient, even though they continue to live in Canada in conditions comparable to those of third world countries and their rights are oppressed.

Does my colleague agree that the government's fine talk about reconciliation and the importance of its relationship with indigenous peoples is not enough? What it must do is take real action. We must pass this historic bill as well as make significant investments and do whatever is necessary to deliver justice to indigenous peoples across the country.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I know that the first nations are important to her because we have had the opportunity to talk about it.

Of course I wish the government would do more than pay lip service and express its good intentions to legislators. We want real action, and we can simultaneously work on an implementation plan. I imagine that in 15 years, some thought has been given to how to bring in the required measures.

My colleague talked about living conditions comparable to those in the third world. With all due respect to the first nations, in some places there is no drinking water and no one is ever sure when the food will arrive. Some communities are grappling with climate change. Then there are all the problems related to COVID-19: How can they respect social distancing rules when they do not have a roof over their heads and have to share housing with several families? How can they protect themselves when they have to isolate but someone shows up with the virus?

It is not just those regions that are far away; often, our knowledge of first nations is also miles away from where it should be, to make a play on words. I would urge my colleagues to find out more about first nations. Anyone who is less familiar with first nations, who may not have had the opportunity to see their communities or to visit them regularly, might learn something about how important this bill is.

People in some of these communities do not even have access to clean drinking water or have a roof over their heads. This is 2021. We have a duty to act.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good that I can ask some questions on this subject, but it is unfortunate that it is in the context of time allocation. Once again, we find ourselves in this situation.

The member from the Bloc talked about a number of myths. I would ask her to comment very specifically on the fact that it is a myth that all indigenous peoples in the country oppose resource development. In fact, I hear from many indigenous peoples across my constituency, my province and the country. They have expressed great concern about the implementation of UNDRIP and some of the associated policies that inhibit the economic opportunity of indigenous peoples, specifically in regard to resource development.

The member talked a little about some of the myths, and I would like her to comment on whether she would acknowledge that it is in

fact a myth that all indigenous peoples oppose resource development.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, the myth is that all indigenous peoples oppose development.

In my riding of Manicouagan, we have mines, fisheries, hydro-electricity and a number of related projects. I come from a resource-rich region, and these projects are already happening.

What we want is free and informed consent. First nations are interested in their economic development. If there is a myth, it is that first nations are not interested in their economic future, but that is completely false.

First nations want to be consulted. I think that is what the people of Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick want as well. Asking first nations what they think and seeking their consent is the right thing to do, as history shows. I am thinking of Hydro-Québec in particular.

First nations are interested in their economic development. They believe that adopting the declaration and enshrining it in Canadian law will help them.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is so important that we are having this conversation. I want to talk about some things that are a little Alberta-specific, so I hope the member will be patient with me.

Since November 2016, the Metis Settlements of Alberta has unanimously endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Although the legislation before us comes late and has lacked full consultation, as we have heard in the House today, it is a first step that has the potential to ensure a real working framework for better outcomes for indigenous peoples, including for my colleague, Blake Desjarlais from the Métis community of Fishing Lake, one of eight Métis settlements in Alberta.

Although the original content of the bill under former Bill C-26 is lacking in this version, we need to ensure that the intent is still to ensure true nation-to-nation relations and real reconciliation that must put indigenous people in the driver's seat.

I am wondering if the member could comment on this. Does the member agree that this is, in fact, the true goal of UNDRIP, to ensure that indigenous people are in the driver's seat and are leading the reconciliation?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments.

I am pleased that she spoke about what is going on in her home province. We are here to work together, debate and improve the bill. She made some compelling comments.

Government Orders

I completely agree that the first nations must be at the forefront of our discussions. I am a member of the Bloc Québécois, so I want to speak for Quebec. I do not want others to decide what is good or bad for Quebec. That is a decision for me and all Quebecers to make. The same goes for first nations.

First nations have rights too, and I want them to be able to weigh in on this issue.

As an elected official and a human being, I feel strongly about being able to make free and informed decisions, and first nations are no different.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is such an honour to rise today to speak to this very important bill. I would like to start with commending all those who spent so many decades drafting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the grassroots, leadership and civil society groups that have brought us here today.

I would also like to thank those who introduced bills in support of the implementation of UNDRIP, such as former members of Parliament Denise Savoie and Tina Keeper, or tabled motions in its support, as former MP Irene Mathysen did.

The NDP has a long history of support for the UN declaration. For instance, in 2006, the late Jack Layton wrote to the UN of our belief in social justice and equality leading us to support the declaration. He stated that even before the UN General Assembly had adopted it.

I would also like to give a special acknowledgement to my partner, Romeo Saganash, whose Bill C-262 forms the basis for Bill C-15, the bill we are debating today. It has been a very long road to get here.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007 to enshrine the human rights that, as it outlines, “constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.” I would also respectfully suggest adding the security of the person to that list.

The declaration was the result of over two decades of negotiations between indigenous peoples, civil society groups and nation states. It consists of 24 preambular paragraphs and 46 articles that define the inherent minimum human rights of indigenous peoples. This was a recognition that the rights of indigenous peoples were being violated throughout the world.

The articles within the declaration affirm the social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and spiritual rights of indigenous peoples. They include the right to self-determination, the right to free, prior and informed consent over matters impacting indigenous rights, including resource extraction on indigenous lands and territories.

Should these rights be violated, article 27 of the declaration also provides for fair and mutually acceptable procedures to resolve conflicts between indigenous peoples and states, including procedures such as negotiations, mediation, arbitration, national courts,

and international and regional mechanisms for denouncing and examining human rights violations.

It is important to note that the requirement for free, prior and informed consent in activities of any kind that impact on indigenous peoples, their property or territories, differs in law from a veto. Courts are obliged to take into consideration the facts, circumstances and applicable laws in any given cases, while veto is an absolute concept in law.

Canada, over a period of two decades, was an active participant in the drafting of the declaration, along with numerous indigenous organizations and representatives, and other states. However, despite that hard work, Canada, under the Harper government, opted to oppose the adoption of the declaration in 2007 with three other countries: Australia, the United States and New Zealand.

Although the current Prime Minister indicated in 2015 that the “most important relationship” was with indigenous peoples, he, along with the Liberal caucus, continued to not support Bill C-262, which was introduced in April 2016.

It was only through public pressure that the Liberals finally caved and voted in favour of Romeo Saganash’s bill. This was in spite of the fact that during the 2015 election campaign, the Prime Minister promised repeatedly to adopt and implement the UN declaration.

• (1215)

It is time we move away from the Indian Act, and move forward in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples throughout Turtle Island. It is time that we confirm the application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian law, obliging the government to ensure that all legislation is consistent with the rights articulated within the declaration, as well as to prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the declaration’s objectives, including addressing injustices, combatting systemic racism and discrimination, and eliminating violence against indigenous peoples.

However, as we speak here today, we are very far away from achieving that goal. Today, as I rise in the House, the current government is in breach of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling to immediately stop racially discriminating against first nations children on reserve. There have been 10 non-compliance orders to date, and the Liberals have now indicated they will break the law and not pay what was ordered by the tribunal.

There are more children in care now than at the height of the residential school system as a result of human rights violations, including failing to afford families the right to housing, failing to meet international obligations to ensure access to clean drinking water, and numerous other human rights violations that make it almost impossible for families to survive, let alone thrive. The government turns a blind eye to human rights, even when it impacts our children and families.

The amazing warrior Cindy Blackstock so eloquently stated, “There’s simply no credible defence to suggest that we, the people of this period, don’t know any better.”

As talk about reconciliation has become the new normal in this House, the government continues to fight St. Anne residential school survivors in court and sixties scoop adoptees, a Crown behaviour that continues to strip survivors of justice. It shows a total disregard for the violence they endured and continue to endure in real time while dealing with the residual traumatic and lingering pain.

Those experiences changed or shattered lives, including that of my dear friend and spirit sister Michele Guerin. Michele Guerin is a member of the Musqueam Indian Band and an esteemed lawyer who testified as a survivor during the national inquiry’s truth-gathering process. Michele was apprehended in the hospital at birth, during the sixties scoop, from her mother Beverley Guerin, who served two years in the Canadian navy and worked as a secretary at an engineering firm.

The lives and fates of persons who end up in the system are often left to the whims of those making decisions, often leaving them very unstable. That was true for Michele, who decided to testify and chose to pursue a freedom of information request to obtain her child welfare file, records she used in her testimony, walking her through her journey as a kid in care labelled as a “high risk youth”. I would argue that the label was incorrectly provided. It should be given to institutions that are at risk of not meeting the needs of children and families.

There was a failure to meet Michele’s needs as a young person, including objectifying her at the age of 14 in a local newspaper ad posted by the ministry of child and family services in an attempt to find her a home. The ad stated it was looking for a home for “a pretty independent teenage girl. Absolutely no parenting required.”

Even as a young person, she was objectified and sexualized by the system. Her rights were totally disregarded. Her personal experience brought her to feel connected with the late Tina Fontaine, a young indigenous girl who at 14 was left alone by the system and who was murdered. Her valuable life was further disrespected with the acquittal of her accused murderer.

Michele so clearly shared this during the hearing in British Columbia during the national inquiry:

The system labels us, neglects us, ignores us, and fails us. The worst failure is that decade after decade nothing changes. Our girls and women are still the prey. So we held the Inquiry. There were a lot of politics around the Inquiry, yet the families persisted. They needed to be heard. I testified as part of my own healing journey. The Inquiry lawyer told me, it’s rare that we have a lawyer testify as a Survivor. More importantly, I testified to be a voice for my Sisters. Still, there is no action plan. It feels as if our words fell on deaf ears and the government has chosen to Do Nothing.

● (1220)

These deaf ears are failing to invest in the current housing crisis, which has become even more critical during the pandemic. Many indigenous people continue to be unsheltered as a result of the violent and wrongful dispossession of our lands, territories and resources, a situation that has become even further pronounced on re-

Government Orders

serves, where issues of overcrowding, disrepair, inadequate infrastructure and lack of affordability are the norm, not the exception.

There has been a continued failure of this government to heed the calls from the member for Nunavut, the member for Keewatinook Aski and the member for Timmins—James Bay to take immediate action to address the massive shortages of homes and the mould crisis that have resulted from major disrepair.

There is also the promise of ensuring an end to water boil advisories on reserve, and it is one broken promise after broken promise. This is a vile human rights violation, as noted by Human Rights Watch in a 92-page report citing the Canadian government’s failure to meet a range of international human rights obligations, including its failure in, and extensive excuses about, ending all boil water advisories on reserve in Ontario, Manitoba and throughout the country. Even now, as we are in the midst of a pandemic, the government continues to find excuses not to afford indigenous peoples with this basic human right to water, yet it had billions of taxpayer dollars to spend on the TMX pipeline. These are choices.

Although Canada has endorsed the UN declaration, the Liberals still do not apply the right to free, prior and informed consent, as has been witnessed in Kanesatake, Site C, TMX, Keystone XL, Muskrat Falls, Wet’suwet’en territory, Baffinland Mary River Mine and 1492 Land Back Lane. It is not limited to these instances. We have seen excessive police force, or a lack of it, as witnessed in the Mi’kmaq fishing dispute, where police forces stood by their fishery, literally watching it burn to the ground.

It is no wonder that there has been criticism of Bill C-15 coming from indigenous peoples who have even lost faith that maybe this time the government will do the right thing. It is one thing to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and it is completely another thing to respect and uphold the rights affirmed throughout the articles of the declaration. Indigenous peoples have no reason to trust the government.

I understand this mistrust. It is valid, warranted and earned. I have the same mistrust, which is why we need this bill, Bill C-15, so we can finally have some legislative affirmation of our minimum human rights contained in the declaration. My support for the bill comes from my valid mistrust of the government to do the right thing. My trust has grown thin watching the clock run down, taking away hope, once again, that this will actually make it through Parliament.

Government Orders

Why does the government continue to hold up this bill? It is because indigenous people have seen and felt the impacts of human rights violations, including those contained in the Indian Act and other policies in Canada that maintain the violation of our rights to this day. Not only have governments failed in meeting the most basic human rights, but they legislated a violation of these rights.

It is abhorrent that in 2021, indigenous human rights are still up for debate almost daily in the House. Consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments can pull billions out their hat for their corporate friends, but banter back and forth about how they can come up with the money needed to resolve the water boil advisories on reserves, respect the right to housing and actually put in place a national action plan to resolve the ongoing violence perpetrated against indigenous women and girls caused by colonialism that continues to this today.

● (1225)

It is time for the Liberal government to start upholding human rights to ensure that the dignity, safety and the security of all persons is realized. This bill confirms these rights and ensures that any new legislation going forward will be consistent with United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as the summary of the bill affirms.

It is a critical step toward replacing the Indian Act with human rights. The Liberal government needs to act now, and I cannot express that strongly enough. The implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is essential. Bill C-15 confirms its application in Canadian law, meaning that courts can refer, and have referred, to the declaration to interpret domestic law, in addition to other distinct legal frameworks that also inform the interpretation of indigenous rights including the Constitution, indigenous law, our treaties, and international law that also respect and affirm those rights. None of these legal frameworks supersede the others, they are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

Bill C-15 is not perfect and requires amendments. This has been noted in witness testimony by indigenous and non-indigenous people in our study of the bill in committee. We must ensure that broad-based consultations occur as we move forward to strengthen the bill. For example, a recommendation to include, in preambular paragraph 8 and article 6(2), a reference to racism.

We know there are growing movements of white supremacy here and abroad. We also know that as a result of human rights violations, indigenous peoples throughout what is now referred to as Canada have been left poor and, far too often, unsheltered on our very own lands. All the while violence resulting from systemic racism, including what is being witnessed in the case of Eishia Hudson or a failure of the justice system in the case of Colten Boushie, the fact the indigenous women and girls 2S and diverse gendered people continue to be murdered and missing without urgent action, like our lives or loss of lives does not matter. The onus of proving systemic racism is placed on indigenous people whether sitting in the House of Commons or boardrooms, or fighting boots to the ground.

Indigenous peoples are constantly put in the place of having to justify experiences with systemic racism and the microaggressions we experience, having to explain this reality to those in privilege

who get to decide whether the claims are valid or not. Gaslighting: we need to call this out. To do otherwise would merely uphold the white supremacy and paternalism that is designed to keep indigenous peoples oppressed. Let us stop with the games and the need to protect the status quo, and just call it what it is, systemic racism, and not only when it is convenient but let us just call it systemic racism, neo-colonialism, white supremacy and human rights violations.

We need to first acknowledge truth if we are ever to realize a change in behaviour. Call it out, and let us get on with the work of creating a world where all people are safe and uphold their basic human rights, so we can all achieve our right to joy and dignity.

Let us stop fighting indigenous peoples in courts, whether it be about lands and resources; our right to free, prior and informed consent; fighting children; sixties scoop adoptees; and residential school warriors. Let us just honour human rights. Laws need to be put in place to protect indigenous peoples from acts of racism.

The implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should have happened 13 years ago, when it was adopted by the UN General Assembly.

How many years will we have to wait before indigenous peoples' human rights are finally respected? The time for excuses has run out. That is why I am proud, along with the NDP colleagues, to call on the Liberal government to act now and to finally uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

● (1230)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague so much for her incredible, impactful words today. She has articulated so many of the things that need to be said more often in this House.

I have struggled with this bill. I have high hopes, but I also have those same concerns and that same mistrust. I am thinking of court cases, child welfare, residential school survivors, the boil water advisories, the lack of action on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the snail's pace of implementing the TRC recommendations, the poverty, the state of housing.

I wonder, will this bill truly address the situation? For communities on the ground, day-to-day band operations, what will this mean in practice? That is the question I am having trouble articulating. Is it symbolism over substance, or can I believe in Canada this time around?

• (1235)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it provides us with another legal tool that we can use to protect indigenous rights in this country, which include treaties, international law, domestic law and indigenous law. It provides us with another legal tool we can use to affirm our rights. It does not take away from or impact our rights, it affirms the application of the minimum human rights standards articulated in UNDRIP as having application in Canadian law, and it is beyond time that this happen.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the proudest moments in my parliamentary career was being in the House of Commons on May 30, 2018, and voting alongside Romeo Saganash on the third reading of Bill C-262 and sending it to the Senate, where, sadly, it languished for an entire year before the first round of debate began.

I want to ask my colleague about the inconsistent approach the federal government often has when saying it wants to uphold indigenous rights and the sort of selective application of the UN declaration. My riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is being plagued by an anchorages issue that were all established without the free, prior and informed consent of the Halalt, the Lyackson, the Penelakut, the Stz'uminus and the Cowichan peoples. Parks Canada is making a huge effort to consult with these nations in the establishment of a national marine conservation area, but when those same nations raise concerns about the anchorages to the Minister of Transport, we get dead silence.

I would ask my colleague about the totally inconsistent approach that we get from different departments of the federal government.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that there has been a normalization in this country of violating the rights of indigenous peoples, as we have seen globally. We need to move beyond decision-making that is made only when it suits our economic and political interests and brushing it aside when it does not. Human rights are human rights. Human rights are a non-partisan issue and need to be applied.

This bill would provide application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law. It would clarify rights that have already been affirmed through the courts, through hundreds and hundreds of Supreme Court rulings, so it is necessary. That behaviour is colonial behaviour and if we truly want to move beyond reconciliation, we have to at least uphold the minimum human rights of indigenous peoples in this place that we now call Canada.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her incredible passion and the work she has done on this file.

As we speak today, the people of Kashechewan are being forced to face another evacuation. Year in, year out, every spring, the people of Kashechewan have to leave their traditional territory because they are living in a community that is fundamentally unsafe. I bring

Government Orders

this up at this point because we have had the Conservative government break agreements with the people of Kashechewan, we have had the Liberal government sign agreements with the people of Kashechewan, but there is no difference between the actions of either party. They continue to ignore the health and safety of people. The Liberals make promises, but do not follow through.

With other year of threat to people's very lives, having to leave their homes in the midst of a third wave of COVID, what does the member think about the government's failure to live up to the obligations of legal contracts that it has signed with indigenous people to guarantee human rights and justice?

• (1240)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the House that Canada has signed on to international human rights obligations. We are signatories to human rights in the international community, yet the government has wilfully and intentionally violated the minimum human rights of indigenous peoples. We know indigenous peoples in this country, as a result of human rights violations, were already behind and we know as a result of COVID-19, people are even further behind.

The fact that in all the COVID spending, although we were further behind, although indigenous people comprise 5% of the entire population, we were given less than 1% of the overall COVID funding. That is a normalized behaviour in this country that we need to look at. We need to stop turning a blind eye and ensure that all people who live in this place that we now call Canada are ensured minimum human rights. That includes the right to housing, to accessing clean drinking water, to keep their kids, the right to go to school in their own territories, these very minimum human rights that are up for debate almost daily in the House.

I will continue, along with others in the House, to do what we need to do to ensure human rights for all.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I cannot thank the member enough for her comments today. It is so important to hear from her. She is such an ally. I have learned so much from the member about the rights of indigenous people in Canada and around the world. I honour her for her words she has brought forward today.

As the member for Edmonton Strathcona, I would also like to talk very briefly about a community in my province that has been suffering for decades, that has been suffering with insufficient housing, with insufficient care for the people in that community. The community of Saddle Lake has been asking the federal government for years and years for support. I want to flag to the member that the incredible work she is doing is something that I will be sharing with those people. If there is anything she would like to say, any support she would like to offer to the people of Saddle Lake, I would be happy to take that to them after this debate.

Government Orders

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I would like to say that indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, allies, need to unite. We need to unite. The bill is not perfect. It requires amendments, but it is a starting point. We need to stop fighting against ensuring that indigenous peoples have minimum human rights in this country and finally realize human rights for all.

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

[*Translation*]

I am honoured today to speak to Bill C-15 as the member for Nickel Belt in Greater Sudbury, Canada's mining capital, which is located on the Robinson-Huron treaty territory of 1850 and on the traditional unceded lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiitae people.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the Métis people. As a member of the Liberal indigenous caucus, I am especially proud to support this bill, which is so important to the future of my region and the country as a whole.

Like many other members, I work closely with indigenous communities and their leaders to build relationships, mutual respect and, in some cases, good friendships. We all know that too many of these communities across Canada are struggling with the legacy of residential schools, as well as other problems related to systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, housing, access to clean water, high incarceration rates and a lack of jobs.

Today, we are having a debate on legislation that will help us address these enormous challenges. Bill C-15 would bring Canadian legislation into line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. UNDRIP sets out the rights of indigenous peoples around the world, including their right to self-determination and their right to develop their lands, territories and resources.

My speech today will focus on the role that our natural resource economy has played, is playing and will play in helping to right historical wrongs.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Let me share an example from my region. It involves Vale Canada's copper mine and Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation. The property is less than 50 kilometres south of where I am in my riding, next door to my riding of Nickel Belt and the riding of my good friend, the hon. member for Sudbury.

Work began in the sixties, but hopes to extract the nickel, copper and precious metals vanished in the early 1970s due to the world's low pricing. That was during a time when most Canadian companies did not bother consulting local first nations. The Sagamok Anishnawbek people still refer to this ignorance as a 100-year wall of indifference.

Things have changed and while progressive companies have played a role, credit must go to indigenous rights' pioneers, leaders from B.C. to Nova Scotia, who launched court challenges, starting

in the early 1970s, to assert their rights. It was in that context that the Sagamok Anishnawbek nailed down an agreement with Vale prior to the mine opening in 2014.

First nation members got training and access to jobs, which involved everything from underground mining to trucking, hauling and snow removal services. In 2019, the first nation acquired control of the mine's ore and waste rock haulage contract. More important to the community, it was a sense of pride.

[*Translation*]

At the time, the leaders of this first nation called it a historic event. It will go down in history. The future is here, and I am proud that our government is encouraging these partnerships all across Canada.

I just watched a video on YouTube about another success story in northern Ontario. Honestly, I got choked up.

[*English*]

Last year, Natural Resources Canada provided \$500,000 in a training fund for the Agoke Development. The money came from the \$13 million three-year indigenous forestry initiative.

Agoke, a forestry company in northern Ontario, is owned by three first nations. Their leaders are determined to create local jobs, especially for youth who otherwise have to leave their families and traditional territories to get employment. Today, they are truck drivers, millwrights, power engineers and heavy equipment mechanics, and some are trained in forestry management.

One of the youths in the video said that he was reluctant to take part, but then his grandparents convinced him to take that leap of faith. That youth was bursting with pride when he was asked if he was glad he had applied. He said that it was life changing. A young woman echoed that sentiment, telling other youth, "Honestly, just to sign up."

[*Translation*]

The Natural Resources Canada program also gave \$330,000 to the Cree first nation of Waswanipi in Quebec, which is located 800 kilometres north of Montreal. This financial assistance enabled the first nation to reopen a shuttered sawmill. That is fantastic, but the government cannot do this alone.

We need the private sector and its private purchasing power. Industry is answering the call, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is a good business decision at a time when many companies are experiencing labour shortages, especially in areas that are remote and near indigenous communities. The oil industry already supports more than 10,000 indigenous jobs and has invested some \$12 million in the communities.

• (1250)

[English]

Just last spring, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers reaffirmed its 2016 endorsement of the UN declaration as a framework for reconciliation. The LNG sector has helped set the pace. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada said recently that this sector had the potential to close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

Meanwhile, the Mining Association has taken action to support and embrace UNDRIP.

[Translation]

It revised its indigenous and community relationships protocol. This will make it possible for its members to align themselves with the requirements of our new Impact Assessment Act, our government's initiative to achieve the objectives of the declaration.

There are approximately 1,200 indigenous communities located near several hundred active mines and more than 2,500 active exploration properties. These agreements provide for training programs, apprenticeship opportunities, and substantial scholarships and retention bursaries. The objective is to provide transferable skills that can be used after the mine shuts down.

The forest products industry also recognizes the importance of establishing partnerships with indigenous peoples, 70% of whom live in or near forests.

[English]

In B.C., for instance, the various partnership agreements have brought roughly \$250 million in benefits to indigenous communities. This progress is not confined to traditional resources and industries. Many communities will take part in a clean energy wave as we drive toward a net-zero 2050 target.

In northern Alberta, our government is helping indigenous communities build Canada's largest off-grid solar energy farm. This is hardly an isolated incident. The Conference Board of Canada noted that indigenous communities owned half of Canada's renewable projects, which is making real progress.

However, the truth is that there is still more work to do be done. That is why everyone, government, industries and these communities, must work harder and together to build that foundation of trust.

The natural resources sector is the largest employer of indigenous peoples in Canada. The natural resources economy provides jobs, equities and opportunities for indigenous businesses and impact agreements that benefit communities adjacent to natural resources. UNDRIP will provide a clearer picture for resource development in Canada, helping to ensure these projects are done in full partnership with indigenous people.

Government Orders

Working together, we can be part of correcting this grave historic injustice. I urge all members of the House to support the bill.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into debate on this subject, although it is unfortunate it is under the auspices of time allocation.

I heard from a number of indigenous leaders, communities and individuals, who are very concerned about the consequences a legislated implementation of UNDRIP would have on their ability for economic self-determination. Certainly, I appreciate the fact that the member brought forward a number of concerns about how stakeholders needed to be engaged and whatnot, but I am concerned about how some indigenous leaders see this as having possible negative consequences on their ability to participate in Canada's economy.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, the bill has provided some opportunities for consultation. Some indigenous communities have concerns, but the vast majority of indigenous communities are in support of natural resources and work collectively with a natural resources company. It is clear that many, if not all, of the industries have embraced UNDRIP. They know that we need to consult with indigenous communities. They know that to get resources to market, we need to partner and we also need to look at a net-zero plan by 2050.

This is important for the consultation that is happening. It is important that we pass the legislation. We need to move forward. We need need to build the trust with indigenous communities, and the private sector is leading the way.

• (1255)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. He talked about what went on in his backyard, the lack of consultation with first nations people and the fact that first nations youth had to leave the north, again and again. What is happening in his backyard is the destruction of the indigenous languages, the indigenous education, the indigenous politics and environmental programs at Laurentian University. There has been no consultation with them and that member has gone to ground.

The member talks about how great it is that indigenous people can learn to drive trucks. Yes, they know how to drive trucks all right, but we have a world-class program at Laurentian to ensure access for indigenous youth not to have to leave the north, but to stay and be doctors, nurses or teachers. It is being wiped out and that member has not bothered to stand up and fight for them.

Government Orders

How can he have the nerve to talk about consultation with first nations now while this program is being wiped out on his watch?

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, it is always interesting hearing the member speak, because he could not be further from the truth. We all agree that the program cuts that are happening at Laurentian University are unacceptable. The indigenous, the environment and what is happening is unacceptable during the court proceedings.

However, I want to assure the House, members of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury, indigenous peoples and people all across my riding that I have been standing up. Our government will be supporting a plan that has been proposed. This is something we have to do.

Today, we are debating the consultation approach that we have taken. We are debating UNDRIP. We need to pass this legislation. We need to do this now. The urgency is here. We have supported it over the years and now we need to pass it. I hope that tomorrow my colleague and all the members of the House will take that initiative to ensure it is passed.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, resource development and extraction have offered some opportunities for first nation communities: training, jobs, accommodation agreements and perhaps economic prosperity in certain cases. The trouble with highlighting only the positive is that it lacks integrity; it comes off as disingenuous. We know many of the ways that resource development and extraction have actually used and abused indigenous territories and peoples.

Could the member comment on some of the ways that missing and murdered indigenous women are impacted by, say, man camps that accompany this development?

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, obviously more work needs to be done. The House of Commons and all political parties need to support indigenous communities across the country. We need to ensure that we look at housing and clean water, and at the many issues facing first nations. We have many issues to deal with, and we will be taking action. We are making great strides. We need to promote the good that is happening in indigenous communities and we need to do better.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, good day and *ama sqit*. I am speaking to members today from the traditional unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam nations. My riding also includes the traditional unceded territories of the Lil'wat, the Shishalh and the N'Quat'qua nations. I am very grateful to also call this place my home.

Taniyap. It is particularly important to start with this language acknowledgement as we are debating Bill C-15, which seeks to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian federal law.

It is important because we need to remember that indigenous peoples have lived on these lands and waters since time immemorial. Their laws, their practices and their ways of life did not end when settlers reached Canada's shores. However, our nation has

stubbornly not been able to reconcile this reality and has instead sought to carve out a box, figuratively, to isolate first nations in society. It has sought to marginalize indigenous people in Canada or to assimilate them into society more widely.

The actions of settlers and Canadian governments over time have been to dispossess indigenous peoples of the land they enjoyed communally, to separate families, to suppress indigenous culture and to deny the same basic rights to indigenous peoples that the rest of Canadians enjoy freely.

The advances on indigenous rights we have seen in our country were not simply given to first nations. They were the result of long, arduous litigation that led to the development of aboriginal law. This was by no means easy: It started from a point of first nations not having the right to legal counsel to having rights protected under section 35 of the charter. The common law has evolved to recognize aboriginal rights to traditional practices such as fishing under indigenous leaders and visionaries like Ron Sparrow.

Recognition of aboriginal practices and title in seminal cases such as *Delgamuukw* had to be built from an evidentiary base that was recorded through oral history, when the law did not recognize it. These cases had to be heard in front of leading jurists who, only 30 years ago, dismissed indigenous ways of life as nasty, brutish and short before they finally worked their way up to the highest courts in our land where our laws continue to evolve.

The adoption of Bill C-15 would help flip this script with the government finally taking a proactive approach to recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, including the inherent right to self-determination. Nothing less is required to move forward in reconciliation.

Since 2016, progress has been made by introducing new approaches to negotiations and establishing mechanisms for co-operation and collaboration, as well as through ongoing steps to implement and respond to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called upon the Government of Canada to fully adopt and implement the declaration as a framework for reconciliation, and Bill C-15 responds to calls to action 43 and 44.

Bill C-15 would take this step by further requiring that our laws be consistent with UNDRIP, or else modifying them so that they are. It is a simple and short bill, but its implications are wide-ranging. For that reason, an up to three-year timeframe is established to develop an action plan to implement this legislation. I know that seems like a long time, but when we consider that this implicates all federal ministers, the whole of government, and 634 first nations in this country speaking 50 different languages, as well as the amount of federal legislation that will have to be looked at, we can understand the scale of the task.

This is not the first time we are debating this bill in this chamber. This bill was first introduced by Cree former Liberal MP Tina Keeper in a 2008 private members' bill, which failed to be enacted. Former NDP MP Romeo Saganash's private member's bill passed in the House, but unfortunately languished in the Senate for over a year before the last election.

I have to emphasize that we are not the first movers in this space of adopting this bill into domestic legislation, given that the provincial government in British Columbia did so in 2019. We can learn from its experience. The sky has not fallen since. Instead, the province has had one of the most robust economies in our country since then. I mention this to dispel a common misconception about the likely impact of this bill.

• (1300)

When it stalled the previous iteration of this bill, the official opposition in this chamber and the Senate voiced fears that the article recognizing free, prior and informed consent from indigenous people for projects on traditional indigenous land would paralyze resource development. However, these fears disregard the fact that the Government of Canada already aims to secure free, prior and informed consent when actions are proposed that impact the rights of indigenous peoples on their lands, resources and territories. Case law has grown to recognize that significant impacts to closely held rights require a meaningful process that seeks consent, in practice anyway, to uphold the honour of the Crown and to meet constitutional obligations under section 35.

These fears also disregard that industries already work from within this frame because their shareholders expect it, because it is necessary for social licence and business certainty, and because they know that the projects will become fixtures in the communities. Partnership with indigenous peoples is the way forward.

Giving first nations a say in projects that affect them does not mean that projects do not get built. It means that bad projects do not get built, and that the issues that impact first nations are addressed in the process. The Squamish Nation in my riding pioneered an indigenous-led environmental assessment process that a major project proponent agreed to be bound by. Rather than reject the project, the EA approved it with important conditions that would mitigate the impacts of the project. From that, an impact benefit agreement was then ratified by the nation through a referendum.

Similar progressive processes have been developed by nations such as the Tahltan Nation in northern B.C., where mining is a hotbed of activity, and the Secwepemc in the interior of B.C. Processes like these are now allowed, and indeed encouraged, by the Impact Assessment Act that became law in 2019. It is a great departure from the assessment regime that the official opposition brought in, in 2012. When the Conservatives were in power, they treated first nations as stakeholders rather than as the rights holders that they are, and treated consultation with indigenous peoples just the same as with other individuals: as a box-checking exercise. This was not only dishonourable, it was also unlawful, and it is one of the reasons that inspired me to be where I am today.

The Impact Assessment Act is one of nine federal laws that references, and was created within, the spirit of the declaration. We need not fear these developments, because when first nations have

Government Orders

clear power over decisions that affect them trust is built, confidence increases and opportunities become available for indigenous peoples. Decolonizing our relationship with indigenous peoples presents perhaps the greatest opportunity for economic growth in this country. If first nations can get out of the absurdly titled Indian Act, they can gain access to basic abilities, such as getting a mortgage from a bank, among many other benefits.

I wish to recognize Shishalh Nation *hiwus* Warren Paull, who was a councillor in 1986 when the Squamish Nation became the first self-governing nation in our country through visionary leadership, blazing a trail for many other nations. The nation has since developed advanced land-use plans to guide development and is assuming new areas of responsibility from other orders of government. It participates as a full partner in the Sunshine Coast Regional District, has reformed its constitution and voting laws, negotiated detailed provincial agreements on reconciliation and inspired the next generation of leaders, all while continuing complex negotiations on rights with the federal government. This is also happening against the backdrop of a community where survivors of residential schools still painfully recount their experiences.

Chief Paull was one of many dignitaries at the B.C. legislature for the announcement that the province would be the first in Canada to introduce and pass legislation to implement UNDRIP. There he noted that:

It's been 52 years since Frank Calder and the Nisga'a Nation did the first court case on land claims. Since those 52 years and counting, we finally get back to the place where recognition is there.

It is high time, 14 years after UNDRIP was introduced to the globe, that we recognize the same rights here. It is time that we work with first nations proactively to advance reconciliation rather than respond remedially to court decisions. It is time that we co-develop the future that we want to see in this country.

As my time is running out, I will conclude with that.

?ul nu msh chalap.

Government Orders

• (1305)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the member emphasize the importance of this being dealt with now, but I had the honour of supporting Romeo Saganash's bill in the 41st Parliament, which ended in 2015. In that election, the Prime Minister promised to pass and implement UNDRIP. We have not seen that happen. We are now a year and a half into the second Parliament with the prospect of this not getting through, as it did not the last time.

Could the member tell us why it is taking so long? How can indigenous people, or any Canadians, take seriously the Liberal commitment to having this actually put in legislation with an action plan for implementation?

• (1310)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, it is high time that we pass this. It is high time that we implement this in Canada. It has been over 14 years since the declaration was passed. There have been many strong efforts to finally move ahead with this in Canada.

While this process takes place, important progress has been made on implementing some of the principles, but we need to have this as a framework and an action plan so that we reform all types of legislation across the country.

I would certainly agree with the member that it is high time that we pass this. I certainly hope that my colleagues across the House will agree with me as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member provide further comment on the issue of reconciliation and how important that has been for the government over the last number of years? As the member pointed out, Bill C-15 is another piece of legislation that responds to the calls for action, and to a deep desire that I and many MPs have to see UNDRIP take effect. How important is it toward reconciliation from his perspective?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, moving forward with reconciliation is incredibly important for our country.

The Prime Minister has said that our relationship with indigenous peoples is the most important relationship we have. There are significant challenges we have in moving forward with this. This is a long process: It is one that is going to require trust-building to make sure we are able to make the progress that we need to. It is also one of the biggest opportunities that we have in this country with respect to economic development.

We see lots of great progress already. There have been major changes in the way that the Government of Canada approaches negotiations to treaties in British Columbia, which I think is really important progress. We certainly have a long way to go. We have a lot we can learn from the province of B.C., for instance, on how it has been able to move forward in the same respect.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, we have heard about how quickly we need to pass this piece of legisla-

tion, and I understand that perfection in a perfect world is not necessarily what we can aim for.

Significant amendments must be made to this bill. I would like to hear the member's comments on that, specifically about the lack of true intent around including the word "racism." It is not there. We see instead "systemic discrimination", and a measure to address injustices. Why does a hesitancy to address racism exist? Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, systemic racism exists in our country. I mentioned a few examples, going back over 100 years, of how that has been present.

We just have to look at the lack of access to clean drinking water in way too many areas across our country, and the third world conditions that many first nations live in at this point.

I certainly agree that this is here and we need to make sure we are addressing that through any means possible.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Calgary Centre.

I am honoured today to speak to Bill C-15, as the relationship with indigenous people in this country is a lived experience for me growing up and living in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. I must admit there is some trepidation on my part as we embark on this journey. The impacts of this bill would be both long-term and far-reaching, requiring more than the seeking of short-term political gains and talking points. The historical relationship between the federal government and indigenous people in this country is filled with distrust that has put in jeopardy the true potential our great country has to offer all of us.

A couple of months ago, in the announcement that the government would not fulfill its promise to end boil water advisories in first nations communities, it was pointed out that the scope of the problem was not fully understood at the time the election promise was made by the Prime Minister in 2015. This is another reminder to all of us that making promises one cannot keep is not an ideal way to develop trust in a relationship that badly needs more of it.

In a Globe and Mail article published recently, it was pointed out that Public Services and Procurement Canada for the past three years "has said a key indicator of the government's economic and social-policy goals was an increase in the participation of [indigenous-led business] in procurement." Unfortunately, it was revealed in the departmental plans in the last three years that the targets have remained as TBD, to be determined. That is three years that we have seen no change in the ministry's plans to set targets or measure results.

Government Orders

Even worse, to this day, there is not even a mechanism in place to track which bids are coming from indigenous businesses. If the government's goal really was to increase procurement for indigenous businesses, one would think that, at the very least, creating an instrument in its data management system could have been developed in three years. At best, this is an astounding lack of competence.

Further evidence of lowering the bar was in the minister's 2021 mandate letter, where there was not even a mention of the 5% indigenous procurement promise that had been made to indigenous businesses in the past. Instead of doing the hard work and fixing the department's failures, they just removed the targets. It is not exactly an example that one would find in a leadership manual.

These examples illustrate a troubling trend with the government's actions when it comes to delivering results for indigenous people and their communities. It starts with making election promises and getting photographs at press conferences, and it continues by using phrases in ministerial letters, on websites and in announcements like "strongly encourages" and "the most important relationship to this government". It then ends with walking back the original promise, changing the targets or, in the case of the procurement example, eliminating them altogether. The government tends to act only when it has its back to the wall, after spending too much time walking backwards while making little progress on its promises. We see this again today in the fact that it has to invoke closure on a bill that has seen one hour of debate in this House.

This brings me to Bill C-15. After Bill C-262, the government had ample opportunity and time to develop a national action plan that could have created the certainty and clarity that stakeholders have been consistently asking for. Putting together an action plan before tabling the bill would have allowed for many of the concerns of people across the spectrum to be addressed. The worry that government is putting the cart before the horse is justified, as history has proven that to be the case all too often. Why would we not ensure, on such an important piece of legislation, that we remove as many rocks off the road as possible before we proceed? That approach would alleviate a lot of the judicial quagmire that is sure to follow the passing of Bill C-15 without this transparent road map.

With no certainty, the very real worry is that there will be many court battles over the next few decades because of political shortsightedness. As we have seen this past year with the Nova Scotia lobster fishery issue, that is a path not worth taking. In this relationship, we cannot afford more failures. We have to be honest: Governments have a terrible track record on delivering expectations for indigenous people.

Let me use some numbers that the Indigenous Resource Network shared recently, to show who has not fallen short in delivering for indigenous people and communities in this country.

- (1315)

The private sector has led the way in spending on indigenous businesses. Suncor has spent over \$6 billion on indigenous procurement since 1999, including \$800 million, or 8% of its total spending, in 2019 alone. Sunova has spent \$2.9 billion since 2009, including \$139 million in 2019. Imperial has invested \$2.6 billion in indigenous businesses since 2009.

Diamond mines in the Northwest Territories spent \$5.9 billion on indigenous spending between 1996 and 2017. Agnico Eagle in Nunavut spent \$408 million on Inuit businesses in 2019 alone. Teck Resources spent \$225 million on indigenous procurement in 2019. Coastal GasLink has spent \$720 million on indigenous and local contracts. TMX, when it is completed, will have generated over \$1 billion on indigenous-based contracts. Finally, from its own published data, Cameco, a uranium company, has procured \$3.85 billion since 2004 from local suppliers in my riding in northern Saskatchewan.

These numbers represent more than just dollars. They represent real outcomes and direct impacts on the daily lives of indigenous people. They allow for investments into communities that have far too long been left out of the opportunities the rest of Canada has enjoyed.

It is often implied that any discussion around economic opportunity and job creation for indigenous people is somehow insensitive to the social issues they face. I believe the opposite is actually true. Advocating for jobs, own-source revenue streams, equity ownership and financial independence is in fact the pathway to self-determination and the solution to many of the social challenges.

The culture of poverty has for too long defined the culture of the people. A culture with such rich history deserves so much better. The private sector has done the heavy lifting in the building of trust with indigenous people and their communities, and it has been doing it for years. It should be recognized and applauded for the advancement of reconciliation and the role it has played in it. Part of that recognition should be reflected in its voice being heard in the areas of this bill it is simply seeking clarity on.

Since Bill C-15 was tabled, I have had the opportunity and pleasure to meet virtually with many indigenous stakeholders. The common theme in our discussions always came back to the lack of certainty in Bill C-15's plan to implement UNDRIP. That is why it is so important that this bill clarify the following issues.

Number one, in the three years the government has given itself to develop an action plan on the implementation of the declaration, what is the approach going to be to collaborating and consulting with indigenous communities, the indigenous business community and the numerous regional and national organizations across Canada so all their views will be considered?

Number two, how will the application of the declaration be applied when there is conflicting support and opposition from the indigenous communities on projects that are both large and vertical in scope? Does the federal government retain the final authority in the decision-making process?

Government Orders

Number three, will not allowing time and space for indigenous communities to find an answer to the question of who has the authority to provide or withhold consent undermine the process? With the current lack of consensus, what does this mean in the years ahead?

Bringing clarity on these issues is the right thing to do. There is a responsibility in the consideration of Bill C-15 that requires us to not only listen to the concerns around the lack of certainty, but to respond by advocating for indigenous people, communities and leaders who are asking for answers to the important questions they are bringing forward.

We have a long way to go in building the lost trust in the relationship with indigenous people in this country. Divisions within Parliament have often led to legislation that is based more on politics than on real solutions. That is why it is obvious that seeking clarity and certainty on Bill C-15 is not only a fair and valid request, but it is the very essence of what the aspirations of UNDRIP require us to do.

• (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important that we be really clear. The Conservative members say what they will during the debate, but their actual intentions would be not to allow the legislation to ultimately come to a vote. We have seen that on other types of legislation. Even though they might talk nice in regard to reconciliation and so forth, their actions on this particular piece of legislation, as it was with Bill C-262, say more than their words do.

I am wondering if the member could provide a very clear indication as to why the Conservatives would not have recognized the value of allowing this to come to a vote so at the very least it could go to committee.

• (1325)

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, let us just be clear in the question the member is asking. This legislation is already at committee; it has been at committee for weeks already, as we were required to do a prestudy of this legislation at the INAN committee. Maybe we should actually let some facts do the talking.

As I said in my comments, I have had the opportunity to speak to many indigenous stakeholders, and what I have heard and what I understand is that many of them have not had the opportunity to have their input into this legislation. They have asked to come to committee; they have sent letters asking to be at committee, but the member's government limited the amount of time and the number of meetings where we could listen to the evidence at committee, so for him to talk about the Conservatives obstructing the process is literally quite a folly. It is actually the Liberals who have obstructed the process for us to hear from the voices at committee.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I represent a very large natural resources region, and we know that no projects get off the ground without indigenous consent. It is now a fundamental principle.

The issue of consent is important, because it is not just about saying "yes"; it is also about the ability to say "no" when a project has fundamental problems that threaten the environment of traditional territory. I know, from the days when I was working with the Algonquin nation in Quebec, that we actually had to have blockades to get anyone to come to the table. We are talking about a fundamental principle, a principle that has been defined in court case after court case, a principle that the issue of consent is fundamental when we are talking about resource development in Canada.

I would encourage the Conservatives to recognize that if they are willing to work with first nations communities, we are going to move a lot further ahead, but we have seen obstructions against UNDRIP year in, year out. UNDRIP needs to pass before we can move together as a nation.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, in all fairness, I could not agree more with the member. As I said in my comments, not allowing time and space for the indigenous communities to find an answer to the question of who has the authority to provide or withhold consent undermines the process.

What I have heard from the stakeholders, many of them indigenous organizations representing opportunity for indigenous people whose mandate is to end poverty in first nations, is their concern about the uncertainty and the lack of clarity on this particular piece of legislation and how it may hinder their opportunity to fulfill their mandate of serving their people in first nations across this country.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask quickly about some of the words we use. Language is so important, and "reconciliation" has been said time and time again in the House. I have heard from many people who feel that this word is actually losing some of its meaning. In fact, if we think of reconciliation, it means to reconcile, to improve what was perhaps once a good relationship, which we know was not the case.

Could the member speak about reparations and what we could actually be doing in Canada to ensure that we repair a broken relationship?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, I would simply point out to the member opposite that the slogan of my campaign and in my riding has been "Building Authentic Relationships" with the people I serve, in a riding that is 70% indigenous people. I believe that authenticity, being real, having good conversation and listening to the concerns of the people is the answer to repairing the relationship. We have to get out there. We have to be part of their lives. We have to listen to their concerns. We have to consider them valid. It is about building relationships that are real and authentic.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I represent a riding that is in Treaty 7 territory, the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Nation, including Siksika, Piikani and Kainai, the Tsuut'ina nations; and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge all the many first nations, Métis and Inuit, whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

Let me start today's debate on Bill C-15, introduced to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with the questions I am often asked about its clarifications.

How is United Nations involved? How do its edicts fit in Canadian law, which of course is much more robust? How do the United Nations edicts affect jurisdictions that have an established rule of law? How does UNDRIP consider and affect unique institutional rights, like section 35 of the Canadian Constitution? How do the two go hand in hand? As this is legislation, will it remain subservient to the constitutional law of Canada that supersedes it? What happens to existing Canadian laws? How are decades of legal precedent affected by this declaration?

Who will be the decision-makers? That is, the arbiters to balance the various interests and outcomes of these very pertinent questions. Will it be the same stagnant bureaucrats and interest groups that have enshrined the Indian Act as the status quo, in spite of decades of compulsion from all affected corners of Canada to move beyond this paternalistic legislation? Will it be a star chamber of legalists who have never set foot on the ground or experienced the problems that generations of first nations have been striving to overcome?

One thing is clear: Based on outcomes that have not arrived, the status quo is broken. How do we know it is broken? Let me count the ways. The words that describe the rights of Canada's indigenous people are a meaningful gesture, but gestures themselves are empty. There is no reconciliation that does not include economic reconciliation. Any legislation that we consider must not contribute to any negative impacts on the many indigenous communities that rely on resource development for jobs, revenues and a means to better outcomes. The decision-makers, bureaucrats, legalists, self-serving interest groups, those with a stake in maintaining the miserable status quo, should not be enshrined as roadblocks to the change that Canada requires.

It is also worth noting that those with a large stake in the benefits of the status quo have no stake in the misery associated with the status quo, which is borne by those who have been actually seeking to escape that misery for decades. Wholesale change is long overdue, and bringing forth legislation to secure the interests of these regressive middlemen is the opposite of what Canada and its indigenous population require.

Let me caution the Minister of Justice about placing his faith in the same interest groups and intervenors who have been part of the problem on this matter for decades. If the minister wants to get on the ground and hear about the frustrations with those voices by indigenous Canadians throughout Canada who will be affected by this legislation and the uncertainty it brings forth, please take the time to meet with those groups and have fulsome consultation, which has not happened, including in this House where we have had one hour of debate on it prior to today.

Weeks ago, I asked questions in this House about the effects of the government's actions on the flight of capital for project development in Canada. Oddly, it was after one of the government's appointees blamed risk and uncertainty as the underlying reasons that projects were no longer being viewed as viable investments by for-

Government Orders

eign capital in Canada. Of course, rather than addressing the causes of the risk and uncertainty and changing the destructive course on which the current government has ventured for six years, the solution seems to be for the government to allocate capital to replace private investment: the magic of social finance to the rescue.

We know what this means. It means more risk and uncertainty for Canada's taxpayers. What are others recognizing as a problem is going to be a problem for Canadian taxpayers, and the government is doubling down on the risk Canadians will bear. In regard to UNDRIP, this legislation, as written, adds another level of risk and uncertainty to development in indigenous territories.

Prior to this country's battle to get ahead of a pandemic 13 months ago, the biggest issue we were facing, as a country and as a cohesive society, were the blockades that were initiated by certain indigenous organizations in support of some parties opposed to the Coastal GasLink pipeline, traversing Wet'suwet'en territory in northern British Columbia. Do we know who these initiators were? Do we know what standing they had: traditional, authoritative, representative, legal, responsible?

● (1330)

Do we know if these parties had other interests in the outcome? We know the democratic process for the band matters was completely usurped and endorsed by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, thus by the current government. Therefore, a well-understood process, which had changed substantially, was quickly usurped. Do I need to define "risk" and "uncertainty" for the current government? What does the government see as having legitimacy in the eyes of project proponents? It is definitely not the process as represented. As proponents have attested, if they do not have process, they do not have a path forward.

This bill, Bill C-15, proposes to increase that risk and uncertainty for indigenous organizations and adds another barrier to the participation in economic reconciliation. Even as project proponents themselves attracted real capital for the development of their own economic opportunities, they will be thwarted again by the government. I thank them for the words, but how about some real action? Let me illustrate the costs of that uncertainty.

Government Orders

Kitimat LNG is a project on Canada's west coast. The project has been progressing for a decade, along with its partner development the Pacific Trails pipeline. The project proponents have spent over \$3 billion to get to this point, which represents a raft of documentation for the regulators, a gravel pad, full agreement from all 16 indigenous organizations traversed by the pipeline and full partnership with the Haisla First Nation at the project site. Thousands of indigenous jobs, hundreds of millions of dollars of benefits to people in indigenous communities, advanced trade training for a generation of people in those communities and the creation of capacity for advancing economic interests do not arrive out of thin air. In addition, more than 40 million tonnes per annum of greenhouse gas reductions will not be met. Sadly, at the end of the day, this project is on hold because there is no path forward at this point in time. Putting aside the ancillary environmental benefits, another file on which the current government is all talk with little tangible results, economic reconciliation delayed is reconciliation denied. Members should tell their children after 10 years that the reason they could not get a better education and advance their own, their society's and the world's interests is because the process was obscure and caused a decade of delays. Then members will understand the frustration.

The interests advancing this confusion have no stake in the outcome. Let us acknowledge that some of those interests, such as the NGOs that are short-term participants, often funded by foreign actors, have their own interests at heart and are often funded as well by the federal government.

Words and actions: we hear much of the former from the government and receive little of the latter. How many indigenous organizations have to stand up and say to the Minister of Justice they do not think the law will work and are worried that it adds further to the difficulties they have already experienced before he pays attention, before he gathers consensus, before he shuts down debate in the House of Commons on a fundamental piece of legislation that will change our country's governance going forward, including with those groups we are constitutionally bound to consider under section 35 of the Constitution of Canada?

We have seen this minister in action with Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying. Let me remind members that we moved this bill through this House and, on this side of the House, many of my colleagues supported the government's legislation before it went to the Senate. The minister manipulated that legislation in the other place and brought it back here in an entirely different form that ignored the at-risk groups that were left behind in the legislation. As a result, as that represented manipulation, we voted against the process. It was not democratic.

Does the minister believe that first nations organizations have not recognized his actions? Does he think they are unnecessarily wary of his non-democratic tendencies and partiality to other interested parties? I will repeat that there are many who are moving this legislation forward who have no stake in the outcome. That spells moral hazard and we must divert it.

Real outcomes, accountability and trust are in short supply with the current government. We must do better.

• (1335)

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member across and I appreciated him talking about uncertainty with respect to these protests and blockades. I want to ask him about a blockade that occurred in my riding. It was a famous blockade that occurred in Ontario in central Canada that lasted for three weeks and it impacted many billions of dollars worth of commerce.

I spoke to the local chief of that nation in my riding and we were trying to think of a way to end this blockade. He told me that many protesting would not heed his calls to remove the blockade because they did not respect his title of "chief" under the Indian Act. These individuals claimed that they themselves held hereditary rights to the chief role.

Does the member believe that Bill C-15 would make this type of scenario more likely to occur in the future?

• (1340)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question because I have met with indigenous organizations in my riding and across Canada. One of the exact issues that they brought forward is who has standing to say that "you need my consent in order to move this forward". Does that consent now come at the high school level when every person has to step forward or does it come with an actual legitimacy? We have experienced that across the country. It has been brought to our attention that this is a fundamental that has to change. We have to recognize who actually has the authority to give that consent or withhold that consent at the end of the day. That is not clear at all in the bill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, self-determination means being in a position to accept or reject a project. It also means knowing who has the authority to do so.

Unfortunately, the Indian Act is fundamentally racist, given its concepts and archaic nature. Bill C-15 is about reconciliation.

Does my colleague believe that to achieve total and clear reconciliation, the Indian Act must also be changed?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

I am certainly proud to talk about the existing constraints of the Indian Act. That has to change now. Maybe they should cease to exist. I hope we will see that in the next Parliament.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is somebody from my neck of the woods and someone I consider a friend. I miss being able to talk with him in the lobby and share our different perspectives.

I want to talk about a specific Alberta issue. In Alberta at the moment he will know there is a lot of debate around coal mining and about mountain top coal mining. I have worked quite closely with indigenous groups in southern Alberta to help them protect their rights, to work with them to ensure their rights are protected. They brought forward a petition that had 18,000 signatures calling on the government to protect treaty aboriginal rights, water rights, species at risk rights and the environment.

I am wondering why the member feels that implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would not provide more clarity, more certainty for investment decisions, not less. By involving indigenous people in the beginning of the project, it seems that would make it an even stronger proposition.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, the coal development they are looking at that has been petitioned in southern Alberta has been in the process for over eight years. I think it started in 2013, so it has transcended different provincial governments and indeed different federal governments and has a multi-party, multi-level of government environmental assessment review going on at this point in time.

It is important to make sure that we bring everybody in at the front of the line, but have a process involved that actually says, here is where we get input from all of the different actors or interests that are involved in any type of natural resource project development, especially coal mines.

I understand the provincial government is looking at that very clearly and potentially reverting to a policy that has been in the works that existed back in the time of Premier Lougheed. It is a very good piece of legislation that made sure we protected those interests and the nature that we need to uphold, especially in the Rocky Mountain eastern slopes.

• (1345)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill C-15.

I am pleased to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples bill that is before the House of Commons today. I am speaking today from my riding of Labrador on the traditional territory of the Inuit and Ainu people of our great land. We have one of the most beautiful, prosperous areas in the subarctic of Canada. We are very proud Canadians.

I think we can all agree that today's discussion on Bill C-15 is part of a broader discussion. It is one that stems from generations of discussions that have been led by indigenous people, by many tremendous, strong indigenous leaders who have lent their voices, expertise, skills and knowledge to build to the point we are at today, seeing this bill before the House of Commons.

While our discussion is a broader one, it is important to highlight that it is also about national reconciliation. One of the broader perspectives that we have been dealing with as a country in recent years is one that we should have, could have but did not deal with in many generations past. It is about the recognition and the rights of implementation of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It is the

Government Orders

rebuilding of strong and healthy relationships based on respect, cooperation and partnership.

We all know that Canada as a country has a constitutional and legal framework that embodies many of the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In particular, section 35 of the Canadian Constitution recognizes and affirms aboriginal and treaty rights. Section 35 is the core pillar of the Canadian legal and constitutional framework for the renewal of that relationship between the Crown, which is Canada, and indigenous people.

Implementing the declaration in the context of the Constitution and of the legal framework will contribute to enhancing indigenous participation in the Canadian economy and advancing reconciliation toward renewed relationships.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hate to interrupt the member, but I believe she forgot to indicate that she is splitting her time with the member for Beaches—East York.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I thank the my colleague for being so diligent in his responsibilities. I am sharing my time with my colleague from Beaches—East York.

I want to emphasize that we are enshrining this in legislation. It is an opportunity for renewed relationships in our country. The declaration itself, despite the naysayers out there, will help all of us chart a clear and more predictable path forward for the future.

Some people have questions, and we are hearing a lot of them today. There are some fears associated with clauses of the bill that speak to free, prior and informed consent and how this would be interpreted in the Canadian context, including the relationship to land, natural resources development, other developments and how it affects indigenous people.

Free, prior and informed consent is one of the key elements, one that we have probably heard more about than any other within the declaration. As one of my colleagues said a short time ago, it is grounded in self-determination. That is the piece we cannot forget. It is really about respectful two-way dialogue and the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them, their communities, their territories and the future generations of their people.

Implementation of the declaration can really help contribute to sustainable development and resource development and it affirms the range of indigenous rights and related protections that are relevant when it comes to natural resources, lands, territories and resources.

As I said earlier, I grew up in Labrador, where I speak from today, where we still have unsettled land claims with the federal government. I am part of the southern Labrador Inuit and the NunatuKavut Community Council, whose rights have, to date, not been affirmed by the Government of Canada in land claims and settlements. That is not good enough, in my mind. The colonial system under which we and many indigenous peoples have operated has prejudiced them in access to their own lands and having the opportunity to have a final say, a real say, in what happens.

Government Orders

In my riding today, Nunatsiavut is a territory with settled land claims. It got to settle those land claims because nickel was discovered in Voisey's Bay and because a large corporation had a resource deposit. That became the catalyst to settle land claims with the northern Inuit people of Labrador. If that had not materialized, they would probably still be at the table today fighting for what is their inherent right: to have full declaration in what happens within their lands and territory.

The land claims agreement with Nunatsiavut Inuit in northern Labrador is one of the most historic claims in Canada next to the one with the Cree. It is a landmark agreement. It is really what UNDRIP is speaking to today with the inclusion of the Inuit people in ensuring they have free, prior and informed consent. That mining operation went forward. It employs nearly 90% indigenous people. It is contributing to a community, but it was done through co-operation, through dialogue, through a two-way agreement on how to move forward.

When I attended my first United Nations permanent forum on indigenous rights with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations back in 2016, she stood at the United Nations that day and affirmed Canada's support for UNDRIP for the first time in our history. It was a very proud moment for me to know that Canada could see this through the eyes of indigenous people and the rest of the world with respect to its importance and what needed to happen with regard to UNDRIP. Bringing it to where it is today has been, in my opinion, an absolute win for Canada and indigenous people. A lot of work still needs to be done, but as an indigenous person, there is nothing to fear here.

• (1350)

Our great country was built on consensus and co-operation. We are reaffirming and including indigenous people in the opportunity to have real say and opportunity within their own lands. Who would ever want to deny that or deny the indigenous rights and reconciliation within Canada?

I really believe getting to where we are today has not only involved indigenous participation and engagement, but also the natural resource sectors, corporations and people who have a vested interest in lands and indigenous lands across Canada. They know sustainable development comes with co-operation. It comes with working together and having a partnership with indigenous communities.

It means we build capacity, look at real benefit agreements, joint management and profit-sharing operations. That is where we are with companies like Vale today, which has been successful in Inuit lands and many others. There are models out there that have worked, but they worked because they were forced to the table, not because there was willing participation, in many cases. That is what is going to change here.

While industry leaders have invested time and energy into fostering many long-term relationships and building trust with indigenous groups, building an agreement that speaks to free, prior and informed consent, this bill asks for that and it would do that. There are many examples of that have already happened in Canada.

We have done outreach to many sectors, including the natural resources sector, of which I am a proud champion, including the mining industry. It is an industry that fits well for indigenous people, and we are the living proof of how that can work.

When I look at what is happening today, we might hear of the tremendous experiences and relationships that have been built between industry and indigenous people across many of these natural resource sectors and how they worked together in good faith and made every—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. She will be able to continue during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Labrador, in her role as a parliamentary secretary, has been involved in the indigenous affairs file for quite some time. When we look at Bill C-15, it would make the government commit to an action plan.

When I speak to indigenous people in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the thing that comes up in conversation all the time is the Indian Act. We cannot talk about discrimination in our country without talking about the Indian Act.

With her experience on this file, could the member give the House some thoughts, and this is in the context of the Liberals having been in power now for five years, on what steps we take to get rid of the Indian Act? What are some of her thoughts on the process we need to start to fundamentally reform that colonial era legislation?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, in all honesty, I would like to see us get rid of the Indian Act overnight, but I also know, in my role and in the knowledge I gained in this department, that it is not that simple. It is an evolving process. It is a process that will require many legislative changes going forward, but it also has to be replaced. It has to be replaced with something that is not racist, is not discriminatory and that really speaks to opportunity for indigenous people.

That is where we are today, and it is not the government's decision to do this arbitrarily. It has to be done in partnership with indigenous people and with Canadians. That is the stage we are at right now.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I have a question with respect to free, prior and informed consent and also resource development. We know that in some cases on these large projects there may be the majority of indigenous communities, maybe even a super-majority of indigenous communities, that approve of a project but there may be a small group that does not.

In the creation of the bill, an amendment was put forward that explicitly clarified that free, prior and informed consent would not be considered an absolute veto. I wonder if the member thinks that free, prior and informed consent would give an absolute veto to any group even if a majority of other groups, for example, approved of a project.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, this legislation is really there to guide a collaborative path forward. We cannot forget that. It is there to build a stronger relationship and provide greater predictability, as well as more certainty, over time. It encourages partnerships in the resources sector and includes industry and indigenous people working together.

It does not create any new obligations. It does not create any new obstacles. It does create a path toward respect and respecting the rights of indigenous people in this country.

To be honest, many corporations and most industry sectors are more than willing to walk that path because they understand it. They get it, and they know that it is not compromising their investments. In fact, it enhances what they are doing and ensures a fair and shared distribution of benefits to all people who are affected and involved.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INDIA

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of all Canadians, I would like to thank India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for providing two million AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses. A total of 500,000 doses are to be delivered, and the balance is expected in due course. This is what real friends do. During a crisis, they help each other.

India has also supplied vaccine doses for some needy countries for free or at a subsidized cost. This is practising an ancient Vedic saying of the sages. In Sanskrit it is *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which means that the world is one big single family.

India is also offering technology transfer for commercial production of vaccines in Canada. These actions reconfirm the respect and affection Canada and India have for each other.

* * *

● (1400)

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, National Volunteer Week starts April 18, and this has been an incredible year in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil with people stepping up like never before to help.

Today, I would like to recognize several individuals and groups in our communities of Barrie and Innisfil who have been there to help each other and our most vulnerable, or to simply bring joy and hope to our communities when we have needed it the most. They are the Barrie Food Bank; Mark and Patty Sachkiw; the Innisfil Food Bank; Innisfil's incredible Jennifer Richardson and her fami-

Statements by Members

ly; Barrie Families Unite Facebook group; Dawn Mucci; the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie; Tom Hanrahan; Deb Harrison, VP of Christmas for Kids (all year round); Marshall Green; Fill a purse for a Sister; David Blenkarn; Sandy Berube; the Coldest Night of the Year in Barrie; Tracy Baker; Lexi Capirchio; Glenn Rogers; and Bev Kell.

I will be virtually hosting my fifth annual Barrie—Innisfil volunteer awards soon to honour these and other terrific volunteers. On behalf of a grateful community and nation, I thank everyone who volunteers to make a difference in their communities and in people's lives.

* * *

[Translation]

WAGE SUBSIDY

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, thousands of businesses in Quebec have had a terrible time qualifying for federal assistance or never received any in the first place, yet all parties in the House except the Bloc Québécois pocketed cash from the wage subsidy.

All parties but the Bloc diverted money meant for businesses and charities to protect their campaign coffers. The Liberals collected handouts, siphoning off taxpayers' dollars, while raising \$15 million in donations in 2020. The Conservatives raised \$22 million and the NDP \$6 million, yet none of them had the decency to pay back a penny of the public money they pocketed.

During the next campaign, every time we see one of their ads, we should remember that we unintentionally paid for part of it. Every time they talk about the sacrifices everyone made during the pandemic, we should remember that they made no sacrifices and even exploited the situation for partisan gain.

Shame on them.

* * *

[English]

RIDING OF DAVENPORT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Toronto is one of the many parts of Canada deep in the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. I rise to recognize the unbelievable organizations in my riding of Davenport that have stepped up during all three waves to help our most vulnerable through this unprecedented time.

Statements by Members

The federal government created a \$350-million emergency community support fund, and 32 organizations in Davenport were awarded a total of \$1.3 million to address the urgent COVID-related needs of our community. These organizations included Horizons for Youth, Loyola Arrupe Centre for Seniors, Quantum Sports and Learning Association, Latinas en Toronto, George Chuvalo Neighbourhood Centre, Vietnamese Women's Association of Toronto, and so many more have stepped up to provide a wide range of support.

From remote services for seniors to warm meals for newcomers, these groups have been lifelines to countless residents. They are a beautiful illustration of how we step up to help each other during tough times, becoming stronger as a community. Together we will get through this pandemic.

* * *

[Translation]

NEW HORIZONS FOR SENIORS PROGRAM

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the new horizons for seniors funding recently announced in my riding of Nickel Belt. In Greater Sudbury, nine projects to support the physical and mental well-being of seniors received funding.

[English]

The nearly \$300,000 has enabled dozens of organizations like the Coniston Community Garden, Skead Senior Citizens Club, Wanup Quilters, Rayside Balfour Senior Craft Shop, St. Gabriel Villa in Chelmsford and Killarney Lion's Den. These initiatives promote laughter, joy, knowledge and sharing, and these are essential to keeping residents engaged.

Isolation remains a real challenge for seniors during this pandemic. I thank volunteers, caregivers and essential workers collaborating to prioritize the well-being of our aging population. Let us continue to reach out to our loved ones, friends, neighbours and others around us, and remind them that we are there for them.

* * *

• (1405)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians are struggling to cope with the rise of COVID-19 cases, increasing lockdowns and the effects of a struggling economy. Businesses are closed, workers are losing their jobs or having their hours cut, the mental health crisis has deepened and Canadian families are worried about their children. This is all because the government did not secure enough vaccines and did not secure them in time.

We are far behind our neighbours to the south. Jake Tapper from CNN has brought this failure to the attention of our American cousins. The U.S. has already begun to vaccinate monkeys in U.S. zoos. I cannot make this stuff up. Meanwhile, here in Canada we have only vaccinated 2% of our population. The vaccination issue is such that the current government may go down in history as one of the biggest failures of any Canadian government during a crisis. Canadians and Canadian businesses are suffering because of it.

The data and tools to effectively manage this pandemic already exist. It is time for the government to begin using them.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to honour the many volunteers across Canada and in my home of Labrador. Next week marks National Volunteer Week, and we know in this legislature that it is really the volunteers who keep the pillars of our community strong. That has been magnified more so than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is those who give relentlessly of their time, skills and energy who make life better for all Canadians. I could not be prouder than I am of the volunteers in my own riding.

Today I thank those who work in their communities, churches, recreation centres and social groups, from all walks of our society, for their contributions. They have extended their hand in times of need, and they continue to build on the solid foundation that makes life enjoyable and better for others.

I acknowledge all of those who give so freely and expect so little, yet contribute so much. They are our volunteers.

* * *

THE GREAT CANADIAN BAKING SHOW

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so happy today to be able to share the good news story of Raufikat Oyawoye-Salami, a Milton resident who was recently crowned the season four winner of *The Great Canadian Baking Show*. Raufikat wowed the judges with a combination of natural talent and incredible flavours, which were inspired by her time growing up in her mother's kitchen in their home of Nigeria.

A proud mother of two, she loves baking for her family, and she sees it not only as a way to stay connected to her roots, but also as a way to share her Nigerian heritage with friends and neighbours. When she is not baking tasty treats, she works as an IT support engineer, a background which she says gives her the scientific precision that was crucial to her success. Having come to Milton in 2017, Raufikat was delighted to find herself in such a diverse community where she could connect with other Nigerian and Muslim diaspora while being able to share in the many cultures of our community. It was through sharing her baking with neighbours that Raufikat was able to share her culture.

While unfortunately I have not been able to try one of her treats, I know Milton is proud to call her one of our own. We are very fortunate to have her, and we are excited to see what she does next. I congratulate Raufikat on winning *The Great Canadian Baking Show*.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic recovery and future prosperity are under threat.

The government's failure to quickly secure and distribute COVID-19 vaccines has placed the health and safety of Canadians at greater risk while we fall further behind economically. The government's inability to prevent the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline or reverse the decision to suspend Enbridge's Line 5 threatens Canada's oil and gas industry and the nation's energy supply.

On the government's watch we have seen the drastic reduction in foreign capital investment; the heavy losses of steel, aluminum and auto jobs; and the punishing trade barriers and tariffs placed on Canada by both China and the U.S. The Prime Minister refuses to admit that Canada's situation is dire and that his government is responsible.

Canadians fear that tomorrow will be worse than today and our children's future will be worse than our own. Canada's only path to securing the future is with a Conservative government.

* * *

[Translation]

EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the work and dedication of front-line workers, especially teachers, specialized educators and education professionals during this extremely difficult pandemic period.

Every day, I witness the hard work of a dedicated teacher of young people with autism who are eager to learn and who must navigate an intermittent world between the face-to-face and the virtual. I am talking about my wife Mélanie who, since the beginning of the pandemic, has worked even harder to ensure that these children get the best possible education under the circumstances. She can count on a top-notch team with Natacha and Didier, without whom the goals could not be achieved. This means many extra hours of preparation, communication and planning for these education professionals.

On behalf of all these children with special needs, I thank the parents and education staff who are supporting them on their educational journey during this difficult time.

* * *

• (1410)

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, the Liberals adopted a mo-

Statements by Members

tion Monday at the Standing Committee on National Defence to end its investigation into sexual misconduct in the highest ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces.

What is behind this alliance between the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois leader, to the point that they want to shut down important testimony that will shed light on the matter?

The House will recall the moving case of former CAF member Stéphanie Raymond, who had to fight for 10 years to get justice for the crime committed against her.

At a time when women need to be protected more than ever, we do not understand why the Bloc Québécois would be complicit in a conspiracy of silence that prevents Parliament from acting to protect the safety and integrity of Canadian women.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen in a recent survey by MNP Ltd. that 53% of Canadians have said that they are \$200 or less from not meeting their monthly bills or debt obligations. Meanwhile, the Liberal government is increasing costs on Canadians: a carbon tax; a second carbon tax; alcohol escalator taxes; increased business taxes; elimination of family tax credits, and the list goes on. With \$170 carbon tax, I hope the Prime Minister knows that he will force those 53% of Canadians to choose between heat and feeding their family.

The government claims that it wants to get Canadians back to work, but has proposed a tax that is projected to kill over 200,000 jobs across Canada. The Liberals' tax increases disproportionately impact lower and middle-income households, single mothers, pensioners and immigrants.

If the Prime Minister cares so much about middle-class prosperity, why is he trying so hard to push Canadians into poverty?

* * *

FIRE KEEPER PATROL

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fight against opioids, fentanyl and homelessness has been a grim experience for people in the north, and every day we are losing people to overdoses. However, I want to speak of an incredible initiative that is bringing hope and saving lives.

Oral Questions

The Fire Keeper Patrol is a mobile team working 24/7 on the streets of Timmins to help the indigenous homeless who all too often fall through the cracks. The fire keepers are acting on an initiative of the Mushkegowuk Council, working in partnership with the City of Timmins, Living Space, DSSAB and the front-line workers who have been keeping people alive through this crisis.

I was approached by the fire keepers about making their dream a reality, so my office got down to work. We got them the funding so we could get the resources deployed on the streets of Timmins.

We have a long way to go in dealing with the nightmare of opioid addiction and homelessness. We need more treatment facilities. We need the feds to actually put in place a national housing strategy.

However I want to thank the members of the fire keepers because their work will keep people alive and they will keep the citizens of Timmins safe. That is really important at this time.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL LOUVAIN

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is mourning the death of a Quebec music legend.

Michel Louvain charmed several generations with his warm voice and love for his audiences. His songs named for women made Sylvie, Lison, Louise and Marie popular names in Quebec. There was also *La dame en bleu*, whose great success was the subject of a documentary.

Quebeckers have had a love affair with our crooner for more than 60 years. He was awarded many prizes and received national recognition, which culminated with the opus *Ils chantent Louvain* when his artist friends and the *Orchestre symphonique de Québec* interpreted his biggest hits.

In 2014, he was awarded the Félix Hommage by the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque. He was going to go on stage in the fall of 2021 at the age of 84. His friends speak warmly about him, remembering his professionalism, class, generosity and his legendary zest for life. It was said that he had stars in his eyes.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and all of Quebec, I offer my condolences to his wife, sisters and family.

* * *

● (1415)

MICHEL LOUVAIN

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Quebec and Thetford Mines are mourning the loss of a larger-than-life legendary performer, who was nonetheless down to earth.

The humble Poulin became the great Louvain. He made thousands of women swoon and dance and sing. Many men would sing his songs under their breath. We have all said, "*Buenas noches mi amor*". We have all sung, "*La dame en bleu*". Michel Louvain

earned many titles, won countless awards and received the most prestigious honours.

Nothing made him happier than the applause from his audience. His greatest fear was that his audience would no longer like him. He took care of his fans. He was always elegant, respectful, and meticulously dressed. On stage he wanted to please his audience above all else. He was planning another tour. At 83, he still had a lot of energy to share.

I will close with these words by Michel Louvain: "I miss the stage, the audience, my musicians, my backup singer, and my technician. I miss my people. They are my world." We will miss you, Michel.

To his spouse, his sisters, his admirers and his fans, I offer my deepest condolences.

Buenas noches, Mr. Louvain.

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[English]

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House and recognize the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, the world's largest maple syrup festival.

The festival is a local tradition, dating back to 1965. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of guests from all around the world have visited Elmira to celebrate.

This past weekend, we celebrated the 56th annual and first virtual festival, featuring an online sugarbush tour, virtual taffy demonstrations, contests and sales of pancake boxes featuring local syrup Producer of the Year, Hoover's Maple Syrup.

The food, the entertainment and the sense of community that the festival builds is due to the tremendous dedication of the many volunteers who make this annual event possible. Since the inception, over \$1.7 million in proceeds have been returned to our community to charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

I congratulate the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival volunteers for their milestone anniversary, their resilience and their success.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

After over 23,000 deaths, tens of thousands of businesses closed, people's jobs and livelihoods lost; after drug overdoses, suicide and mental health crises at an all-time high; people being locked in their homes, away from their families; and a third wave of COVID upon us, could she explain why she thinks the pain and suffering that COVID has caused is a political opportunity, as she said last week, and not an absolute tragedy?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect, all members of the House, regardless of party, appreciate the nature of the immense tragedy that has fallen across Canada and impacted families and communities from coast to coast to coast.

When we look forward to what may come out of this pandemic, we have the opportunity to make investments to cure some of the social deficits that we have been living with for generations. From the very outset of this pandemic, we made a decision to support households and businesses and to invest, most important, to protect the health and well-being of Canadians.

We will continue to do so until this pandemic is over, no matter what it takes.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a really ridiculous thing for the Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister to say. The fact is that the Liberals have messed up so many things in their response to COVID, but they will not admit, they will not learn from it and they will not change it.

Today, we have learned that Moderna vaccines scheduled to arrive mid-April are being delayed yet again, which means provinces are forced to close vaccination clinics and people are not getting their shots. That means higher case counts and more lockdowns.

Responsibility for the third wave is the Prime Minister's. How many more Canadians will be infected with COVID because of the government's disastrous vaccine rollout?

• (1420)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there for Canadians. We have been there for provinces and territories in delivering on the things that we know are saving lives.

This is a difficult time for the country. It is a difficult time for all Canadians. It is a difficult time for the health care workers, the lab workers, the front-line workers and the essential workers, who are all trying so hard to support each other and care for each other.

We will be there for Canadians, whether it is with personal protective equipment, testing equipment, human resources and, indeed, vaccines.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's failed vaccine rollout and spin is actually making international headlines.

This morning's cover of the Daily Mail asked if our Prime Minister was jealous of Britain's vaccine delivery. It pointed out that Canada had four times as many new cases per day as the U.K.

Oral Questions

Prime Minister Johnson said that he did not have a response to our Prime Minister's comments, but that the British case data spoke for itself, because their vaccine rollout is months ahead of ours.

Could the Prime Minister admit that he is not only failing Canadians, but he is making an international fool of himself?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really important that all of us work together now to save lives. It is important that we see cohesion in our messaging. I surely hope that the member opposite is not working in any way to discourage Canadians from taking vaccination when it is their turn.

Let us be clear that every step of the way, we have given Canadians the information they need. We have supported Canadians with financial measures. We have been there for provinces and territories to deliver on their health care responsibilities.

Surely the member opposite would encourage the people in her riding to accept vaccination when it is their turn.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Liberal government, with the help of the Bloc Québécois, decided to shut down the parliamentary investigation into the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance. Ultimately, no one took responsibility and no one apologized. We will not be able to get to the bottom of this matter, which is shameful, yes, but more importantly, it is an insult to the women who had the courage and dignity of speaking out during a difficult time.

Why are the Bloc and the Liberal Party refusing to get to the bottom of this matter?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will always respect the work done by colleagues at committee. In fact, I worked with the national defence committee on this matter quite extensively. I appeared before the committee three times, and for more than six hours.

I have repeatedly stated at each of these appearances and many times in the House of Commons that our government, and me personally, will not stand for any type of sexual misconduct and that we will be taking more action.

I look forward to the committee's report on this matter and the substantive recommendations that will be coming.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course the Minister of National Defence testified. There were other people it would have been worth hearing from. Unfortunately, the Liberals, with the help of the Bloc Québécois, stopped us from getting to the bottom of this matter.

We know that the government has some serious ethics problems. It is no coincidence that the Ethics Commissioner found the Prime Minister guilty on two occasions, and there is a third report coming out soon about the issue of sexual misconduct among the highest-ranking military officers. The Liberals and the Bloc Québécois identify as feminist, but they are shutting down an investigation involving these women.

What message does this send to the women in our military who have been the victims of harassment?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work the committee does, and the experts they were talking to, can be extremely important. This is why I value their opinions. We need to figure out exactly what needs to be done. All options are currently on the table. I look forward to those recommendations, because we agree with all members of the House that more needs to be done, and more will be done.

* * *

*[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a second hellish year for farmers when it comes to quarantines for temporary foreign workers. It was already hard enough for them to shoulder the entire burden of the quarantines, but now the problems with the new border measures are making things even worse.

From a public health perspective, the federal government has an obligation to ensure that the quarantines are respected, but it also has an obligation to ensure that tests are accessible and the results arrive quickly. Right now, workers are spending over 25 days in quarantine before they can get out in the fields. This is an administrative foul up. The crops will not wait while Ottawa gets things sorted out.

What is the minister going to do?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have worked with other federal departments to expedite the process and simplify the arrival of foreign workers as much as possible. We know that there have been delays in receiving test results. The Public Health Agency of Canada and Service Canada have been in regular contact with Switch Health, the employers and industry associations to resolve these issues.

We take these issues very seriously, and we will continue to work with Switch Health.

● (1425)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the government hired Switch Health to handle COVID-19

testing, it did not make sure the company had the resources to serve Quebecers in French. Now farmers have no choice but to use Switch Health, even though its services are inadequate. Once again, Ottawa unilaterally gave a contract to a company that cannot serve Quebec. Our farmers are paying the price.

The minister is responsible for making sure the services available to Quebecers are just as good as those available to Ontarians. What is she going to do?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are of course working very closely with the provinces, and we know that workers in Quebec have the right to be served in French. That is why we are working so closely with the provinces, and we will continue to ensure that Quebec workers receive the services they are entitled to in French.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third wave of COVID-19 is hitting hard. This is a difficult time. On top of this third wave, tax season is upon us. People need help, as they risk losing the benefits they need. We need to help people.

Will the Prime Minister commit to giving Canadians more time to file their taxes, as he did in the first wave?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that this tax season is stressful for Canadians. We will continue to be there for them every step of the way.

In February, we announced that recipients of the emergency and recovery benefits would be eligible for interest relief if they filed their 2020 tax returns. The Canada Revenue Agency has also put in place robust taxpayer relief provisions that grant them relief from penalties or interest incurred for reasons beyond their control.

These measures ensure that Canadians who need help during tax season will get it.

* * *

*[English]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the lack of vaccine supply has resulted in thousands of vaccination appointments being cancelled and a slower rollout of the vaccination program across the country. This is directly the responsibility of the federal government, and it has failed. It gives me no pleasure to say this, because Canadians want to get vaccinated, but they simply cannot because there are no doses available.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his government's failure to ensure we could produce the vaccines here in Canada is what led us to this mess?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that all Canadians at this time need to pull together to get through this third wave.

For our part, the Government of Canada has already delivered 12.7 million doses to Canada. We have 8.9 million doses that have been administered in this country. We have accelerated 22 million doses from later quarters to earlier quarters. We are now third in the G20 in terms of the percentage of people with at least one dose.

We will continue to pull in millions of vaccinations. We will provide them to the provinces and territories and assist them in whatever way we can, including with the low dead-volume syringes that we have procured for the benefit of all Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, The Globe and Mail reported that the government dropped specific COVID-19 screening for travellers from Brazil, even while the P1 variant spreads throughout British Columbia. It also reported that the health minister's office declined to explain why the extra screening was scrubbed. Her spokesperson directed The Globe and Mail to the federal Public Health Agency, which did not provide comment.

Why has the government dropped specific COVID-19 screening for travellers from Brazil?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has among the strongest measures in the world at the border. Every traveller, no matter where they come from, is subject to testing on arrival. Then the traveller must wait in a government-approved hotel until the return of their test. Every traveller must further quarantine until the return of their 10-day test and until their 14-day quarantine is over. All positive tests are sequenced by our hard-working National Microbiology Laboratory folks. Of course, we will stop at nothing to protect Canadians.

• (1430)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that the reason there is no specific COVID-19 screening for travellers from Brazil is because she feels that the other measures the government has in place are adequate, and that there is no additional public health benefit to having the additional screening measures in place?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat: We have among the strongest measures in the world at our border. In fact, everything that we have added has created a situation where we are protecting Canadians from the importation of COVID. We are able to track and sequence any positive cases.

I will take this moment to congratulate the National Microbiology Laboratory during this national week of celebration of laboratory workers. I will also say that every traveller must quarantine for 14 days, regardless of which country they arrive from. We will continue to monitor our borders to protect against importation and to support the provinces and territories in their fight against COVID-19.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is saying that the measures put in place prior to the additional screening being put in place were sufficient, would she say that the government put in place additional screening that had no additional public health outcome and, if so, why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite has not been a fan of the mandatory measures that we have put into place at the border. In fact, she has spoken out against them on her social media channels. However, I will tell her that they serve an important purpose. They protect Canadians from the importation of the virus.

Every step of the way, we have responded to science. We have been led by our incredible scientists and researchers, and we will continue to do that to support the provinces and territories and indeed to protect Canadians' health.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the shipment of 1.2 million doses from Moderna that was scheduled to arrive next week has been delayed until early May.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that there could be delays of a few days, but now we are talking about weeks. Quebec has gone back into lockdown, and Ontario has had to shut down vaccination clinics because of supply issues.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his procurement strategy has failed?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. We will continue to manage our supply chains for COVID-19 vaccines, while accelerating deliveries of approved vaccines.

Some 12.7 million doses have been delivered to Canada so far.

[English]

Also, millions of vaccines are on the way. We have accelerated 22 million doses from later to earlier quarters. We will continue to work together as a country to make sure that vaccines get out to the provinces and territories.

[Translation]

We are working day and night to get the job done.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is giving all kinds of figures, but the results speak for themselves, and they are appalling. We are an international laughingstock.

There is another decision that I am having a hard time understanding. Why did the government decide to drop the specific screening measures for travellers arriving from Brazil? What was the reason? I have no idea, because the government is being very secretive about it.

Oral Questions

Once again, we see the Prime Minister shirking his responsibilities when it comes to the fight against this virus, and leaving the provinces to fend for themselves.

Is there anyone on the other side of the House who can explain the Prime Minister's decision?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, we will stop at nothing to protect Canadians' health. We have multiple, layered measures of protection at the border, as the member opposite knows, including a 14-day mandatory quarantine, mandatory pre-departure testing, mandatory arrival testing and mandatory testing at day 10, and we will continue to protect Canadians from the importation of this virus for as long as it takes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year at the beginning of the pandemic, we made it clear that the border was the first line of defence. They did not listen. Then we said Health Canada should station officers at the airports. They did not listen.

Now we are being told that we have the best control measures in the world. How can variants from around the world have entered Canada if we already had measures in place, very robust measures according to the government?

Will the government start screening travellers from Brazil again or not?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every traveller, regardless of their country of origin, is required to undergo some of the strictest measures in the world. Let me repeat that all travellers must subject themselves to a pre-departure test and submit that test prior to boarding the plane to Canada. They must also subject themselves to a post-arrival test and wait in a government-approved hotel until such time as their tests come back negative. The travellers must then continue to quarantine for up to 14 days and must submit a day 10 test. Any positive test is also sequenced so we understand just how this virus is shifting and changing.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the budget is being tabled on Monday. If there is one segment of the population that does not have the luxury of being patient with Ottawa, it is people with serious illnesses.

Currently, people with diseases like cancer have the added burden of being in a precarious financial position, because they have been shut out of employment insurance. The 15 weeks of sickness benefits are not enough. They need 50 weeks.

On Monday, will these people be able to count on the federal government?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a flexible employment insurance system that is tailored to their needs, and they deserve it. That is why we have spent the past five weeks modernizing the system and making improvements to benefit Canadians. EI sickness benefits are an important support measure for Canadians who have to leave work because of an injury or illness.

Right now, far too many claimants are exhausting their EI benefits before they are able to return to work. That is why we are committed to extending the benefit period.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope it will be extended to 50 weeks.

Unfortunately, EI does not meet the needs of those with serious illnesses. The 15 weeks of special sickness benefits are not adequate for illnesses such as cancer, which sometimes involve longer recovery times and relapses. Sickness benefits have been capped since 1971, but 88% of Canadians are in favour of increasing them.

After 50 years, will the government finally change EI to meet the needs of the sick and provide 50 weeks of benefits in the interest of fairness?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to modernizing the EI system. We are committed to extending the sickness benefit period.

This afternoon, I will definitely be speaking to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which is studying the modernization of the EI system.

[*English*]

I am very happy to be talking to the committee about this issue this weekend.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to honour the memory of Émilie Sansfaçon, who died of cancer, fighting to the very end for women like her to have access to an essential 50 weeks of coverage. She had met with the Prime Minister, who promised to do something.

The House has also called for an increase to 50 weeks, led by the Bloc. This is not a demand, it is a heartfelt plea. We are appealing to the government's humanity and we want to know when it will increase sickness benefits to 50 weeks.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we offer our condolences to the family of Émilie Sansfaçon. I was there at her meeting with the Prime Minister and I often think of Émilie as I work on modernizing the employment insurance system.

As I said, we are fully committed to extending the EI sickness benefit period. We are committed to making this happen.

* * *

• (1440)

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, remember when the Prime Minister gave Loblaws \$12 million for fridges? How about the \$50 million he gave to Mastercard? Oops, he did it again. On Tuesday, the government cut a cheque for \$655 million to a company owned by Fortis Inc. for the Lake Erie corridor project. This is a company worth billions.

The Liberals are now giving tax dollars to a for-profit company to sell electricity to the United States. Could the minister tell us why?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to this project, Canada has an opportunity to export clean power, helping to reduce emissions, maximizing clean power use and making electricity more affordable for Canadians. The Canadian Infrastructure Bank's investments in the Lake Erie Connector will give Ontario direct access to North American's largest electricity market, 13 states, and the District of Columbia. It will reduce overall GHG emissions by giving those jurisdictions access to Ontario's clean energy.

The Lake Erie Connector also gives the province of Ontario the ability to import more clean energy to meet periods of exceptional high demand rather than firing up an additional gas plant within the province. This is part of our infrastructure plan to create jobs across the country, tackle climate change—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the project is so good, why can this multi-billion dollar company not pay for it itself? It can. In fact, it was already going to. Fortis Inc. was already committed to the Lake Erie Connector project.

The Infrastructure Bank was supposed to leverage private sector money to get new public infrastructure built. Instead, it is using tax dollars to build projects for billionaire private companies, which were already going to build the projects in the first place.

Simple question: Who will own the Lake Erie Connector project once it is completed?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this relates to climate change, certainly Canadians have been waiting for a very long time to see a serious climate plan from the Conservative Party of Canada.

This morning after reading through the Conservative Party's 15-page pamphlet, Canadians are still waiting. No mention of science, no numbers about how much these policies will cost consumers, no incentives to help Canadians afford an electric vehicle or retrofit their home. It is, interestingly enough, a carbon tax that cuts less pollution, that costs more and that takes away the climate action in-

Oral Questions

centive rebates for families and replaces them with some kind of petro-points where the more we burn, the more we earn. This is not a plan. This is a pamphlet that will do less, cost more, from a party that I am sorry to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member can try to change the channel from his own corporate welfare scandal, but the fact remains that the Lake Erie Connector is a project owned by a subsidiary of Fortis Inc., which according to its own website, had revenues of \$8.9 billion in 2020. Fortis is a massive energy company that makes huge profits. Last year, it paid out over \$800 million in dividends to its shareholders. Why did the government not just tell Fortis that if it needed \$600 million, it could pay for it itself?

Every day we hear from small business owners who are losing their entire life's work. Why does the government think that it is the billionaires who need a bailout?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, as this project relates to climate change, it is important that the Conservative Party can answer some questions with respect to the pamphlet that it released this morning. It is a pamphlet, not a plan. It has more holes in it than we could drive a truck through.

Certainly the focus is on a number of things, including putting a tax on carbon, which in and of itself would be an interesting step forward if it were not so convoluted, complicated and actually incented the creation of more pollution and put more pollution into the environment.

At the end of the day, we need to be skeptical. We need to look at this through thoughtful eyes. It is not a good plan, but it is also from a party—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, dock workers at the port of Montreal began a partial strike refusing overtime. The management side is standing its ground, foreshadowing a labour dispute that could drag on.

The Liberals have already hinted that they intend to introduce back-to-work legislation, in complete violation of workers' fundamental rights. This is hardly surprising.

Oral Questions

Can the Prime Minister promise workers that he will allow the bargaining process to proceed, that he will respect the integrity of their rights and that he will not impose back-to-work legislation?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Negotiations between the two parties have been ongoing for over two and a half years.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order. The member for Manicouagan on a point of order.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, for the last two questions, there has been a lot of background noise in the House, and I am having a hard time hearing, even with my earpiece.

I would like you to remind my colleagues to respect other colleagues who have the floor.

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. member is right. I was going to say something after the answer, but this forces me to say it now. I thank the member for raising the issue.

I want to remind members that, if they want to talk, they can go to the other side while keeping two metres apart. That is fine. If they are 20 metres apart, that is a problem because then they have to shout, and that is unacceptable in the House.

I know that debates in the House can get heated, but I want to make sure members know how this works.

[*English*]

It is hard to estimate the distance, but I am sure the hon. members in the chamber can figure out the difference between two metres and 20 metres.

The hon. minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[*English*]

Negotiations between the parties have been ongoing for over two and a half years, and our federal mediation and conciliation service has been there every step of the way. In fact, in February, I took the extra step of appointing two of our most senior mediators.

We understand the impact this is having on the Port of Montreal and the key role it plays in economic activity in Canada. I would like to encourage the parties, who are now at the table as we speak, to reach an agreement. We will consider all options as we move forward on this very important matter.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, the Russian Federation has increased attacks on Ukraine's eastern borders. This has been coupled with significant Russian troop movement, raising concerns among NATO and G7 allies about a possible further invasion of Ukraine. This could lead to a devastating conflict, putting thousands of Ukrainian lives at risk.

Canadians have an important and meaningful relationship with the people of Ukraine. The Liberal government must do more to support our Ukrainian allies. Will the minister please provide an update on the actions Canada is planning to take to deter possible further Russian aggression against the people in Ukraine?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been in very close contact with Ukraine. The Prime Minister has spoken to President Zelensky, and I have spoken to Foreign Minister Kuleba. We are speaking with our allies.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine against the amassing of unnecessary troops and equipment in Crimea and along the eastern border. I can assure the member that we are there for the Ukrainian people and with our allies with respect to this particular situation.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have made great sacrifices this year, spending time apart from their loved ones to stop the spread of COVID-19. These public health measures are important, but we also know that Canadians need support in these difficult times. The mental health of Canadians is an issue I am genuinely concerned about. Even though delivering these services falls to the provinces, I am proud to see that the federal government has stepped up to help.

Can the Minister of Health update us on the mental health supports our government is providing for Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his constant advocacy in this area and his compassion and kindness for his constituents. He knows first-hand how disruptive COVID-19 has been for people and communities and how it has impacted all of our mental health.

We know that what helps is access to services. We knew we needed to step up to help the provinces and territories in delivering on their responsibilities in health care. That is why, a year ago today, we launched the Wellness Together Canada portal. It is free. Over 1.2 million Canadians have used it over 3.6 million times. People should check it out today for support—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Laurentian University is tens of millions of dollars in debt, and that is jeopardizing 69 programs, 28 of which are offered in French. The programs that were cut include political science, engineering, law, education and history, to name just a few.

The francophone community has the right to university programs in French. Despite all the rhetoric we are hearing from the minister, can she tell us what she has actually done to help Laurentian University?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have always stood up for official language minority communities, and we always will.

We know that post-secondary institutions are gathering places that are essential to the survival of communities across the country. We are willing to work together to ensure that francophones in northern Ontario have a strong post-secondary institution. As our document on the modernization of the Official Languages Act clearly states, we will continue to support these institutions because the future of our two official languages depends on strong, vibrant communities.

• (1450)

The Speaker: Before going on to the next question, I want to remind members that it is very difficult for the interpreters to hear properly if the microphone on members' headsets is too close to their mouths. Plus, it can actually be physically painful for the interpreters. I would therefore ask members to move their microphones either up or down just a bit, so that other members can hear them and the interpreters can do their jobs effectively.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been in power for nearly six years now, and they still have not introduced a bill to modernize official languages. The Liberals themselves do not respect French. I can think of some examples, like WE Charity, COVID Alert texts sent in English only and documents submitted at committee in English only, to name just a few. Now we also learn that Laurentian University's budget has never been increased under this government.

Will the minister stop blaming others, accept responsibility and take concrete action to help francophones at Laurentian University, full stop?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to the students and faculty at Laurentian University who are in a very difficult situation. I think everyone in the House feels the same way.

The minister has been in touch with the provinces about this, and we are looking for solutions. We are prepared to work with our

provincial counterparts to find solutions, but I remind members that education is a provincial jurisdiction.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the veterans affairs committee, Allan Hunter, a military and veterans advocate, spoke about the reaction from women in the military to the Liberal decision to shut down the defence committee's study into sexual misconduct in the Canadian military. He said he has heard from women who have said, "Shutting down the committee is giving the message that what happens to females in the service is not important and that we are second-class civilians." Mr. Hunter also said that women in the military feel like they cannot come forward now out of fear.

How can the Prime Minister justify adding to a culture of fear for women who serve in Canada's military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will do everything necessary to make sure that we have an inclusive environment inside the Canadian Armed Forces. We owe it to our members.

We look forward to the recommendations that the committee will be making as it is talking to experts, including women from the Canadian Armed Forces. All options are on the table, and we will take action.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when asked whether he felt the decision to shut down the committee by Liberal members would put women in our military further at risk, Mr. Hunter said, "I can say that since that happened, I have been getting contacted by females who have been assaulted, raped and abused in the military. Some are still serving, and they are absolutely terrified to come forward."

The women are angry that the Prime Minister does not want to hear their stories or, worse yet, that he does not care. Does the Prime Minister not see that by shutting down the committee and covering this up he is adding to a culture of fear for women who serve in our military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take these allegations extremely seriously, and we will be taking more action. The committee makes its own decisions regarding its actions. However, we respect the work that it will be doing.

Nonetheless, we will be speaking to our veterans and also current serving members. This is an area in which we must continue to make sure we get it right. We will be taking more action, and all options are on the table to make sure that we create an inclusive environment for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the entire francophone community stands with Franco-Ontarians over the cuts at Laurentian University.

Yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously expressed its concerns. The president of the Université de Moncton, in New Brunswick, said, “We are all at risk. No one would have expected this to happen at a Canadian university.”

We know that the minister is talking to Ontario about working together in the medium term, but is a plan being negotiated now to shield the students and faculty of Laurentian University from the immediate consequences?

• (1455)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see that my colleague shares our concerns about the fate of Laurentian University. For our government, there is really no doubt that we need strong post-secondary institutions for francophones in northern Ontario. We are ready to find solutions to achieve this, and we will always be allies of the Franco-Ontarian community.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am reaching out to my colleague. Laurentian University needs a solution before the 100 professors relocate and the students move away to Ottawa or Quebec. We would be more than honoured to welcome them in Quebec, but they have the right to services in French in their native Ontario. Above all, we need to find a short- and medium-term solution before a single student abandons their post-secondary studies in French.

Has the government been in contact with the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to discuss the urgent need for action?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I was telling my colleague, we are ready and looking for solutions.

The minister is in contact with her counterpart and the Ontario ministers. Post-secondary institutions fall under provincial jurisdiction.

From the beginning, we have been there for Franco-Ontarians, and we have been there to protect the linguistic minority here in Ontario. I am proud that we have reached out. Now, it is really up to Ontario to respond.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation has been on a boil water advisory for years, and even though half the island still does not have clean drinking water, the Liberals are pressuring the band to lift the advisory anyway. The Liberals are also refusing to work

with the community to improve Georgina Island's water treatment facilities. Clearly, they think access to clean water for only half the residents is good enough.

When will the Liberal government stop playing games and ensure that the Chippewas of Georgina Island and other first nations communities have access to clean drinking water?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reassure members of this House and all Canadians that this simply is not the case. I would note that when we took power, there were 105 long-term water advisories in effect. We put together a plan and invested \$4 billion, and we have now lifted 106 long-term water advisories. No pressure is put on any first nation. We work in partnership with those nations, including the Chippewas, and we will continue to do so, respecting their rights and respecting the rights of all Canadians to have access to clean and safe water.

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HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are losing sleep wondering if they will ever be able to afford a home, the Liberal government readily acknowledges that our system is a safer market for foreign investment than for Canadians trying to purchase a home.

Why have the Liberals turned a blind eye to foreign speculation and the negative role it is playing in our real estate market? Is the government really okay with selling our neighbourhoods to foreign investors seeking to make a quick buck?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we brought back federal leadership in the affordable housing sector. We have brought back significant investments that were missing in action when the party opposite was in government. Through the national housing strategy, which is now a \$70-billion plan, we are investing more than ever before in communities to ensure the availability of affordable housing in Canada.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the Liberals followed up an election promise to indigenous people without results. The minister of PSPC failed to set targets or even put in place a mechanism to measure the actual results for indigenous procurement. In the minister's 2021 mandate letter, there was no mention of the 5% indigenous procurement promise to indigenous businesses that was made in previous years.

Can the minister explain to the indigenous business community why, rather than fix the failures, the Liberals have decided to just lower the bar for her department?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very committed to continuing to meet the minimum 5% target for diversifying federal supply chains in the area of indigenous procurements. We have also made sure to target indigenous suppliers. We have awarded 32 contracts to 24 self-identified indigenous businesses, collectively worth \$120 million, including for logistics and air charter services, among others, during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a priority for me and my department, and we will continue to—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

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[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-6 to eliminate conversion therapy was introduced last year.

I know that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights heard moving testimony about the importance of taking steps to ban this destructive practice. Bill C-6 will send a strong message to members of the LGBTQ2 community that this government cares for and protects them.

Would the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth tell us why this bill is so important?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is right. It is time for us to take decisive action to end conversion therapy in Canada and do everything in our power to end violence and discrimination. We know that young Canadians are our future and that we have to protect them.

Our government is strongly committed to protecting the rights of LGBTQ2 communities, without exception. LGBTQ2 rights are human rights.

I ask all members of the House to support this bill without delay.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in light of all the administrative problems that the Canada Revenue Agency is having due to the Liberals' poor planning, Canadians will have a hard time producing the necessary documents to file their 2020 tax return by the April 30 deadline.

Can the government extend the filing deadline without penalizing Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands full well that this is a stressful tax season for all Canadians. We will continue to be there for them every step of the way.

In February, we announced that recipients of the emergency and recovery benefits would be eligible for interest relief if they filed their 2020 tax returns. The Canada Revenue Agency has also put in

place robust taxpayer relief provisions that grant them relief from penalties or interest incurred for reasons beyond their control. These measures will ensure that Canadians who need help during tax season will get it.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with record debt and deficits, the wannabe disciples of modern monetary theory across the aisle have only one option, and that is to raise taxes. From the soon-to-be \$170 a tonne carbon tax, the Liberals' punishing fuel standard, and even charging Canadians more for beer, that is the Liberal MO.

Former Liberal MP and insider, Dan McTeague, has said he is pretty darn sure that a GST hike is coming. My question is simple. Will the Liberals be hiking the GST in next week's budget?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member mentioned our plan to put a price on pollution, I congratulate his party on finally embracing the need to price carbon as well. Unfortunately, the Conservative plan is actually going to cost Canadian households more and do less for our environment.

When it comes to the fiscal track Canada is on, I would remind the hon. member that the COVID-19 pandemic created immense costs, and our government was there to support households and businesses to weather the storm. When the budget is tabled on Monday, he will see a suite of measures that will continue to protect Canadians' health and well-being; support households and businesses through this pandemic; and set the course for an economic recovery that is inclusive, prosperous and green.

* * *

• (1505)

SENIORS

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit seniors hard. Increases in the cost of prescriptions, groceries, delivery charges and service fees have them all feeling the pinch.

The \$9 million to the United Way last March never trickled down to the seniors. The \$300 last June was not enough to make ends meet. However, the 61¢ increase in OAS in December, that is just an insult.

My constituent, Lloyd Lancaster, told me that he and his wife put their increases together and decided to go out and have a cup of coffee. Is half a cup of coffee what the government calls direct support for our seniors in need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the opposition continues to confuse the cost of living increase with the significant support that we provided seniors during the pandemic.

We know many Canadian seniors are facing significant health, economic and social challenges due to COVID-19. That is why we provided them with significant tax-free support. Combined with the GST top-up, this provided over \$1,500 tax-free to support the most vulnerable senior couples in our communities.

We will continue to support seniors and all Canadians during this pandemic.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government knows that it is extremely important to strengthen our relations with Canada's allies and are committed to expanding Canada's global trade ties. The Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade recently led a virtual trade mission to France.

Could the minister talk more about the importance of empowering Canadian businesses to diversify and expand their presence on the world stage?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I led a virtual trade mission to France bringing together over 300 entrepreneurs, 36% being women-owned, 20% are youth-owned and 20% are visible minority-owned businesses. This is inclusive trade in action, taking advantage of Canada's trade agreement with the European Union through CETA.

Our government will continue to promote inclusive and sustainable growth through trade, building back a greener future and a sustainable economic recovery.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Grassy Narrows First Nation have spent the last 50 years fighting for justice after industrial pollution poisoned their waters with mercury. Ninety per cent the residents still suffer from mercury poisoning. Three years ago, Grassy Narrows made a land declaration banning industrial activities on its traditional lands, but the Ontario Conservative government is now accelerating mining development on those lands.

Why is the Liberal government not living up to its responsibility to defend the rights and title of the people of Grassy Narrows?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member would well know that this government has invested historical funding into the mercury treatment centre that was announced early last year to right a historical wrong that should never have occurred in the first place.

When it comes to advocating for the rights of Grassy Narrows', chief and council, and the people of Grassy Narrows are fully capa-

ble of doing it, but we will also be their voice at the federal level for whatever they advocate to premiers across the country and to territorial premiers as well. We are glad to do it and speak up on their behalf at any time, but they are fully capable of doing it as well.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's climate record just continues to get worse. The most recently released data shows that our greenhouse gas emissions were rising at the beginning of COVID. Today's report from Environmental Defence demonstrates, once again, that fossil fuel subsidies are also going up, while a report from the Breach tells us that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers secured its own special committee with cabinet.

Next week, when the Prime Minister stands up in President Biden's climate summit, we will at long last announce a target that is meaningful and holds to 1.5°C?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, we have developed a comprehensive climate plan that enables Canada to move forward with the rest of the international community to meet our international obligations. A credible climate plan requires increased ambition. The parties to Paris agreed that all would need to do more and increase ambition overtime. Countries around the world are doing that, and Canada will be playing its part in the international community and seizing the economic opportunities.

I believe that all parties in the House, with perhaps the exception of the Conservative Party, agree on the need for greater ambition, and Canada will be bringing forward a new climate target next week at the Earth summit.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)
[English]

ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resume from April 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading of Bill C-14.

Call in the members.

● (1520)
[Translation]

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

(Division No. 92)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bessette	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Garneau
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould

Green
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Spengemann
Tabbara
Thériault
Trudeau
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vignola
Weiler
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zann

Government Orders

Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Ien
Johns
Jordan
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
Marcil
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tassi
Therrien
Trudel
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 210

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold

Routine Proceedings

Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shipley
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tochor	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Wagh	Webber
Williamson	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When I asked my question to the minister, accidentally a microphone was open and the answer of the minister was not heard properly.

Is it possible to allow me, please, to re-ask the question to the hon. minister in order that everyone can hear the question properly?

The Speaker: It was a very slight interruption, but we will ask the House.

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

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

We will go ahead, and the member can ask the question once more.

Please go ahead.

● (1525)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Mr. Speaker, this government knows that it is extremely important to strengthen our relations with Canada's allies and is committed to expanding Canada's global trade ties. The Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade recently led a virtual trade mission to France.

Could the minister talk more about the importance of empowering Canadian businesses to diversify and expand their presence on the world stage?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Laval—Les Îles for this important question.

Two weeks ago, I led a trade mission to France, bringing together over 300 entrepreneurs, of which 36% are majority women-owned businesses, 20% youth-owned businesses and 20% visible minority-owned businesses. This is inclusive trade in action.

Taking advantage of Canada's trade agreement with the European Union through CETA, our government will continue to promote inclusive and sustainable growth through trade, building back a greener future and a sustainable economic recovery.

The Speaker: It being 3:25 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, April 14, the House will now proceed to statements by ministers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians join Her Majesty the Queen, members of the royal family, citizens of the Commonwealth and people around the world in mourning the loss of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. This sad occasion gives us an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate a life given in the service of others.

His Royal Highness's life of service began when he joined the Royal Navy just before the start of the Second World War. An accomplished naval officer who was recognized for his bravery, the Duke of Edinburgh's contribution to the women and men of the armed forces of the United Kingdom, Canada and other realms would continue for 70 years after the end of the war. His relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces, and particularly his service as Colonel-in-Chief, was an enduring one. It was so enduring, in fact, that in recognition of his unwavering support His Royal Highness was appointed honorary general of the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as honorary admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy.

[*Translation*]

From his first visit to Canada with Princess Elizabeth in 1951, the Duke of Edinburgh made connections across the country. He was there for some of our most important milestones, including our centennial celebrations and the proclamation of the Constitution Act, 1982.

In every province and territory, His Royal Highness had the pleasure of meeting Canadians from every corner of our vast country over the course of his 60 visits to Canada. His deep commitment to Canada was even recognized when he was named the first extraordinary Companion of the Order of Canada. He served as patron or president of nearly 800 organizations, more than 40 of which were in Canada. These organizations reflected his interest in science and technology research, environmental conservation, and most notably his love of sports and dedication to young people.

• (1530)

[*English*]

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, a program he founded in 1956, embodies his desire to help young people succeed. The award is a personal challenge that is tailored to the interests and abilities of each participant. The program is not meant to be competitive. Instead, it seeks to develop youths' skills and perseverance and helps set goals to achieve them. The Duke of Edinburgh wanted a program that was accessible to all regardless of the background of the participants. The award has challenged, empowered and recognized millions of young people around the world and has left them better prepared to succeed. Since 1963, more than half a million Canadians have benefited from the program. The award program alone would qualify as a most important legacy.

However, when we think of the Duke of Edinburgh's legacy of service, we of course remember His Royal Highness for his decades of devotion to Her Majesty our Queen. The longest-serving consort attended tens of thousands of official engagements, either with Her Majesty or on her behalf. He was a participant in, and a witness to, the great progress we have made as a country over the course of Her Majesty's reign. In fact, one of his last public events was to attend Canada 150 celebrations at Canada House in the United Kingdom in 2017, where former governor general Johnston presented the Queen with a Sapphire Jubilee gift on behalf of all Canadians.

The Interim Clerk of the Privy Council, Janice Charette, recently spoke to me fondly about his Royal Highness's visit to Canada House at that time, when she was our high commissioner. Even af-

Routine Proceedings

ter retiring from public duties at the age of 96, his Royal Highness continued to be an important figure for the royal family and particularly for Her Majesty the Queen, who described him as her "strength and stay all these years".

I hope his memory will encourage more of us to serve our community in whatever capacity we can, that it will remind us we all gain when we help others realize their full potential, that providing opportunities in the most inclusive way possible brings us together, that we must support our youth to ensure their success, that when our country calls, we should be ready to serve, and that in times of joy and sorrow, we must be there for our families.

[*Translation*]

On Saturday, Canadians will have the opportunity to remember His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh at a commemorative ceremony to be held in Ottawa.

Although we will not be able to gather in person, this will be an opportunity to remember a remarkable person who reminds us of what it means to serve. It will also be the last opportunity for Canadians to express their deep sadness.

As we mourn the loss of this public figure, we should remember that the Duke of Edinburgh was a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. We acknowledge the profound loss felt today by Her Majesty the Queen and members of the royal family.

[*English*]

To the Queen, I respectfully express my deep sympathy for her loss. We share in her sorrow. It is my sincere hope that Her Majesty will take comfort in the knowledge that His Royal Highness inspired generations of young people in Canada and around the world to reach their full potential, achieve excellence and give their lives in service to others. Through his tireless work, he has forever earned our respect and admiration.

As Her Majesty the Queen best expressed, we "owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know."

• (1535)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today on behalf of all Conservatives, the constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, many Canadians and many current and former members of our Canadian Armed Forces to pay tribute to the life of service by Field Marshal, His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh on his passing. We all share our deepest condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and all members of the royal family.

Routine Proceedings

I am going to focus my comments on the prince's impact on our Canadian military and, I will admit, skewed toward his service as the colonel-in-chief to The Royal Canadian Regiment for 68 years, why I fully recognize he served in this capacity for other Canadian Army regiments, including the cadets, was an admiral for the Royal Canadian Navy, captain general of the Canadian Army and general of the Royal Canadian Air Force. As such, I am going to read into the record not my own words, but quotes from some key Canadian military leaders on His Royal Highness's passing.

[*Translation*]

The Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery said that His Royal Highness's life of devotion, service and duty in war and in peace "will remain an enduringly worthy example for us all."

[*English*]

On behalf of The Royal Canadian Regiment, the Right Hon. David Johnston, the 28th Governor General of Canada and the Colonel of the Regiment, "We share a deep sadness on the passing of His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, a man who personified service before self. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to Her Majesty, the Queen; the entire Royal Family, as well as His Royal Highness' friends and colleagues in this most difficult time."

From Major-General Steve Whelan, the senior serving within The RCR, "The RCR was privileged to have His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, wear the cap badge of Canada's oldest regular force infantry regiment for 68 years. He served as a role model of service to country that no other will likely ever surpass. His leadership will be missed."

From Colonel (Ret'd) Joe Aitchison, and former colonel of the regiment:

No description of Prince Philip's connection to The Royal Canadian Regiment would be complete without reference to an event that occurred well before he was appointed Colonel-in-Chief, but became known only 70 years after the fact.

On October 1942, young Philip had just been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and appointed First Lieutenant of HMS Wallace, notably the youngest officer of the Royal Navy to hold such an appointment at the time. HMS Wallace was assigned to support Operation HUSKY, the allied invasion of Sicily that began on 10 July 1943.

The Royal Canadian Regiment was one of the units that took part in the invasion landing as part of the 1st Canadian Division. The regiment's objective was a small airfield near Pachino on the southeast area of Sicily. The second in command of the anti-tank platoon on the day of the landing was a young Royal Canadian, Sherry Atkinson.

Fast forward 70 years:

At the breakfast reception preceding the presentation of the new Regimental Colour of the Third Battalion in Toronto on 27 April 2013, the Colonel-in-Chief, the reviewing officer, met Mr. Atkinson by design. In the course of their conversation, they established that on the day of the landing they had been roughly at the same place at the same time, the Prince offshore and Sherry onshore, with the former providing naval gunfire support to the activities of the latter. When they established this connection, it became very difficult indeed to separate them.

This is the kind of connection that existed between Prince Philip and The Royal Canadian Regiment over the entire 68 years of his appointment as its Colonel-in-Chief. The connection can perhaps be best described as a relationship between warriors, unquestionably of different generations and background, with shared values and ethos.

I fully agree with these esteemed Canadian military leaders' words that clearly highlight His Royal Highness's dedication to ser-

vice. Further, I would add that I had the honour to meet the prince in person during the same visit in 2013 as the commanding officer of the Second Battalion of The Royal Canadian Regiment. Our interaction was likely only 10 seconds in duration, but I still count myself fortunate to have had this privilege. Watching the prince work the room, showing his accustomed ability to relate to whomever he was speaking to, be that a private soldier or the Governor General, his remarkable stamina, his close eye to detail and his overwhelming charm was incredibly impressive.

Next, I would like to focus on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These awards will be one of the most significant legacies that will immortalize Prince Philip and his encouragement of youth. Established in 1956, it came to Canada in 1963. Today, the Duke of Edinburgh's international award operates in over 130 countries and territories globally. Over 500,000 Canadians have benefited from the program since its inception.

● (1540)

It recognizes young people between the ages of 14 and 24, and encourages those youth to develop universal skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, communication and decision-making.

The award's aims include improving mental health, employability and earning potential, physical fitness and health; and increased engagement with charitable and community causes.

The award program is comprised of four sections. The service section is intended to develop a sense of community and social responsibility. The adventurous journey section aims to cultivate a spirit of adventure and discovery, and an understanding of the environment. The skills section develops cultural, vocational and practical skills. The physical recreational section encourages improved performance in fitness.

I think all members of the House would agree the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a program that is just as applicable today, if not more so, than when the program was established in 1956.

Tied to my own riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I would offer this unique piece of history tied to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award winners and the official opening of the Bruce Trail in 1967 by Lord Hunt. Lord Hunt was the director of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program and was the leader of the climb of Mount Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary. In August of 1967, Lord Hunt joined 27 of the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award winners from 13 different Commonwealth countries for the start of the hike on the Bruce Trail from Tobermory to Owen Sound, which included five Canadian gold award winners.

As a side note, I have learned that during the initial planning for this event it was suggested that a then young Prince Charles and possibly Prince Philip would accompany the group. The original plan was to have them flown in by helicopter with an RCMP detail. Apparently, the local committee was aware of this and told it was top secret. Committee members were then surprised when on their way to a Duke of Edinburgh meeting in Toronto they heard on CFOS, the local radio station back in the riding, that Prince Charles might accompany the group. That announcement ended any talk right then of Prince Charles or Prince Philip coming to the hike with the group. I guess maintaining confidentiality has been an ongoing problem for more than just political parties. In this case, it is very unfortunate, as I am sure both Prince Charles and Prince Philip would have enjoyed the hike on the magnificent Bruce Trail.

In closing, His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, lived a life of service and public duty. As a consort to Her Majesty the Queen, he was an unwavering, loyal companion in supporting her as monarch. His service as a warrior, leader and public figure for his entire life is hard to fathom. He serves as an example we can all learn from.

On behalf of all Canadians and the Conservatives, I offer Her Majesty the Queen our deepest condolences on the passing of the prince. May he rest in peace. *Pro Patria*.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to express condolences on behalf of New Democrats to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and to the entire royal family on the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

For me personally, during the entirety of my almost 42 years on this planet, there has always been a Prince Philip as the Queen's consort, so in some respects, his passing marks the end of an era. For most of my fellow parliamentarians, it is the same.

Born on June 10, 1921, on the Greek island of Corfu, Prince Philip was part of Danish and Greek royalty. His father, Prince Andrew, was the son of King George I of Greece and the grandson of King Christian IX of Denmark. This lineage was reflected when, in response to a comment on the quality of his French, he earnestly informed former prime minister Jean Chrétien that he was not an Englishman.

It would be a gross understatement to simply say that over the course of Prince Philip's lifetime the world has undergone great change. At his birth, the British still ruled an empire that stretched across the globe, and today, after a decades-long and often painful process of decolonization, the United Kingdom is a small island nation that is struggling to define its place in Europe.

The monarchy, too, has seen significant changes both in its formal role and in the public perception of it. From the time of his marriage to Princess Elizabeth in 1947, and through his elevation to consort of the Queen in 1953, Prince Philip was witness to many tumultuous decades in support of his wife's important role.

I want to acknowledge and pay my respects to Prince Philip's service as a World War II naval veteran, enlisting as a cadet in 1939, advancing to midshipman in 1940, sub-lieutenant in 1941, lieutenant in 1942 and soon thereafter second in command of the

Routine Proceedings

destroyer HMS *Wallace*. Prince Philip served on many different ships and saw service across the globe, from protecting Australian convoys in the Indian Ocean to seeing battles in the Mediterranean. He finally saw the end of the war with service in the British Pacific Fleet.

Among the many honorary military positions held from around the world, he was also recognized as admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy, a general of the Royal Canadian Air Force and a captain-general of the Canadian Army.

As my colleague the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke mentioned earlier this week, Prince Philip will be remembered not only for being the longest-serving consort in the history of the British monarchy, but also for being the person he was. Yes, he was known for many gaffes and for being an expert at opening his mouth and putting his foot into it, referring to it personally as “don-topedalogy”.

We should also recognize that he was dedicated to encouraging young people to set high goals and work hard to achieve them through the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, which has the goal of challenging, empowering and recognizing young people and motivating them to set goals and challenge themselves to take control of their lives and futures.

He recognized the importance of the conservation movement and the importance of keeping our world habitable. He helped found the World Wide Fund for Nature and promoted conservation issues at the highest government and corporate levels. He spoke powerfully and committedly on issues such as biodiversity loss long before they entered the mainstream where they are discussed today. He recognized that if nature does not survive, neither will humans.

He was a dedicated public servant, keeping an active schedule well into his 90s. The stamina required for this active involvement was reportedly fortified by his adherence to the daily, full-body strength and flexibility regime known as the five basic exercises, which was developed to help get members of the Royal Canadian Air Force into shape without the need for equipment or much space.

Last, but certainly not least, he was there to support a powerful and strong partner in her duties as Queen.

● (1545)

Canada has hosted Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth many times over seven decades, when he came to know the full splendour of our country's geography from coast to coast. I know many Canadians join me today in expressing our deep and sincere condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and to the entire royal family for their loss of Prince Philip.

May he rest in peace.

Business of the House

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join in the tribute today to a remarkable human being, a royal, and someone who cared deeply about Canada, and the nature and wildlife of this country.

It was a hot June day in 1987 when I was walking across a farmer's field in Saskatchewan and had the huge honour of meeting His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. He was performing the kind of duties that I think he loved the most, which were helping to increase public awareness and support for endangered wildlife.

We were in the field of a farmer. I remember his name is Grant Fahlman. He was one of the first farmers in Saskatchewan to help with something called operation burrowing owl to try to preserve this very endangered bird, which has sadly become even more endangered since 1987.

However, His Royal Highness was there in his very strong engagement, as we have just heard from the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, in the work of the World Wildlife Fund. His Royal Highness was there to increase awareness and increase support. His tour of Saskatchewan in June 1987 included the stop at Grant Fahlman's family farm, as well as going to Last Mountain Lake to see the endangered whooping cranes and sandhill cranes.

However, what I remark about the most when I think back on that trip was His Royal Highness's extraordinary interest in detail. He had a very sharp eye, and he did not miss a thing. I will give two brief examples. We were walking across the field when he spotted a bit of desiccated excrement, and he stooped down to pick it up and examine it. He handed it to a wildlife biologist who was with us in the field and said, "What do you suppose this is? What animal do you suppose it is?"

The biologist said, "I don't know. Maybe it's a coyote" and tossed it away casually. His Royal Highness said, "Excuse me, you don't know what it is, and you're going to discard it? Surely we should look into it." The biologist scampered and found the piece of desiccated excrement, took it with him and promised His Royal Highness that he would study it. Nothing escaped his attention.

I was there in my capacity as policy adviser the federal minister of the environment at the time, and the burrowing owl relieved himself in the minister's hands. I very discreetly passed my boss a piece of old paper napkin from my purse, so he could wipe his hands off. Somewhat later in the day it was my turn to be presented. Tom McMillan, my boss, turned to His Royal Highness and said, "I want to present you with a member of my staff and she—" at which point His Royal Highness said, "Oh, I know, she provides you with Kleenex". He did not miss a thing. He had the sharpest eyes I have ever seen and was absolutely attentive to detail.

He was there also fundraising for Ducks Unlimited to protect our migratory waterfowl, our wetlands and Prairie Pothole. He was there in his capacity as president of the World Wildlife International, a role he held from 1981-96. That is not a small degree of commitment. He was also the vice-president of the International Union for Conservation of Nature from 1981-88.

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was dedicated in a way that was more than show. It was not just the oc-

casional event. He went to 50 different countries advocating for wildlife and preservation of key areas of ecosystems. He contributed to saving Canadian old growth in the campaign that took place in those very years to protect the area that is now Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve in Haida Gwaii.

The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford referenced that Prince Philip was known for the occasional gaffe, but I think that people, wildlife and endangered ecosystems around the world owe an enormous debt of gratitude to this member of the royal family whose sense of duty was extraordinary. His inspiration and his love of the natural world was second to none.

I join with all of my colleagues today in expressing the deep condolences of the people of Canada to our Queen, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This is an enormous loss to her and to the whole royal family. We express our condolences, and I personally want to express my thanks for the extraordinary honour of having met someone so dedicated to the wildlife, wild spaces and wilderness of Canada.

● (1550)

The Speaker: I would like to thank all those who have spoken today in tribute to His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. His life was lived in devoted service to his Queen, his country, and the Commonwealth and its people.

[Translation]

Her Majesty the Queen has lost her most dedicated subject, her companion of more than seven decades. I hope she will take comfort in the admiration and affection expressed by the people of the Commonwealth.

Pursuant to order made Wednesday, April 14, 2021, the following motion is deemed carried on division:

● (1555)

[English]

That a humble Address be presented to Her Majesty the Queen expressing the House's condolences following the passing of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and its hopes that the expression of the high esteem in which His Royal Highness was held may comfort Her Majesty and the members of the Royal Family in their bereavement;

[Translation]

and

that a Message be sent to the Senate informing their Honours that this House has passed the said Address and requesting their Honours to unite with this House in the said Address.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

[English]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is Thursday, I will ask the traditional question to the government about what will be happening in the next few days.

As members know, we are in a real stretch now, working here in the House of Commons for 10 weeks out of the next 11 weeks. We are very pleased to serve our people, our constituents in our ridings, here in the House of Commons.

It is with great honour, privilege and pleasure that I will ask the question. What is the plan?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my good friend.

This afternoon, we will complete second reading debate of Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Tomorrow morning we will start with the debate of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy), followed by the debate at second reading of Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050 in the afternoon.

On Monday of next week, we hope to complete second reading debate of Bill C-11, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts. As all members are aware, at 4:00 p.m. that day, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will present the budget. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday will all be days reserved for budget debate.

Finally, on Friday, we will continue with second reading debate of Bill C-21, an act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms).

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION REQUIREMENT FOR BILL C-265—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: In my statement of March 22, 2021, regarding Private Members' Business, I expressed my concern about Bill C-265, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), sponsored by the member for Salaberry—Suroit.

At the time, I encouraged the hon. members who wished to make arguments regarding the need for a royal recommendation for this bill to do so, which the members for Kingston and the Islands and Elmwood—Transcona did during points of order on April 12 and 14, respectively. I thank them for the precedents and the information they shared during their interventions. I am now ready to rule on the matter.

During his intervention, the member for Kingston and the Islands argued that Bill C-265 would extend sickness benefits and would thus seek to authorize a new and distinct charge on the consolidated revenue fund not authorized in statute. He added that there is no existing authorization to cover this new and distinct charge and that a royal recommendation is therefore necessary.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Here is what it says at page 838 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, and I quote:

Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation, or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown's financial initiative.

Furthermore, a royal recommendation may only be obtained by a minister, the granting of such recommendation being a prerogative of the Crown.

[English]

In order to determine if Bill C-265 requires a royal recommendation, the Chair can rely on a number of similar precedents, including the ruling made by my predecessor on Bill C-269, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act regarding improvement of the employment insurance system, and Bill C-308, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act regarding improvement of the employment insurance system, both of which would have, among other things, extended the length of the benefit period.

A reading of Bill C-265 reveals that it would amend paragraphs 12(3)(c) and 15.14(1)(c) of the Employment Insurance Act to increase the maximum benefit period in the case of a prescribed illness, injury or quarantine from 15 weeks to 50 weeks.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Clearly, the bill's goal is to permanently lengthen the period for employment insurance benefits, which would increase the expenditures made under the act's system. It is, therefore, my opinion that Bill C-265 would increase an existing appropriation and must be accompanied by a royal recommendation before it can proceed to a final vote in the House on third reading.

[English]

When this item is next before the House, the debate will only be on the motion for second reading of the bill, and the question will be put to the House at the end of this debate.

I would like to thank the hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division and the ministerial statements, Government Orders will be extended by another 40 minutes, for a total of 70 minutes.

Government Orders

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs has one minute remaining in her debate, and then we will go to questions.

The hon. member's camera is off. We will move on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Beaches—East York, I speak today in support of Bill C-15. I want to start by acknowledging the work of former NDP member Romeo Saganash. It really highlights how the importance of this issue cuts across party lines, and the significance of working across party lines to get important things done.

I have had many constituents reach out to me in support of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Most, of course, email or write letters. Some call. Before the election in the last Parliament, when Bill C-262, Romeo Saganash's bill, was before us, I had a constituent, Murray Lumley, who came and met with me in my office and called on me to support that bill, which I did, and encouraged the government of the day to support it. Murray is a thoughtful, caring constituent. He did not vote for me; he worked against me, if I am being honest, in the last election, and I do not expect he will vote for me whenever the next election might be. However, I do want to highlight his efforts, all the same, just as I have highlighted Romeo's efforts. It is important that we emphasize just how this cuts across party lines and how all of us, regardless of political stripe, need to support this really important legislation.

When we work across party lines, we build trust. Another way we build trust in politics is by keeping our promises. I just want to highlight the platform that we ran on in the last election, which stated:

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission said that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples charts a path "for reconciliation to flourish in 21st century Canada."...

We will move forward with introducing co-developed legislation to implement [UNDRIP] as government legislation by the end of 2020. In this work, we will ensure that this legislation fully respects the intent of the Declaration, and establishes Bill C-262 as the floor, rather than the ceiling, when it comes to drafting this new legislation.

That promise has been kept through Bill C-15, which was introduced in Parliament in December of last year.

In substance, Bill C-15 has a lengthy preamble, including that:

[UNDRIP] provides a framework for reconciliation, healing and peace, as well as harmonious and cooperative relations based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith.... [They] constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples of the world....

It recognizes "historic injustices" and says that "the implementation of the Declaration must include concrete measures to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination, including systemic discrimination, against Indigenous peoples."

In substance, clause 5 states:

The Government of Canada must, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration.

Saganash rightly noted before committee that "the Minister of Justice [already] has an obligation under section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act to make sure that any legislation, before it is introduced, is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms", and he noted that Bill C-15 provides for an equivalent for indigenous rights and treaty rights in this country.

Clause 6 is the most important section in this legislation:

The Minister must, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples and with other federal ministers, prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration.

This includes measures to "address injustices" and discrimination and to "promote mutual respect"; "measures related to monitoring, oversight, recourse or remedy" and accountability; and "measures related to monitoring the implementation of the plan" and annual reporting mechanisms to Parliament.

Bill C-15 does treat Bill C-262 as a floor, which is incredibly important. It goes beyond, in its preamble, and recognizes the inherent right to self-determination, including a right to self-government.

In the words of the justice minister:

Bill C-15 would create a legislated, durable framework requiring government to work collaboratively with indigenous peoples to make steady progress in implementing the declaration across all areas of federal responsibility.

Is it supported by indigenous communities? Is it supported by experts? Is it supported by the above-noted Mr. Saganash? The answer is yes, an overwhelming yes. There is a letter in support of Bill C-15, with over 200 signatures from first nations, from indigenous communities across the country, organizations, experts and activists, including Saganash, Irwin Cotler, the current NDP member for Winnipeg Centre, and many others. I know that one of the signatories is also a constituent, Kerry Wilkins, who is an expert at the University of Toronto.

• (1605)

They write in this letter:

Parliament has an historic opportunity to advance reconciliation.

[UNDRIP] is a consensus global human rights instrument, elaborating minimum standards for the "survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples." Implementation of these standards is vital to improving the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world, and to upholding Canada's solemn and urgent human rights commitments.

They go on to note that the measures in Bill C-15 are "important, practical and achievable measures that deserve the support of all Canadians."

Government Orders

Two of those signatories, Alex Neve, formerly of Amnesty International, and Brenda Gunn, wrote recently, and separately:

By any measure, implementing this global declaration domestically will significantly advance reconciliation and strengthen respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples across the country. Not automatically. And not without much hard work ahead, such as the considerable effort—in full collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples—that must be invested in developing the action plan for implementation that will be required.

They go on to note that it is important as a matter of global leadership and that it “stands to advance Canada's overall commitment to international human rights.”

Speaking recently to a parliamentary committee studying Bill C-15, Romeo Saganash stated:

I fully support Bill C-15 being tabled by the federal government in the House.... Government bills can proceed more efficiently, I believe, before the House and the Senate. Bill C-15 confirms the declaration as the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples.

He goes on to note that there are some amendments he would like to see, but he supports Bill C-15 and acknowledges that it meets his previous bill's commitment in Bill C-262.

Former chair of the TRC and former senator Murray Sinclair said, “Indigenous people now will be able to negotiate with a stronger hand than they ever have in the past”.

The Assembly of First Nations said, “The AFN is urging all Parliamentarians to support adoption of a strong implementation framework before the close of this session of Parliament.”

The ITK calls for the strengthening of Bill C-15, but goes on to say that it strongly encourages all members of Parliament to support Bill C-15 in order to help advance the urgent work of implementing UNDRIP.

The Métis National Council stated:

Canada now has the opportunity to assert its place as a world leader in the recognition of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples through this Bill. The Métis National Council fully supports this effort, and we urge members of all political parties to pass this legislation without delay.

Sheryl Lightfoot, the Canada research chair in global indigenous rights and politics at UBC, stated:

I am strongly in favour of the implementation model that Romeo Saganash created when he first brought...Bill C-262 before Parliament. This model, which is the foundation for Bill C-15, has a number of elements that I think are crucial.

First of all, it requires collaboration with indigenous peoples. It also requires concrete action including legal reform and...the creation of an action plan, and it requires public reporting and accountabilities.

...Bill C-15 is advancing the global conversation and setting a very positive example....

Quite simply, Bill C-15 represents the best approach to human rights implementation that I have seen from around the world, bringing all of these various elements together.

I previously noted my constituent Kerry Wilkins, who states, “Meaningful incorporation of UNDRIP into Canadian law would improve materially the circumstances, and enhance the autonomy, of Indigenous peoples dwelling here.” He goes on to provide a couple of examples. I recognize I am running out of time, so I will not get into them, unless perhaps I get asked questions.

Of course, I expect the government will look for ways of improving the bill at committee. I hope to see further testimony at committee that addresses whether a three-year waiting period for the action plan is appropriate and, if it is, whether interim measures might be useful. I am also interested to understand from testimony why the bill does not include a section on power-sharing agreements in the same way B.C.'s UNDRIP implementation legislation does.

Finally, it is really important to emphasize that so much depends upon implementation, so there are big questions in that regard. This bill is important, but it is important in its potential. Let us pass it at second reading, send it to committee, improve it at committee where possible, and let us get back to the hard work of implementing this important international framework here at home.

● (1610)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referenced quite a few quotes, so I would also like to reference a quote from Dale Swampy of the National Coalition of Chiefs, who writes in a special to the Financial Post:

While the affirmation of Indigenous rights is always welcome, the legislation as currently drafted is likely to have negative impacts on the many Indigenous communities that rely on resource development as a source of jobs, business contracts and own-source revenues.

I have spoken to a number of indigenous leaders and individuals across my constituency and across the country who have shared concern about some of the ambiguity and possible extra layers that would reduce economic opportunities for Canada's indigenous peoples. I would like the member to comment on that.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of different things.

One is that it is curious to me that we would get out ahead of ourselves to determine exactly how this would be implemented, because this is to be implemented in a very codeveloped way in collaboration and consultation with indigenous peoples across the country.

Government Orders

The second is that its incredibly important to note, because the Conservatives and that member have asked a number questions around certainty, that our Canadian law already says, with respect to the duty to consult, that it varies with the circumstances, from a minimum duty to discuss important decisions where the breach is less serious or relatively minor, through the significantly deeper than mere consultation that is require in most cases, to full consent of the aboriginal nation on very serious issues. These words apply as much to unresolved claims as to intrusions on settled claims.

Those are the words of our current Supreme Court. This notion of certainty has to be put to bed. We will get increased certainty through collaboration and consultation with indigenous people once and for all.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I applaud the tabling of the bill, but unfortunately it is a bit late coming. Our NDP colleagues have been introducing bills for the implementation of the United Nations declaration since 2007. The Liberal government has said many times that it is in favour of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. If that is what it wanted all along, why the lengthy delay in introducing this long-awaited bill?

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, we supported Mr. Saganash's efforts in the last Parliament. I have supported every bill that has come before Parliament, so long as I have been in Parliament, in relation to the implementation of UNDRIP. Romeo Saganash's bill should have passed in the last Parliament but for the fact the Conservatives blocked it in the Senate. That is an unfortunate circumstance, but we are rectifying that in this Parliament through leadership from this government.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the earnestness in which he has supported the previous work of the very great and learned Mr. Romeo Saganash, a friend and mentor of mine, who provided the framework here. However, the hon. member for the Bloc raises some important questions.

I have a question of my own. I heard the member speak about the ideas of consultation, collaboration and power sharing. There are concerns that the legal frameworks that are already in place have led to scenarios like what we are seeing in Wet'suwet'en and in 1492 Land Back near my home, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy territory. We are seeing these problems exist as well in the Mi'kmaq territory out east.

Does the hon. member have confidence in the government's commitment to actually having free, prior and informed consent for the collective rights-holders of these treaties?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, this comes up too often and I think this is an inference of a previous question I received from Conservatives in relation to uncertainty. Of course, I am confident that free, prior and informed consent, as referenced a number of times throughout UNDRIP, will be a key part of the col-

laboration and communications with indigenous peoples in setting down the action plan under Bill C-15.

What that will entail in the end, as Kerry Wilkins, the expert in my community, and as Murray Sinclair have said, is that it ought to enhance our current framework unquestionably. Let us also remember that, as Romeo Saganash has himself said and as the UN has said in its expert committee's look at free, prior and informed consent, when we are grounded in human rights, we are also looking at not absolute veto considerations, but we are looking at principles of proportionality as they relate to the interest at issue. Therefore, we will see an enhancement of our existing law through the implementation of UNDRIP, Bill C-15 and the action plan. We will also see it building upon this notion of human rights and considerations around proportionality.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

I am really pleased to be working and building relationships with the people of the Cote, Keeseekoose, The Key, Fishing Lake and Yellow Quill First Nations and the Métis Nation Saskatchewan in the riding of Yorkton—Melville on Treaty No. 4 and Treaty No. 5 lands.

I am also very pleased to speak today on Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It goes without saying that the consideration of this legislation today is a significant moment for Canada, not only because members on all sides of the House, and therefore all Canadians, want to achieve meaningful reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people but because the Liberal government has made a critical misstep toward this goal through the introduction of the bill in its current form. It is my fear that the impact of the bill will result in the opposite of its desired effect.

The bill aims to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP. Subclause 4(a), for instance, states that "The purpose of this Act is to (a) affirm the Declaration as a universal international human rights instrument with application in Canadian law". Further, clause 5 charges the Government of Canada with working "in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration."

Government Orders

The House will remember calls to action 43 and 44 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, urging the federal government to “to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation” and “to develop a national action plan, strategies, and other concrete measures to achieve the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” It was in fact the previous Conservative government that adopted UNDRIP in 2010 as an aspirational document.

Then and now, the Conservatives support the goals and aspirations of this declaration. We support treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with the indigenous people of Canada. However, we remain concerned about the Liberal government’s unwillingness to put forward legislation that clearly outlines the effect and interpretation of key terms within the declaration, such as “free, prior and informed consent”. When it comes to understanding what exactly this term means in a practical sense, the lack of consensus between the federal and provincial governments, among members of the legal community and within indigenous communities themselves is worthy of concern.

The previous Conservative government, at the time of its inception, opposed UNDRIP, because free, prior and informed consent did not align with Canadian constitutional law. That is why, a few years later, the same government adopted UNDRIP as an aspirational document, not binding law. This was a move in line with three of our Five Eyes partners: the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. It was a decision made with good reason. The wide-ranging provisions within UNDRIP, like FPIC, were found to be inconsistent with Canadian constitutional law.

Over a decade later, the Liberal government is forging ahead with infusing UNDRIP into the law of the land. However, it has failed to do its due diligence in presenting a bill that can be clearly understood by government and stakeholders. There is a lack of consultation on what purports to be a transformative piece of legislation that will have untold ramifications on our country, indigenous communities and, indeed, all Canadians.

NTC president Judith Sayers says that the consultative process for this bill lacked mutual agreement and was rushed. AFN chiefs have expressed their concern that no extensive consultations were held. The government is good at partial consultations, but the word “extensive” is mentioned here.

Late last year, six provincial premiers wrote to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to object to the six-week window provided for input on the draft bill. They stressed the need for “appropriate engagement with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners on the draft bill” that could “fundamentally change Confederation.” I do not believe that has taken place and any that has is not clearly outlined to the House. The premiers pleaded for time for Canada to fully and meaningfully consider and address the legitimate, significant concerns that we have already raised about the draft bill in its current form.

It is unacceptable for the government to claim that the time for consultation has been satisfied. I have heard that a great deal today. Concerns expressed at the time of the previous UNDRIP bill, Bill C-262, still exist now. How can the government claim credit for a

new era of trust and reconciliation with indigenous communities with such a heavy-handed and sloppy approach to this legislation?

● (1620)

As I mentioned earlier, the effect of free, prior and informed consent has been a long-standing concern that has not retreated from the national discourse. It generates more questions than it provides answers.

Take, for instance, the direct input of indigenous communities. The National Coalition of Chiefs and the Indigenous Resource Network have expressed its concern about ramifications, such as who would have the authority to grant it and the impact it would have on future resource projects. If grant expectations under this model are not met, how will it undermine trust between the Crown and indigenous people for generations to come? Will it deter investment, good jobs and secure incomes from reaching our shores? Indeed, the interpretation of this may lead to consequences beyond Canada’s resource development.

Professor Dwight Newman of the University of Saskatchewan’s Faculty of Law, speaking before the Senate aboriginal affairs committee on a previous iteration of the bill stated, “the Court’s interpretation of FPIC is nonetheless subject to uncertainties that have enormous implications for Canada”. Professor Newman’s input has merit.

Again, let us focus on how indigenous communities may be impacted. Clearly, the pursuit of reconciliation and tangible progress for indigenous communities could be stagnated by opaque language like FPIC. Even considering the current constitutional model, one that outlines a duty to consult and accommodate, tangible results can be hard to come by depending on the degree of intrusion proposed. With the implementation of this model, many serious questions are raised, including who might provide their consent in any given circumstance or who speaks for any community.

Government Orders

Members will recall a sensitive period for our country not too long ago when the decisions of 20 band councils concerning the Coastal GasLink pipeline came into direct conflict with opposition from Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Opposing groups within the Wet'suwet'en could not come to an agreement about who spoke on their behalf. Speaking before a parliamentary committee, Theresa Tait-Day, a founder of the Wet'suwet'en Matrilineal Coalition, said that the project had been hijacked, despite 80% of the band wanting the project to proceed.

It has been argued that the passage of Bill 41 in British Columbia, in many ways a mirror of the legislation before us, led directly to the disconnect between the elected band council, hereditary chiefs and government. Many indigenous stakeholders interpreted Bill 41 as the vehicle through which UNDRIP was adopted and therefore established a right to veto construction on the line. Indigenous communities deserve better than the ambiguity that B.C.'s Bill 41 and Bill C-15 provide.

Other questions remain, such as, how will this apply in situations where indigenous rights include title or the right to occupy lands and use resources? In situations involving unresolved or overlapping land claim disputes, whose consent is required? What form will this consent take in Canadian law? There is a real concern that the government is taking steps to enshrine UNDRIP into Canadian law without a clear picture of how concepts like FPIC will be interpreted in that law.

As justice minister in 2016, the member for Vancouver Granville said, "simplistic approaches, such as adopting the UNDRIP as being Canadian law are unworkable." She went on to say, "it's important to appreciate why Canada cannot simply incorporate the declaration "word for word" into law."

The Conservatives have been clear and consistent. We believe that UNDRIP is an aspirational document whose goals we support. However, to adopt it wholesale without consideration for lasting consequences is irresponsible. We need a made-in-Canada approach to achieve the type of reconciliation UNDRIP outlines. Indigenous communities do not need a further barrier to achieving the best for their communities.

Dale Swampy, president of the National Coalition of Chiefs, has spent his professional life in first nations administration as well as the oil and gas industry. In a special note to the Financial Post he wrote that he "know[s] first-hand what happens when federal bureaucracy gets in the way of responsible resource development." It is his belief that symbolic gestures of reconciliation should not come at the expense of food on the table for indigenous people.

Reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people means recognizing and affirming their dreams and aspirations to not just be stakeholders but, as I have been told, shareholders. In this case, it is the private sector that has led the way in spending on indigenous businesses.

One example of nine is Cameco, the uranium company that procured \$3.8 billion since 2004 from local suppliers in the riding of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan, whose member of Parliament is so passionately committed to seeing reconciliation truly succeed. His words I now repeat, "Advocat-

ing for jobs, owned-source revenue streams, equity ownership and financial independence is in fact the pathway to self-determination and the solution to many of the social challenges."

• (1625)

The Liberals have been failing to keep their promises, such as ending long-term boil water advisories, and failing to stand up for the future of the natural resource projects that benefit indigenous communities and that they want to be part of. As it stands, this bill has the potential to sow further seeds of division across our country. If it is the government's intention to enshrine an international—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to end it there. Our time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She talked about the problems indigenous communities are facing and access to safe drinking water on different reserves.

Does she not believe that adopting this program could help foster reconciliation?

In Quebec, the Viens commission recommended that the declaration be adopted. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls also recommended that the declaration serve as a tool for reconciliation and a means to reduce the inequality of women in indigenous communities.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the point that I am making is that there has not been due diligence done. My comments are not coming from me. They are coming from the indigenous communities around us that are saying this is not clear enough. The government seems to want to take the approach that it takes on so many things: It makes big announcements, it makes big decisions, it implements them, but then all things break loose.

We need to take the best approach we possibly can to make sure that our indigenous people, our first nations and Métis have the opportunities to truly excel in the ways they choose. I appreciate the comment. They do not want to be stakeholders. They have every right to be shareholders in the economic successes of Canada and they are more than capable of doing so. They want proper due diligence done in defining this situation.

Government Orders

• (1630)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, UNDRIP was adopted in 2007. We are 14 years into it in Canada, and we still have not domesticated this law. My friend opposite outlined a number of comments made by people who oppose this particular piece of legislation. She has been very selective in picking those.

My question is quite direct. Are there any circumstances under which the Conservative Party would support UNDRIP in any form? The Conservatives had 10 years to implement it within Canada and they have opposed it every step of the way since being in opposition. Is there any way in which the Conservative Party will support this, or any legislation that hopes to domesticate UNDRIP?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, what the member said is very important to recognize. He said my examples brought forward in the House today are individuals and organizations who do not feel comfortable with this legislation going forward because they do not feel it has had the due diligence done to explain in every way possible the accountabilities, and that I am selectively choosing those individuals and organizations.

Truly, today in the House everyone has been presenting individuals who support their perspectives. Unfortunately, what that shows is exactly what I am saying. There is not consensus. There is not consensus within the federal government, within provincial governments or within the perspectives of various indigenous groups, including those who are involved in oil and gas opportunities in Canada. They have seen their opportunities shut down because of that inconsistency.

My concern is that it is clear that the due diligence has not been done. Any consultation has been selective, as the member is indicating in this case, and more needs to be done.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that “free” means without any coercion, “prior” means before the decision is made, and “informed” is when one has all the information. Every other governance system in Canada is allowed that. They are given free, prior and informed consent to make decisions.

The only level of government in Canada that is not given that, and it has been proven again and again in the court system, is indigenous governance. This bill is so important because it starts that process.

Could the member talk about how many indigenous communities want to be stakeholders and how this bill will actually get them there?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the stakeholders who were involved in moving forward and purchasing the TMX did not get that opportunity. There are all kinds of examples of situations, such as with the Wet'suwet'en, where there is not enough clarity, and that clarity has not been provided according to various indigenous groups across the nation.

If we want to move ahead as quickly and efficiently as possible to make sure we have shareholders, not stakeholders, side by side

with us we need to do what they are calling on us to do, which is to make this consent absolutely clear, and it is not.

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 Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Finance; and the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Fisheries and Oceans.

Before we get to resuming debate, I want to give a quick shout-out to my father-in-law, who is tuned in. Ian, stay well, and we hope to see you soon.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

• (1635)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hello to your father-in-law as well from northern Alberta: Peace River—Westlock, or as I like to call it, the promised land. We have 7,500 dairy animals and we are the honey capital of Canada, so we are literally flowing with milk and honey.

Peace River—Westlock was settled on a promise called Treaty No. 8. This involved 14 first nations, three Métis settlements and over 100 communities. I overlap with about 500 other elected representatives of band councils, town councils, school trustees and others from a big swath of northern Alberta. Every day, I have the honour and privilege of representing them here in Ottawa.

Bill C-15, the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, has been a widely debated piece of legislation over the last number of years. It is my honour to bring my voice to that today, representing the people of northern Alberta.

One of the things that I hope I bring as a member of Parliament is that I typically mean what I say and say what I mean. I wish that were the case with the Liberals on this particular piece of legislation. I find it interesting that even though I will be voting against this particular piece of legislation and the NDP will be voting for it, we actually agree on the substance of it: that it could make a significant change to the way the governance of this country happens. The NDP continually say that it would be a significant change and we say that it would be a significant change. It is always interesting that the Liberals continue to say they are going to bring this in, but there will be fairly minimal impact on the way we do business or the way that governance happens in this country. It is fascinating.

Section 4(a) in this bill declares that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will have application in Canadian law. That is probably the crux of the bill for me, the tripping-over point that I have. No other declaration from the UN necessarily has application in Canadian law. We have not legislated that for any declaration other than UNDRIP.

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, you may be familiar with the work I do to combat human trafficking in this country. Human trafficking is a scourge of this country. It is a growing crime that is happening, often within 10 blocks of where we live. One of the tools that I use in combatting human trafficking is a Palermo protocol. The Palermo protocols are part of a UN document and declaration that outlines how to identify a victim of human trafficking. The challenge with that is it is not a legislative tool. It is not a piece of law, it is a declaration. It gives principles under which countries should operate. I advocate all the time for us to bring Canada into alignment with that Palermo protocol. We have made several attempts to do that over the last 30 years: essentially, recognizing human trafficking and bringing human trafficking offences into the Criminal Code, and dealing with how to identify somebody who is being trafficked. All of those things come in, and we get a framework and idea of how to combat it from that Palermo protocol.

Another UN instrument that I use regularly is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. That is, again, something that helps to identify whether the rights of a child are being upheld or being violated by holding a given situation up against the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. When there is a default or issue and we are not able to hold a particular case up against the rights of the child or Palermo protocol to ask why a human trafficking victim is not able to get justice, we can look at the Palermo protocol and see that it indicates, in this instance, that in Canada one of the areas of the Criminal Code is that there is a requirement for the element of fear.

• (1640)

If a person is living in fear, that is one of the elements for them to be identified as a victim of human trafficking, yet the Palermo protocol does not have that requirement at all. The Palermo protocol tries to set it up so that, given the criteria laid out, an outside observer can see whether somebody is being trafficked or not. The individual being trafficked does not have to verify that they are being trafficked.

It is similar with UNDRIP. In a given situation, we would stack it up against UNDRIP and ask: Are we meeting the ideals of UNDRIP, or are we not meeting the ideals of UNDRIP? Does Canadian law have a shortfall? Are we not living up to the areas of UNDRIP?

“Free, prior and informed consent” is one of those very definite areas where we have to ensure that we live up to that. The challenge that we have with it is that if “free, prior and informed consent” means the same thing as “duty to consult”, then on all of the court cases that have gone into developing that whole concept of “duty to consult”, would introducing a new term of “free, prior and informed consent” come alongside? If it comes alongside, if “duty to consult” falls right inside “free, prior and informed consent”, which I think it does, would our jurisprudence continue, would our jurisprudence stand, and in introducing the new topic into it, would that just come along and align?

I think that would be great. However, if it comes in and we are now going to have to start re-litigating all of the court cases of the past because we have introduced a new concept into the jurispru-

dence, I do not think that is going to be helpful, not at all. Now we are going to be confusing the issues.

I have been part of putting together several private members' bills. It is a rewarding exercise. It is something that is a luxury that only members of Parliament have. I am very much appreciative of the efforts that go into developing a private member's bill.

One of the issues that always comes up, every time I have worked on a private member's bill, is the introduction of new terms. Every time I bring an idea to the legislative drafters, I ask, “Why did you use that term, and not the term that I used?” or “Why do you want to talk about this, when I wanted to talk about it like that?” They always say that this term has been clearly defined by the courts. Therefore, if we use that term, we already know what it means, it has a whole list of jurisprudence.

For example, that term of “commercial use” is understood by the courts. There is a lot of jurisprudence behind that. Therefore, we want to use that term when we are talking about supply chain reporting, for example, or the use of images, or whatever it happens to be. We understand that term. The courts have ruled on that term.

When a new term is introduced into the mix, it opens up to a whole new discussion and a whole new debate, and the opportunity for the courts to have to make a judgment on what those rules have to say. That is where the concern is.

I have been sitting at committee listening to testimony on this, as committee work is always a rewarding experience, listening to Canadians bring their perspectives to Ottawa. In one case, we heard from a member of the public who outlined UNDRIP as the indigenous bill of rights. I do not think we are introducing the indigenous bill of rights when we are adopting UNDRIP. Maybe we are, but I do not think that we are doing that. So to then say that we are doing that, I do not think it is helpful to indigenous people, if they think that this is going to be a bill of rights. I am not sure. Maybe the Liberals could clarify that for me, but I do not think that is the case.

I am not 100% sure what the terms, with application in Canadian law, actually mean. Does it mean, as most of the witnesses who show up to committee say, that it would be used in much the same way as the Palermo protocol would be or the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

• (1645)

If that is the case and we can slip free, prior and informed consent in right alongside the court-defined term of duty to consult, that would be great, but I have not seen that from the Liberals. I am hoping that we can hear from the Liberals that they mean what they say and they say what they mean.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a shout-out to your father-in-law, Ian, as well. He should be very proud of all the great work that you have done over the years. I want to thank my friend opposite because I have been able to work with him for the last five years at committee.

Government Orders

One of the things we have seen over the last five years, especially travelling with the former MP Romeo Saganash, is the enormous amount of work that was put in to this legislation in Bill C-262 and then subsequently in Bill C-15.

Regrettably, what we have seen from my friend's party is blockage throughout its term in government up to 2015 and then beyond that we have seen absolutely no effort from the Conservative Party to move forward, whether in legislation or in terms of assessing it in Canadian law.

Could the member give us a sense of what his party intends to do in order to implement UNDRIP in Canada if the bill does not go through?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives moved forward on matrimonial property rights on reserve. Conservatives have worked on ensuring that indigenous children remain with their families. Conservatives have worked on a whole host of things to bring prosperity to first nations communities.

We have worked on a number of things and to use UNDRIP as a tool, much the same way that we used the Palermo protocols or the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, is admirable and is something that we need to do. We want full participation of the first nations communities and first nations individuals in our economy so that the wealth that this country can create is shared by all.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Peace River—Westlock. I have the opportunity to work alongside him on the important issue of modern slavery and human trafficking. We are very passionate about this.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women is calling for the implementation of the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act was one of the inquiry's recommendations. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and modern slavery, and continue to be at a tremendous disadvantage.

Canada's adoption and implementation of the UNDRIP act will help indigenous communities and women to achieve greater self-determination and equality, and help eliminate the discrimination they endure. I think this is really important and I would like to hear from my colleague, who is so passionate about this issue.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, human trafficking is an outrageous crime that happens right here in Canada. It is a growing problem. We know that 97% of victims of human trafficking are young women and we know that 50% of the victims that are rescued are first nations or indigenous. It is a large problem.

In order to bring Canada in alignment with UNDRIP, we need to change our laws, get our laws aligning with what the aspirations of UNDRIP are. Just declaring them to be the law has weird implications. Many of the declaration's items are not necessarily laws. They are aspirations about how we ensure that first nations communities and first nations individuals have access to the same justice

as anyone else. How do we ensure that the outcomes of the justice system are the same, regardless what colour a Canadian is?

We need to ensure that participation in the economy and the rights to the fruits of this beautiful and bountiful country are shared by all.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that UNDRIP was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 and that followed several decades of negotiation. The purpose of it was to enshrine the rights that "constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world".

We know that Canadian indigenous peoples have suffered a genocide. They suffered the worst crime imaginable, having their own children taken from their families by the state. To this day, they do not have access to clean water and suffer the poorest health outcomes of any Canadian group.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that we should be doing everything we can, as a Parliament, to rectify the centuries-old abuses, discrimination and, in fact, genocide of the first peoples?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree that we should be doing everything to ensure that first nations communities and indigenous communities across the country, whether that be Inuit or M tis, would have full participation in the economy so that we can raise everybody out of poverty and stop the heinous treatment of first nations and indigenous people across the country. It is a blight on our character, but we need to, as a country, move forward on these things. I want to see the elimination of boil water advisories on reserve. I want to see these things.

I need an answer on this particular bill. Is it a bill of rights for indigenous peoples or is it something more akin to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child or the Palermo protocol? That question has yet to be answered.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sydney—Victoria.

I am speaking today from the traditional territories of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe peoples and the treaty land of the Williams Treaties First Nations. I am pleased to rise to discuss Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Government Orders

Our government has been clear. We are committed to renewing the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples based on recognition, rights, respect, co-operation, partnership and advancing reconciliation. Earlier this week, I rose in the House to speak about how our government is fighting systemic racism in our judicial system with Bill C-22, and I am proud to rise again today to speak to how the implementation of Bill C-15 is a step forward in protecting the human rights of indigenous peoples and fighting systemic racism.

In Canada and across the globe, citizens are debating the nature and promise of equality in our time. They are rightfully and urgently demanding change to fight systemic racism in our society. Human rights are universal and inherent to all human beings, and this bill is another sign of the progress we are making in affirming human rights and addressing the systemic racism present in the country.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples. Article 1 of the UN declaration recognizes that “Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and that includes the right to self-government and self-determination. In addition, the UN declaration sets out rights and standards that draw on universal human rights norms, but speak more specifically to the circumstances of the world’s 370 million indigenous people.

The recognition of indigenous rights is at the core of our government’s commitment to build the relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis people. That is why our government has introduced Bill C-15. The wait for equal respect and the human rights of indigenous people has been far too long and has taken far too many generations.

As part of our commitment to engage and collaborate with indigenous peoples, this legislation is the culmination of work with indigenous rights holders and organizations over many months past. We understand the importance of building on the work that has already been done to advance the implementation of the declaration in Canada. This is explicitly acknowledged in the preamble, which recognizes that provincial, territorial and municipal governments have the ability to establish their own approaches to implement the declaration. Indeed, several have already taken steps, in their own areas of authority, to do so.

We are ready to work with all levels of government, indigenous peoples and other sectors of society to achieve the goals outlined in the declaration and supported by this bill. We have also included a provision that specifically notes that the bill does not delay the application of the declaration in Canadian law. Achieving the objectives of the declaration and further aligning federal laws with the declaration will take time. However, we are not starting from scratch and we continue to advance recent and ongoing priorities and initiatives, which contribute to the implementation of the declaration in parallel to the process and measures required by the bill.

We have also responded to calls for clearer and more robust provisions for the process of developing and tabling an action plan and annual reports. These updates are incredibly important, and the ac-

tion plan is a central pillar of this legislation. Developing and implementing the action plan means working together to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination, including systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples; to promote respect, mutual understanding, as well as good relations, including through human rights education; to include measures that relate to monitoring, oversight, recourse or remedy, or other accountability with respect to the implementation of the declaration; and to include measures to review and amend the action plan.

• (1655)

With this legislation, we will fulfill the Government of Canada’s 2016 endorsement of the declaration without qualification, while also responding to the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the continuing progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action. There is no doubt that passing this legislation will help us move in a direction we all want.

Over the past few years, this government has taken a number of steps and measures consistent with the human rights framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian charter. We are beginning to see positive changes happening, including steps to strengthen restorative justice, access to justice and diversion programs, and reform to our criminal justice system.

The Government of Canada, alongside the provinces and territories, is developing a pan-Canadian strategy to address the overrepresentation of indigenous people in the criminal justice system. Work on this strategy also includes close collaboration with indigenous communities and organizations.

We are also implementing impact of race and culture assessments, which allow sentencing judges to consider the disadvantages of systemic racism that contributed to indigenous people’s and racialized Canadians’ interactions with the criminal justice system. We are putting in place community justice centre pilot projects in British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario, as well as consultations to help expand the community justice centre concept to other provinces and territories.

Among other initiatives, we are also developing administration of justice agreements with indigenous communities to strengthen community-based justice systems and support self-determination. I believe this initiative to be especially important. It recognizes that indigenous peoples have to be part of the solution and that the capacity is there to improve justice within indigenous communities.

Bill C-15 is a significant step forward, but alone it will not achieve our collective goal of transformative change for indigenous people. There will be much work to do together after royal assent to develop an inclusive and effective approach to realize the full potential of the declaration. As a result, additional efforts and measures to implement the UN declaration will be needed, and as I just listed, the Government of Canada has begun work on additional efforts and measures. Certainly, there is much more work to do to support indigenous communities to a better state of health and security, but these are important steps forward. While the important national work is taking place, Canada will continue ongoing discussions with indigenous peoples to make progress together on our shared priorities of upholding human rights, advancing reconciliation, exercising self-determination, closing socio-economic gaps and eliminating the systemic barriers facing first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

Change is happening. Our government and our society are evolving as we learn the importance of doing things differently in a way that is better and fairer for all of us. Implementing the UN declaration is something the indigenous people in Canada have long called for, and it is a change we want to see come to fruition.

• (1700)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently I was at a forestry conference and heard a respected first nations leader speak, a leader who is very much involved in ensuring that his people benefit from the natural resources in their territory. When asked about UNDRIP, he said it is important to understand that UNDRIP does not give first nations people rights. The United Nations has not given first nations people rights. It simply sets out the rights that indigenous people already have.

I am wondering if the member could comment on that, as well as on the Conservative concern I hear that somehow this bill and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would somehow curtail the rights of first nations to access the natural resources on their territories.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is an affirmation of rights that exist. The real benefit of this document and of our discussion is that we are developing a conversation to address these issues.

I have heard people say that this is an aspirational document. Without any aspiration, we are not going to accomplish anything, so we need to set out some shared goals. I hope and believe the comments I made have outlined those shared goals, which are the goals of equity, fairness and working toward them. I think the member and I share the objective and principle of making this a better, kinder and gentler nation.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his presentation.

Some people will argue that implementing UNDRIP would effectively give first nations a veto over every natural resource development project.

Government Orders

I would like to hear my colleague explain why that is not the case and how Bill C-15 would still allow for proper negotiation.

[English]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-15 sets out a framework for dialogue, collaboration and working together, and frankly, if we do not have that we will have a far more cumbersome way of accomplishing anything. If this document creates a framework for dialogue and a framework for free, prior and informed decisions for all parties, we will come to better decisions.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Green Party has been calling for the implementation of UNDRIP for a long time. It is unfortunate that we have time allocation on the bill, because I think it is part of our democratic process to have a fulsome debate in the House of Commons on important bills like it.

The British Columbia government implemented legislation on UNDRIP, and shortly after, we saw the conflict with the Wet'suwet'en explode. We have seen it ignore the complaints of West Moberly First Nations and Prophet River First Nation with Site C. We have seen revenue-sharing agreements with silencers on them so that members cannot speak out in their communities, and we have seen those agreements leaked. We know this is happening with old-growth logging in British Columbia too, and we see division in the Pacheedaht community. It seems like the colonial project of resource extraction continues on, whether we have UNDRIP legislation in British Columbia or not.

I would like to ask the hon. member how he sees UNDRIP unfolding in Canada. Will we see a more fulsome process for free, prior and informed consent on these projects to ensure that people in these communities are not silenced by revenue-sharing agreements that are set up by the government?

• (1705)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, as we are in a democracy, we are not always going to agree on everything. I think what is important here is that we are building a framework for dialogue, for discussion and for free, prior and informed discussions. I think that will improve our relationship. It will also strengthen our country and strengthen the fabric of the values that we hold across it. I think it is becoming a basis for better dialogue and a basis for developing collaboration.

Government Orders

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I speak from the Mi'kmaq traditional territory of Unama'ki in the Eskasoni First Nation.

It has been over 400 years since my Mi'kmaq ancestors met European travellers on the shores of Mi'kma'ki. This moment thrust generations of transformation and struggle that led to the conflicts, diplomacy and eventually treaties that have shaped Canada and its Constitution. That struggle and those relations continue to this day across Canada.

Today's debate is the next step on this journey and the generational struggle of indigenous peoples in Canada. With Bill C-15, we turned a page on colonial narratives entrenched within the Indian Act and moved on to a new chapter founded on the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous People.

This past week Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild reminded me that indigenous leaders have been fighting for recognition of their basic human rights entrenched within UNDRIP for over 40 years. The fact that this government act is in Parliament today is an achievement of the possible in the realm of the improbable.

Today, I would like to share a perspective on Bill C-15 that is personal, but also shared by many indigenous people in this country. My father, Sákéj Henderson, one of the original drafters, wrote that UNDRIP is a process whereby, “Thousands of Indigenous peoples participated over thirty years in the development of Indigenous diplomacy.”

Before the 1982 Constitution, long before the recognition in the Supreme Court of Canada, Kji-keptin Alexander Denny and a delegation of Mi'kmaq went to the United Nations to seek justice for Mi'kmaq based on the UN covenants available to them at the time.

There, they met several indigenous leaders from around the world who were all advocating for the right to be recognized as humans and protected by the rights that came from the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights. At the time, there was no UN mechanism whereby the rights of indigenous peoples, as humans, could be protected. In fact, the first meeting of the UN working group referred to indigenous populations because of the fear of recognizing them as a people.

Despite the objections and fears, indigenous leaders persevered, and on September 12, 2007, more than 143 countries affirmed the recommendation to extend human rights and fundamental freedoms to indigenous people. Canada voted against that. That decision by the Harper-led Conservative government to deny indigenous people human rights and freedoms brings us to where we are now. Today, we can undo that mistake.

In a divided world, UNDRIP is a global vision. The longest, most comprehensive human rights instrument negotiated at the United Nations, fought and won by thousands of indigenous leaders speaking 100 different languages from all corners of the globe. The 46 articles within UNDRIP give clarity and understanding of the inherent rights recognized in section 35 of our Constitution, also known as aboriginal rights. It addresses what is meant by fair, just and consensual relationships between indigenous people and government.

Our Liberal government has already shown our commitment to implementing the human rights of indigenous peoples, entrenching these principles into our Environmental Assessment Act, the Indigenous Language Acts and the indigenous children, youth and family act.

However, the time has come for all political parties to stand up for the inalienable human rights of indigenous people in this country. Let us be clear: The human rights of indigenous people have been and continue to be denied in Canada. UNDRIP is a vital and necessary part of the remedy to this generational injustice. The 1876 Indian Act codified this injustice and colonial framework stating that the term “person” means an individual other than an Indian unless the context clearly requires another construction.

• (1710)

From the moment Canada legally denied Indians the rights of persons, it became necessary to create this declaration and to confirm the inalienable human rights of indigenous persons. With great humility, I add my name to those who wish to be recognized as persons as well in Canada. I am humbled in the knowledge that so many other indigenous MPs have spoken in this House, advocating for human rights to extend to indigenous people as well.

Let me be clear: Bill C-15 would not create new rights. It affirms rights actively denied to indigenous peoples for generations. Bill C-15 rejects colonialism, racism and injustices of the past. It affirms familiar human rights norms and minimum standards that Canada and Canadians have long supported.

It places two interrelated obligations on the federal government, in consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples of Canada. The first obligation is to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of Canada are consistent with the declaration. The second obligation, which is just as important, is to establish an action plan to achieve the objectives of the declaration within three years. These obligations are necessary for establishing a just framework for reconciliation and fulfilled promises, to generate better lives for indigenous peoples.

Critics of Bill C-15 have tried to use words like uncertainty and unintended consequences to slow, stall and create fears of UNDRIP. However, in reality they are doing nothing more than perpetuating colonial notions that for generations have benefited them and exploited indigenous peoples.

Former Justice Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, in response to fears that Bill C-15 would slow down the economy, stated:

It is fearmongering to suggest that somehow the rights of indigenous people will make the Canadian economy not work and to point to British Columbia and say that is particularly laughable and inaccurate.

Bill C-15 is about fair, just and consensual relations among legally recognized people. Bill C-15 is another step to guarantee indigenous people a dignified life and a meaningful economic future. Whether supporter or skeptic, all Canadians will benefit from recognizing and exercising our shared humanity. The passing of this bill into law would require, inspire and enable Canadians to maintain the promises of a better nation.

In closing, I would like to thank Romeo Saganash for his leadership on his private member's bill, Bill C-262. I would also like to thank my father, Sákéj Henderson, and Russel Barsh for their wise counsel and their tireless efforts to help the Mi'kmaq over the years; as well as the many indigenous leaders within the Assembly of First Nations and the Indigenous Bar Association who have advanced my education on UNDRIP over the years; as well as all the indigenous leaders from coast to coast to coast whose tireless efforts have led to government legislation on Bill C-15.

• (1715)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for a very moving speech on Bill C-15. The concept of consent was first raised with me nearly 40 years ago, when I lived in Yellowknife, by leaders of the Dene Nation in their initial opposition to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. Ever since then, we have heard this rhetoric that recognizing indigenous rights will somehow block progress.

I wonder if the member shares my concern that these expressions of concern about delay and about blocking are fundamentally based on what can best be called stereotypical views of first nations, if not racist views of first nations.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I agree with my colleague's assessment.

The notion that indigenous people are anti-development is wrong. Indigenous people want to see development. They want to see Canada grow. However, what we are in favour of is sustainable development, smart development, development that does not jeopardize our future and that of the next seven generations that we are obligated to protect.

It is an important step moving forward that we realize that when indigenous people succeed in Canada, Canada succeeds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on Bill C-15.

I am trying to understand. Many bills have been introduced in the past on this matter. My colleague applauded the work of Romeo Saganash, who advocated for the recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Liberal government has been in power since 2015. Has waiting so long to pass the bill not caused more misery in indigenous communities?

Clean drinking water is still a problem. Women and girls have disappeared or been murdered. We know that passing this bill could help solve these types of problems. That is why it is so important to

Government Orders

do it, especially for a self-proclaimed feminist government. Has the failure to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples not harmed the cause of indigenous women?

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I started off my speech on the premise that it has been 400 years. We can look at the past, and we should look at the past. However, the best time to implement these rights is right now. That is what we have in front of us, the ability to take those strides that no government has taken before.

I ask my learned colleague from the Bloc to join with us in not delaying, for any more time, when indigenous people could have the same human rights as every other Canadian.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by thanking Professor S k j Henderson, and my friend from Sydney—Victoria for his enormous leadership within the indigenous caucus and within our government as well.

As the member just mentioned, this is the moment for us to capture, this is the moment in which we could reset the relationship. For parties that are not supporting this bill, what does this member have to say to them? What is it that they are missing that others have been able to capture? What is the message that he has for the Conservatives and the Bloc?

• (1720)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, It is a difficult question, because I want Conservatives to be on board with this. I want Conservatives to want to give indigenous people human rights.

The delays, tactics and talking about vetoes; it is baseless. It has been pointed out by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond that it is fearmongering to suggest that we somehow would slow down the economy by getting the most basic human rights.

The question that I have to ask all of my other colleagues in this House is, what expectations would they have for their communities. Why should the expectations of indigenous people be any different?

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House today to speak to Bill C-15. I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

This is important legislation and is an opportunity to have a debate in the House about our relationship in Canada with the first nations community. I always try to start off my speeches by providing a local context or ensure at some point I cover the local context of my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Government Orders

I am fortunate to represent not only the city of Cornwall, the united counties of most of SDG, but also the residents and people of Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, 14,000 people strong. This is probably, from a federal issue, one of the more difficult geographic first nations communities we have in the country. It is located right along the Canada-U.S. border, there is a port of entry there. The geographic set-up that goes back a long time certainly makes it difficult to navigate through and work with them on many issues.

I am grateful for a good and respectful working relationship with Grand Chief Abram Benedict. I also want to acknowledge some of the meetings I have had to date with members of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. We had two, I think, pre-COVID, and unfortunately everything else needed to be put on the back burner. I made a commitment in our community, as a new member of Parliament, to ensure I would reach out just as much to members in Akwesasne as I would to every other part of the riding. There certainly are a lot of federal issues, federal files, on which we need to work with them.

The debate today is not about whether Canada needs better reconciliation with first nations communities. That is a given. I know there is not a party nor a member in the House and very few Canadians who do not know we need to do better and build a better relationship.

What I want to speak about in my comments today is a theme I built on in several of my speeches since I have had the honour of being in the House, which is the difference between an announcement and an intention, a theme, respectfully, in the actual delivery and follow-through in getting things done.

With Bill C-15, the details do matter. There is no issue with anybody with an overwhelming part of the declaration. In Canada, we are proud to say that we have already implemented many of those measures for which the declaration calls. That is progress. It is a positive and a strength of our country to show the progress we have made.

I listened to my colleague before me. I have respect for all colleagues in the House as well as the questions and comments even going back with my friend from the NDP from Vancouver Island. I do not think the concerns being raised, including from first nations communities, representatives and allies, are racist, stereotypical or laughable. They are very valid concerns.

I speak about my concerns on certain parts of Bill C-15 not because I do not believe in reconciliation, not because I do not believe we need a better relationship with first nations but actually the opposite. By not better defining and laying these things out, making them more clear, more black and white, I worry we take steps back when it comes to reconciliation.

I will use the example in the Maritimes of the fisheries disputes in the province of Nova Scotia and some of the vague definitions, such as moderate livelihood, that are subject to court interpretations and DFO interpretations. We are seeing serious tensions between first nations people in Nova Scotia, residents of the province, lobster fishermen, fishermen, the government, provincial government and local law enforcement. We have even seen violence happen. Nobody wants that to happen. The reason, I believe, is the defini-

tions. It takes time. It is not easy. I am not pretending it is simple to do. However, we need to have more clear timelines and more clear wording when it comes to certain aspects, not the overall intent of UNDRIP but rather certain parts.

● (1725)

I can say quite a few things, but I want to listen, as I mentioned, to some of the stakeholders who have spoken at committee and who have the interests of first nations communities across the country at heart, first and foremost, as we do in the House.

I want to quote Stephen Buffalo, president of the Indian Resource Council. Just a couple weeks ago in committee, he said, "It would be much better if this committee could define 'free, prior and informed consent' in the legislation and determine who can represent and make decisions on behalf of indigenous peoples for the purpose of project approvals. Better yet, this committee can engage indigenous people across Canada to come to a consensus on what 'consent' means before passing this legislation, because you know as well as I do that some people think it's a veto, and if the committee doesn't think it's a veto, then they should make that clear."

We have heard numerous other stakeholders. I know of a comment from Dale Swampy of the National Coalition of Chiefs, who said "However well intentioned Bill C-15 is, my discussions with legal experts, industry representatives and investment bankers have persuaded me that it is introducing another layer of uncertainty and risk to development in indigenous territories."

People, like myself, our caucus and all Parliament want to get this right. We want to move forward on reconciliation and do better. However, what I worry about, and this is from a passion of mine, is that words, actions and themes and good intent are important, but so are the details in legislation like this. The frank reality is that we will need to take the time, whether it is before the legislation or after, through courts and legal battles that will go on for years over certain projects, certain wording and what it is or what it is not.

If we pretend that we will just pass this, that there will be no problems and that it will be all tickety-boo, that will not be the case. If we can take the time and get those clarifications through consultations, close, passionate deliberations with first nations communities, we can make the legislation and the process more clear for everybody. That does not hurt reconciliation; that makes it smoother.

Government Orders

We have seen in Nova Scotia what has happened. We are seeing some of the concerns of potential investment. This is not big corporations versus first nations communities; these are people with a vested first-person connection to the well-being of our indigenous people and with a better, smoother future that involves economic development that does all these things.

This debate is not about whether we are racist, or whether it is laughable and stereotypical or how awful anybody is. These are valid concerns. I know members who support this know that if we pass the bill in this form, there will be serious legal challenges. We will be in courts and litigated, and there will be gray areas for years to come. That will challenge our path to reconciliation. That will challenge better economic development opportunities for communities like Akwesasne in my riding.

I thankful for the time to give my voice and my perspective. I am always trying to be positive and constructive, if I can. We can do better and we must do better. As a country and as a Parliament, we will be better off with much clearer black-and-white definitions on some of these things to move our reconciliation process forward in the country.

• (1730)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for his work on other files, protecting rights of people. He always speaks from the heart, which is I really appreciate.

I do, however, want to bring up a couple of things. First, I just want to remind everybody in the House that the use of possessive nouns when referring to indigenous people should be avoided at all costs. Indigenous people do not belong to Canada and they do not belong to us, so we should never say “our indigenous people”.

The assertion that Bill C-15, one of the most important pieces of legislation that I think we as a generation will ever see in the House, would take steps back on reconciliation or people's rights is really troubling to me. I want to refer to the response of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond to my question two days ago in committee. She said that the most important thing it would do would be to put an obligation on Canada to conduct its policies and conduct its interactions with indigenous peoples on the basis of recognizing indigenous people have rights.

I think we can all agree that more rights is never a bad thing. How in the world would more rights have a negative impact on people who have title to land?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague, and I apologize for my wording and my adlibbing. First nations people are not my constituents. They are my friends, they are my neighbours and they are my colleagues, not only locally but across the country. I thank the member for that part of his intervention.

We talk about adding rights. Some of the vague definitions and wording in certain parts of the bill, which could be strengthened, could lead to confusion. The rights and the battles could end up in court. We have seen that with different issues when we did not orig-

inally take the time to get the definitions right and specific, to come to that balance, to have that cohesion and that reconciliation in certain communities.

I am all in favour of enshrining rights. The overwhelming majority of this document is attainable, because we are doing many parts of it and there are many parts on which we can all agree. However, where we could have stronger definitions, that would help a reconciliation process in building rights, strengthening rights, not having them end up in courts for years to come.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech. It was top-notch as usual.

He mentioned that it is important to define certain concepts to avoid legal challenges in the courts. He spoke mainly about free, prior and informed consent. However, Bill C-15 sets out criteria that, if necessary, will guide the courts in assessing what should constitute consent. All of the witnesses who appeared before the committee said that it will take time to come to a consensus or establish a clear definition.

Since we need to establish those definitions anyway, should we not just pass Bill C-15 now, rather than delaying the entire process? We should work on those definitions, bill or no bill. The current bill provides direction on how to do that, but it also includes a long-awaited recognition of indigenous rights that should be quickly implemented.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is good to see my colleague from Saint-Jean, albeit virtually. I do miss sitting with her at committee in my former committee role on PROC.

I hear what she says about the details needing to be worked out, but I go back to the same thing. We are better off as a country, as a Parliament with respect to reconciliation if these things are ironed out and if the consultations and resolutions happen sooner rather than later.

The member alludes to courts and different interpretations. That leads to my argument that we will have many of these consents end up in court for years and years to come. They could create divisions, not unity, when it comes to reconciliation, when it comes to economic development opportunities.

I come from a space of not wanting to stop progress but making progress smoother. The member is right that we will have to tackle these definitions. We need to do it sooner rather than later. The sooner and the better the clarity is, the better our path to reconciliation and stronger future for first nations communities in every part of the country.

Government Orders

• (1735)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today about my opposition to Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is evident that much of our contemporary political debate is denominated in terms of human rights, with both sides' various questions using the language and philosophy of rights to justify their conclusions. This is most evident in contentious debates about social issues, where one person's assertion of a right to die is measured against another person's assertion of a right to encounter a health care system that does not make distinctions based on ability, or whether one person's assertion of a right to bodily autonomy conflicts with the potential claims of another person in terms of someone's right to life. In these cases, it clearly is not enough to say one is for or against human rights as such. Rather, one has to develop a procedure for determining which rights claims are valid and which are not, or for determining which rights claims can be justifiably abrogated, or for determining which rights claims take precedence in the case of a conflict.

When we are evaluating these questions of how to compare competing rights claims, it matters very much where we think rights come from. We need to establish where rights come from if we are to determine which rights claims exist and which rights claims take precedence. On this point, let us say there are three general categories of options. Rights either come from positive law, from social consensus or from nature.

Some seem to take the view that rights exist because they are called "rights" by the state or some multilateral body. This would imply that those rights only come into existence when the associated statutes or declarations are promulgated, and that nothing can be called a violation of rights if it is done legally. This view of rights would imply, falsely in my opinion, that no violation of human rights occurred in the context of horrific, violent actions against indigenous peoples in previous centuries, if those actions were legal. That seems to be a monstrous conclusion. I therefore reject the view that rights come from positive law. Arbitrarily depriving some of their lives, freedom, culture and community is a violation of their rights, regardless of whether it is recognized as such by domestic or international law.

The same general issues arise if we see rights as derived from social consensus. There have been many times and places in which a social consensus existed in favour of policies that also arbitrarily deprived people of their lives, freedom, culture and/or community. As such, if we wish to justify the conclusion that these acts of violence have always and would always constitute violations of human rights, then we must start from the premise that human rights emanate from nature as opposed to from law or convention: that is, human rights come from being human.

Deliberations in the House or international bodies about human rights are not fundamentally about creating rights, but rather about discovering rights. Rights are discovered, not invented. If rights exist in nature, as gravity exists in nature, then we should be able to identify a procedure for discovering rights objectively. Whether such a procedure can exist or not, it does not seem to be invoked

often in this House. More often, we hear the assertion of the existence of a certain right as being self-evident. We hear a call for more rights, not fewer rights. We hear rights referred to as "hard won", and perhaps referenced in the context of some domestic or international text deemed sacred by our legal tradition.

If rights come from nature, then members should argue for how we can know that a right exists, not simply point to a text that says it does. If rights come from nature as opposed to from text, then texts that claim to codify human rights may contain gaps, errors or other problems. It is possible to believe that human rights have all been correctly codified by UN documents because of some metaphysical process by which the deliberation of these bodies is protected from error. However, believing in this idea would require a kind of faith in a metaphysical process: a faith that I do not think can be grounded in reason alone.

The particular legislative proposal before us today, with respect to human rights, is to graft UNDRIP, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, onto existing law and practice in this area. Much of the debate today has centred around the importance of indigenous rights. I think we all agree about the importance of indigenous rights, but that is not really the core question we have to evaluate when determining whether to support this legislation.

The question really is about what impacts or changes the implementation of this legislation will have on existing rights frameworks, and whether those changes will advance human rights for indigenous peoples or not. With this question, I think it is also important to challenge some of the Hollywood-ized framing of indigenous communities. Many of us will have seen the 2009 movie *Avatar*: a movie about a group of human colonizers who seek to exploit and destroy a natural environment guarded by an indigenous community that lives in perfect harmony with it.

• (1740)

Although filmed in colour, the moral message of the film is very black and white. Those who fully absorb the message of this film will perhaps come to the conclusion that indigenous communities never want development, but this is, of course, false. The complex history of European settlement in North America involved a great deal of colonial violence and oppression, as well as mutually beneficial exchange and collaboration. Today, many indigenous communities want development.

As wonderful as being in harmony with nature in this sense is and that some people ideologize, generally development can be associated with higher standards of living and amenities associated with modern life. For me, defending indigenous rights means respecting the rights and choices of indigenous peoples, and indigenous nations acting autonomously to make their own choices about their own development paths. It is about competing balance: how they balance traditions with opportunities to develop in new ways. These are choices that individual communities and nations should be able to make for themselves.

Sadly, we have seen many attacks on indigenous rights by anti-development forces, advancing a kind of green colonialism based on this *Avatar*-informed view of the world, which seeks to force indigenous people to live in the equivalent of national parks even if they would much rather enjoy the benefits that come from resource development in terms of jobs and convenience.

While my friends on the political left like to assume that their opposition to natural resource development aligns them with the wishes of indigenous people, they are increasingly offside with the wishes of indigenous people in areas where resource development is taking place. The anti-development policies of this government are increasingly raising the ire of indigenous people and indigenous proponents of resource development projects, such as those seeking the construction of the Eagle Spirit pipeline, blocked by Bill C-48, or those indigenous people in the Arctic who were not consulted at all when the Prime Minister brought in a ban on drilling.

For reasons described earlier, these anti-development voices still frame their positions in terms of indigenous rights, believing that the right to say “no” to development is so much more important than the right of those same people to say “yes” to development. I think we all know and understand that this gets dicey in situations when the rights of some indigenous peoples come into conflict with the desires and rights of other indigenous peoples, when different peoples and different communities disagree about whether a particular project should proceed, or when indigenous proponents find themselves in conflict with members of their own or other communities over how to proceed on a development path.

Bill C-15 would establish a principle in law that there must be free, prior and informed consent for resource development to take place within an indigenous community, but it lacks significant clarity about who consents on behalf of indigenous communities or what happens when different communities, perhaps with competing legitimate claims to traditional presence in an area, disagree. The lack of clarity about who gets to decide will make it nearly impossible for indigenous communities that wish to develop their own resources to proceed.

We got a sense of the risk associated with this uncertainty last year, when the country faced widespread rail blockades in solidarity with some Wet'suwet'en protesters who opposed the Coastal GasLink project. Members of the House, at the time, seemed to believe that the opposition of a minority of hereditary chiefs required that the project be stopped on the grounds of indigenous rights.

These arguments came from an *Avatar*-inspired world view and a failure to take into consideration the legitimate competing rights claims of the majority of indigenous peoples affected by this project who supported it, the fact that all of the elected indigenous bodies responsible for this project had approved it, and the fact that those who, from a democratic perspective at least, were the representatives of those indigenous people wanted to say yes. It was enough for members of the House that people from a different hereditary leadership who claimed to speak on behalf of those nations wanted to say no. This is the problem that arises when we have competing rights claims. When we lack a procedure, and when there is ambiguity inserted in the law about how to resolve the desires of those people, it ends up always being a path of no de-

Government Orders

velopment instead of a situation where those communities get to decide.

I am suspicious that members of the House who are promoting the bill in the name of indigenous rights are actually happy with that outcome. They are actually happy with an outcome in which development has a hard time proceeding, when investments do not get made even if indigenous people in a particular area, in association with a particular project, overwhelmingly want to see it happen.

• (1745)

As a member who cares deeply about human rights, and well-structured procedures and mechanisms for affirming those rights democratically, I think we need to recognize the existing rights frameworks we have in this country and build on them, but I do not think this particular legislation would do that. It would introduce more confusion and more challenges to development that would, in effect, deny the rights of indigenous peoples in cases where they want to make the choice to develop their resources.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member this. Why does he believe that indigenous knowledge, passed down through languages, passed down through generations and enshrined in our teachings as indigenous people that we should live sustainably within our ecosystem while promoting positive development and smart development, is somehow based on Hollywood notions of *Avatar* and not within our languages, as has been taught for generations? I am trying to understand his notions on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member ascribed to me views that I do not hold. My view was quite clearly expressed: There are some politicians here who have this Hollywood-informed idea that all indigenous peoples do not want development. The reality is that many indigenous nations and communities across the country want development, and their right to choose to proceed with projects is not respected when the government puts in place a highly ambiguous legislative framework that makes it virtually impossible to demonstrate the consent required by the new procedures and mechanisms in place.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I asked a Liberal member a question earlier. I asked him why his party had not moved forward with such a bill earlier, since it is such a strong supporter of reconciliation. He said that Mr. Saganash's bill was blocked by the Conservatives in the Senate.

I did hear my colleague talk about human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples. He addressed these extremely important points, but I did not hear him say whether he is in favour of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Will he vote in favour of this bill?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I apologize if it was not clear. I will vote against this bill. I do not support this bill. I do not think this bill is an effective way of advancing reconciliation. The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains positive aspirations and values within it that Canada should support and move forward on, but the legal framework contains a lot of problems and ambiguity: problems that would negatively affect indigenous peoples. As Winston Churchill said, “It is not enough to do our best, we have to know what to do and then do our best.” In other words, the mechanism and details matter.

We can all have positive aspirations, but we have to get the mechanics right if we want to deliver on those aspirations. That has been the biggest problem with the government when it comes to indigenous peoples. There is a big emphasis on their aspirations, but the government has not been able to deliver on the details. Delivering on the details means sometimes saying that this piece of legislation does not work, and we need something better.

• (1750)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was nothing short of impressive. I followed his rights framework all the way until I got lost with *Avatar*. I thought maybe he was going to go full Jason Kenney and start talking about Bigfoot. Make no mistake: The brutal and violent genocide of indigenous peoples by successive French and British settlers in these lands is by no means a Hollywood story.

When the member suggests that rights are discovered, does he not acknowledge that the basis of all the legal frameworks we have is the racist and white supremacist doctrine of discovery based on the theory of a terra nullius here, and that indigenous people were less than human upon the arrival of the Europeans?

Further to that, does the member's only relationship with and understanding of indigenous rights have to do with the commodification of resource extraction in oil and gas? Does he not see value in these rights outside of the extractory capitalism of oil and gas?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, there was a bit of conflation involving the term “discovery”. I was talking about rights being discovered, which is very different from the very legitimate and correct criticism of discovery that the member used in a different context. I think he knows that, but I wanted to clarify that because the word was used in different ways.

I agree that there is a great deal of horrific violence associated with various periods up until quite recently, and there are still many instances of racism and violence targeting indigenous people. The question we have to ask ourselves in this debate today is what we can do to advance justice and human rights for indigenous Canadians. That includes the opportunity for economic development. I believe there is a broad spectrum of issues that we need to attend to regarding justice and human rights for indigenous Canadians, and one of them is giving indigenous people the power to develop their own natural resources in co-operation with others and without undue burdens imposed on them by the state.

I will not apologize for thinking that economic development matters. It matters for all Canadians. It matters so that people can stay in their communities, find jobs and opportunities—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it at that.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Parkdale—High Park.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that the Parliament of Canada is on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

In December 2020, our government introduced Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since then, I have received many letters, calls and emails from my constituents in Mile End, Outremont and Côte-des-Neiges. They asked me to pass the bill quickly, and they urge the House to do more to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

Most of the people who contacted me told me that they were not indigenous. They were proud to say that as Montrealers, Quebecers and Canadians, the nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples was important to them. It is an issue that speaks to the foundation of our Canadian identity, no matter our background.

We must correct past injustices as much as we can and continue to move forward on the path to reconciliation. Through Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are taking another step along that path. As its name suggests, Bill C-15 seeks to protect and promote indigenous rights, including the rights to equality and non-discrimination, in order to establish stronger relations with indigenous peoples.

The bill provides the necessary legislative framework for Canada to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Through this bill, the Government of Canada will be required to collaborate with indigenous peoples on developing an action plan to achieve the objectives of UNDRIP. If passed, this bill will represent another major step forward in our shared journey toward reconciliation.

• (1755)

[English]

Passing Bill C-15, which would ensure consistency between Canadian laws and the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, is an important step forward on the path to reconciliation. The bill requires the development of an action plan to implement the objectives of UNDRIP and requires the ongoing involvement of indigenous peoples at all stages, while mandating annual reports to Parliament.

Government Orders

Bill C-15 would enshrine the principles of UNDRIP, which include affirming the general application of international human rights laws to indigenous peoples; the right to participate in decision-making, with free, prior and informed consent; the right to culture, religious and linguistic identity; the protection of treaties and agreements with first nations; and of course the protection of the rights of indigenous women, including an obligation for governments to work with indigenous peoples to end violence against indigenous women.

[*Translation*]

Let us talk for a moment about what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada chose to uphold.

The findings and evidence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada forced us to confront the discriminatory and oppressive practices that continued unabated for nearly 150 years in Canada's residential schools. In addition to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action 43 and 44, which call on the government to adopt and fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and develop an action plan to achieve its objectives, all of the calls to action cite the UNDRIP. Our commitment to upholding indigenous rights by acknowledging and redressing the damage caused by assimilation policies and practices is unwavering.

Passing Bill C-15 will not only address calls to action 43 and 44, but will also provide the Government of Canada with a framework for broader reconciliation.

I would also like to talk about what our government is doing right now to demonstrate our commitment to our first nations.

[*English*]

Throughout the pandemic, our government has shown its commitment to supporting indigenous communities in very real and tangible ways. Let us look for a moment at our vaccine rollout.

We know that remote indigenous communities are more at risk of getting COVID-19 and that health systems in those communities are more vulnerable to outbreaks. That is why we as a government prioritized indigenous communities in the procurement and delivery of vaccines for COVID-19.

To date, nearly 300,000 doses have been administered in first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, with over 50% of people having already received a COVID-19 vaccine. In the Northwest Territories, 55% of the entire population has received a first dose. In the Yukon, 59% of the population has received one dose, and already 43% has received both doses. This accelerated rollout has contributed to a dramatic drop in COVID-19 cases in our indigenous communities, with a decline of 80%. That is something we can all be proud of.

Let us also discuss for a moment where we are with respect to eliminating boil water advisories. Like many in the House, I am sincerely troubled by the fact that any boil water advisory still exists in any corner of our country, but real progress has been made and is sometimes overlooked.

When our government came into power, there were 105 boil water advisories in the country. We have eliminated 106 of them, and as of March 2021, 177 short-term drinking water advisories were also lifted. In fact, access to clean water has been restored to approximately 5,920 homes in first nations communities. I know and understand that much more work still needs to be done on this, but never before have we had a federal government in Canada that is more committed to getting that work done.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

We have also made historic investments in education, housing, police services and shelters in indigenous communities.

The 2020 fall economic statement includes an additional investment of \$781.5 million over five years starting this year as well as ongoing funding in the amount of \$106.3 million to fight systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples and expand efforts to fight violence against indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2 and two-spirit people.

These proposed investments include the following amounts: \$724.1 million to launch a comprehensive violence prevention strategy to expand access to culturally relevant supports for indigenous women, children and LGBTQ2 and two-spirit people facing gender-based violence; \$49.3 million to support the implementation of Gladue principles in the justice system in order to help reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in the criminal justice and correctional systems; and \$8.1 million to develop administration of justice agreements with indigenous communities to strengthen community-based justice systems and support self-determination.

There is still a lot of work to do, but we are working even harder.

Bill C-15 is an action plan that will confirm that the declaration is a universal human rights instrument that applies to Canadian law and provides a framework for the Government of Canada's implementation of the declaration. It is an essential step toward reconciliation, and it is long overdue.

I therefore ask all members of the House to pass Bill C-15 as soon as possible.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the House has a responsibility to recognize the legitimacy of the declaration we are discussing today in our debate on Bill C-15.

Since the time of New France, Quebecers have historically been partners and supporters of indigenous nations. I would even say that our history and our nation are bound up with the well-being of all of North America's indigenous nations. This declaration comes at the right time, as does some of Bill C-15. However, a declaration means nothing without measures to back it up.

Government Orders

Since the 1960s, Quebec has signed various agreements on its land regarding the self-government for indigenous nations. Under these agreements, these nations must be provided with as many resources and tools as possible so they can govern themselves. Could my colleague tell us whether her government foresees any major actions to put an end to the vassalage of indigenous nations and allow them greater self-government?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I completely agree that Quebecers want us to move forward with this and that they want to strengthen our nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples.

As I mentioned in my speech, I think that not only do we need to adopt the declaration and the principles in it, but we also need to back that up with money, which we did. In the 2020 fall economic statement, we announced historic investments to address the needs of indigenous peoples.

We need to adopt Bill C-15, which enshrines the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we also need to invest in equipping indigenous peoples with the best tools possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke of vaccines in the indigenous community, and that of course leads to the issue of indigenous health. We know that indigenous people in Canada score below the mean on every major health metric, and one of the core elements of health is access to basic nutrition and clean water. However, the government has missed its self-imposed target of removing every boil water advisory by this time.

The Liberals have been in government for most of the last 150 years but have failed miserably on indigenous health. Why should indigenous peoples have any faith that the government will make any meaningful progress on actually implementing UNDRIP?

• (1805)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. What we have seen through many different statistics is that our indigenous communities are more vulnerable and do have real challenges when it comes to the health systems that are available, particularly in remote communities. That is exactly why this government prioritized indigenous communities in our vaccine rollout. That is why such a significant number of indigenous communities have been vaccinated. As I mentioned in my speech, over 50% of indigenous communities have been fully vaccinated. As I also said, that contributed to an 80% decline in COVID-19 cases in indigenous communities. Our strategy had real and concrete results, and I think we need to continue in that vein as we move forward and continue to support the health and safety of our indigenous communities.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask a brief question.

In testimony before committee, Mark Podlasly of the First Nations Major Projects Coalition asked for a clear definition of what consent means in the context of Bill C-15. I will not read the quote, as I am conscious of the time.

Will the member commit to ensuring that clarity is added to the bill? Many first nations have expressed to me that it lacks a great deal of needed clarity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary has 15 seconds.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if I can give a complete answer in 15 seconds, but I will start by saying that free, prior and informed consent, as it does appear in various aspects of the declaration, refers specifically to the importance of meaningful participation among indigenous peoples through their own mechanisms in all of the decisions and processes that could affect them, including with respect to energy projects. It is a way of working together to establish consensus through dialogue and other means, which would enable—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking today at the second reading stage of Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was introduced on December 3 of last year by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Introducing legislation to advance the implementation of the declaration is a key step in renewing the Government of Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples. I am speaking today from the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinabe and, most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit first nation. Toronto is now home to many diverse first nation, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Many of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park are strong advocates for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is a privilege to represent such engaged and vocal individuals. My constituents have been clear about the importance of having a government that respects indigenous rights and plays an active role in reconciliation. This legislation would address those concerns by taking measures to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This bill is a critical step forward in the joint journey toward reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

I know that members are familiar with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but to provide a bit of context, the declaration was adopted in 2007 after many years of hard work by indigenous leaders and countless Canadians.

We are grateful for the unwavering dedication of indigenous leaders such as Dr. Wilton Littlechild and many other stakeholders who worked tirelessly for many years to develop and negotiate the declaration.

[*English*]

I want to refer specifically to the long-standing work of James Sákéj Youngblood Henderson, who made UNDRIP a key part of his life's work, and who also happens to be the father of my colleague, the member for Sydney—Victoria. The adoption of this declaration was a very significant moment in human history, with the goal of protecting and promoting indigenous rights around the world.

The declaration contains 46 articles that address a wide variety of individual and collective rights, including cultural and identity rights, and rights relating to education, health, employment and language, among others.

It is the language piece that I want to focus on very briefly because I do feel that this dovetails with the other work that has been accomplished by our government and by this Parliament. In this, I am referring to the Indigenous Languages Act.

In the previous Parliament, I had the ability and the opportunity to work with the minister of heritage on the Indigenous Languages Act legislation. Through that process, I learned not only a tremendous amount about myself as a parliamentarian, but also about the legacy of colonial policies in this country over 400 years of settler contact with indigenous persons.

In restoring languages through the Indigenous Languages Act, which we passed in the last Parliament, restoring funding and now ensuring that we are working toward the passage of UNDRIP, we see a continuity in terms of protecting cultural and linguistic rights, among many other rights, for indigenous persons on this land. These rights are sorely in need of protection as we try to give meaning to concepts of autonomy and *autodétermination*, as we say in French.

The declaration itself also recognizes that the situation of indigenous people varies from region to region and from country to country. It provides us with flexibility and the opportunity, in consultation and co-operation with indigenous people, to ensure that rights are recognized, protected and implemented in a manner that reflects the circumstances right here in Canada. In May 2016, our government endorsed the UN declaration, without qualification, and we committed to its implementation.

Subsequently, we were very proud to support private member's bill, Bill C-262, in the previous Parliament, which was introduced by former NDP member of Parliament Romeo Saganash. Unfortunately, Bill C-262 died in the Senate in June 2019, due in large part, I will frankly indicate, to stonewalling by Conservative members of the Senate. However, what we did in the 2019 electoral campaign is redouble the commitment of the Liberal Party to reintroducing UNDRIP as a government bill, which is exactly what we have done with Bill C-15. This builds on the foundational work that was presented by the old bill, Bill C-262, in the previous Parliament.

Government Orders

Building on support from indigenous groups for the former Bill C-262 and following discussions with indigenous partners, we as a government used the old Bill C-262 as the floor for the development of this new legislative proposal, which is currently before all of us in this chamber.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada drafted the bill following consultations with representatives of national and regional indigenous organizations, modern treaty partners, self-governing first nations, rights holders, indigenous youth, indigenous women, gender-diverse and two-spirit people, as well as representatives from other indigenous organizations. The comments received throughout the consultation process helped shape the bill.

That was the genesis of Bill C-15, which seeks to affirm the declaration as a universal international human rights instrument with application in Canadian law and provide a framework for the Government of Canada's implementation of the declaration.

[*English*]

Bill C-15 is but one sign of the progress I believe we are making in advancing reconciliation, affirming human rights, addressing systemic racism and combatting discrimination in this country. Members heard some of that in the previous speech from the member for Outremont with respect to other milestones we have reached as a government, but what I think is critical here is when we speak about combatting discrimination, in particular systemic racism.

It should not be lost on any members of Parliament how critical the timing of this bill is, given the moment we are in collectively as a nation and as a continent, with a movement taken on by all Canadians to actively combat systemic discrimination and systemic racism. COVID has shone a light on this, and we have been responding to it. Bill C-15 is part of the continuity of work that includes Bill C-22, which is about ending many mandatory minimum penalties that disproportionately impact Black and indigenous Canadians. Bill C-15 is part of that continuity and body of work.

This bill, Bill C-15, builds on the significant progress we have been making on implementing the declaration on a policy basis by creating a legislated, durable framework requiring the federal government, in consultation and co-operation with first nations, Inuit and Métis people, to take all measures necessary to ensure that federal laws are consistent with the declaration, to prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the declaration, and to report annually to Parliament on progress made in implementing the legislation.

Government Orders

Enhancements we have made to Bill C-15 as a result of the engagement process we undertook with indigenous peoples, which preceded its introduction, include the addition of new language in the preamble, with the following objectives: to highlight the positive contributions the declaration can make to reconciliation, healing and peace; to recognize the inherent rights of indigenous peoples; to reflect the importance of respecting treaties, agreements and constructive arrangements; to highlight the connection between the declaration and sustainable development; and to emphasize the need to take the diversity of indigenous peoples into account in implementing the legislation. Other key enhancements include the addition of a purpose clause to address application of the declaration in Canadian law and to affirm the legislation as a framework for federal implementation of the declaration, and clearer and more robust provisions on the process for developing and tabling the action plan and annual reports.

Moving ahead with Bill C-15 is consistent with our commitment to address the TRC calls to action and respond to the national inquiry into MMIWG and the calls for justice therein. Implementing this declaration is the natural next step in our journey to advance reconciliation, something I mentioned at the outset. This would be a significant step forward in our efforts to build a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be used as an essential tool in developing the Canadian framework for reconciliation, which will reflect our own history and our own legal and constitutional framework.

[*English*]

The bill proposes a legislative framework for the UN declaration, so that over time, as other laws are modified or developed, they would be aligned with the declaration. To this end, the legislation would require the Government of Canada, “in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous peoples, [to] take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration”, “prepare and implement an action plan”, and table an annual report to align the laws of Canada on the action plan.

As written, this bill would require that the action plan include measures to “address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination...against Indigenous peoples” and “promote mutual respect and understanding as well as good relations, including through human rights education”. The action plan would also include “measures related to monitoring, oversight, recourse or remedy or other accountability measures with respect to the implementation of the Declaration.”

I want to spend my last remaining time on an issue that has come up, which is with respect to free, prior and informed consent. Free, prior and informed consent is about doing just that. It is about the effective and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them, their communities and their territories. The participation of indigenous peoples as full partners in economic development is a reflection of their inherent right to self-determination. Achieving consent is the goal of any consultation or collabora-

tion processes. This means we need to make every effort to reach agreements that work for all parties. To be clear, the concept does not confer veto or require unanimity in these types of decisions. If consent cannot be secured, the facts of law applicable to the specific circumstances will determine the path forward.

I would refer members of this House to the testimony of David Chartrand of the Métis National Council who said precisely this. I would also refer members of this House to the previous testimony of people like Romeo Saganash in parliamentary committees when we were studying the old bill, Bill C-262, in the last Parliament who also indicated that it is not the interpretation of the law that free, prior and informed consent, FPIC, would constitute a veto. Indeed, in literally the last 36 to 48 hours, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, as counsel for the Assembly of First Nations said at the standing committee looking into this bill that “The idea that free—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to have to invite the member to continue during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this may be my only opportunity to speak to the legislation before us.

I am deeply troubled by the fact that this government, which professes the high purposes of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples appears in practice to decide that free, prior and informed consent means to continue to coerce first nations until they give consent to a decision that has already been made. I refer to the Trans Mountain pipeline as an example, which the Government of Canada bought without conferring with first nations, as we should have done. It continues, as elected members of council of the first nation in my territory, which I am honoured to represent, the territory of the WSÁNEC Nation, have told me that the TMX, now a Crown corporation, comes to them offering money to try to get them to stop objecting. That is not free or prior consent, and yet that is what is being practised right now—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary a chance to answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, this is an important issue. It is an issue that is obviously a dynamic one and an issue that will be considered on an ongoing basis.

Government Orders

However, what I was about to relate from Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond I think captures the idea in response to the member's question. She said, as counsel for the AFN, that "The idea that free, prior and informed consent is some kind of a veto is simply not supported, and that is not how it's operationalized." That is an important point to register.

With respect to the timing of the negotiations and the timing of the outreach to first nations communities, be they elected leaders, hereditary chiefs or other individuals, that is a very valid point that the member is raising, and something that we will continue to work on as a government and as all parliamentarians to ensure that this consultation is sought at the earliest possible opportunity.

• (1820)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member about a decision the government made that I think would very clearly violate the principle of free, prior and informed consent. I heard about it when I joined the foreign affairs committee in the last Parliament visiting Canada's north.

In December of 2016, the government designated all Arctic waters as indefinitely off-limits to future oil and gas licencing. Indigenous communities in the north told us that they found out about this through a phone call 45 minutes before the announcement was made to the public.

Does the government think that it has the same obligation to consult when it introduced these kinds of anti-development policies that hold back the desire of indigenous communities in the north to develop their own resources for their own benefit?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his frequent participation in debate on all matters in this House.

The bottom line is that when we enact and seek to enact the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples via Bill C-15 into Canadian law, what we are saying is that we must consult with indigenous peoples in all of their heterogeneity, and I think it is an important point that the member raises.

We know that there are indigenous people on the western prairies who believe in resource development, including pipeline development. We know that there are indigenous communities in the north that may believe in drilling in the far north. A requirement to consult and a requirement to do that outreach must apply across the board with all aspects of the community with respect to all projects, whether it is a resource-based project or one that would prevent such a project from moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, my friend Richard Kistabish, also known as Éjina-gosi, a former chief of Abitibiwinni nation, which is located in my riding, and a former Anishinabe grand chief, was recently appointed to the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, 2022-32. I would remind everyone that the House is located on Anishinabe land.

I chatted with him about the bill yesterday, and he told me it was good news because it officially excludes the term "Indian". He feels

that is a starting point for dialogue because that recognition is a prerequisite for conversations about other issues. He sees the passage of Bill C-15 as nothing less than a signal to initiate dialogue. Ever since the Constitution was repatriated, Indians have lost their rights, and I want to point out to the House that the term "Indian" is pejorative.

What does the parliamentary secretary think about that perspective? Will there be next steps after the passage of Bill C-15 to initiate a nation-to-nation dialogue with indigenous peoples as equals?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, after this bill is passed, I am sure that we will begin a new chapter and open a new dialogue in good faith with all indigenous peoples, namely the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have the great honour to finally rise in the House, virtually of course, to speak to Bill C-15, which seeks to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am also very pleased to give this speech in support of Bill C-15 on behalf of some 20 Cree, Inuit and Algonquin communities in the great riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

I said "finally" because we have waited for this bill for a long time. The United Nations declaration was adopted on September 13, 2007. It is now April 2021, nearly 14 years later, and the declaration has still not been enshrined in Canadian law. Fourteen years is a long time. That is four Parliaments. However, 14 years is just slightly less than the gap in life expectancy at birth between Inuit people and the rest of the Canadian population. In 2017, this gap was 15 years for men. A 15-year gap represents half a generation, or one-sixth of a century, which is a lot of years in a human life.

Time goes by and the world changes, but time stands still for indigenous peoples. Nothing moves, nothing changes because procrastination reigns supreme in the kingdom of Canada. It is time for that to change.

I am unfortunately running out of time, so I will talk about the history of our political party, the declaration, and the notion of free, prior and informed consent.

We believe—

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize for having to cut off the member, but it being 6:25 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

Private Members' Business

[English]

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

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Monday, April 19 at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:40 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

It being 6:40 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.) moved that Bill C-272, an act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance or repair), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am so proud to appear before the House today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-272, and discuss the background and details of it. I really appreciate everyone for their attention to this debate, including those in the House digitally and Canadian citizens who are watching from home.

If members care about agriculture, the environment or consumer rights, they should care about passing Bill C-272. The bill has wide-ranging implications when it comes to solving some key problems for farmers in reducing landfill waste, particularly toxic e-waste, and in the innovation economy. I hope this legislation kicks off a conversation about the right to repair in Canada. This issue is non-partisan, and it spans citizens from all corners of urban and rural areas.

The bill protects consumers. It has a positive impact on our health and safety and the environment. It takes a common-sense approach and is highly targeted to a specific problem. I trust it will be supported by all members of the House.

Bill C-272 addresses some concerns that have become more frequent over the past decade. There is a concern that the Copyright Act is being used and interpreted in areas far beyond its scope and that, in particular, the provisions of copyright are able to prevent the repair of digital devices and systems, even when nothing is being copied or distributed. This is well beyond the intent of copy-

right as Canadians understand it, and it is beyond the scope of the legislation as intended by the drafters.

Copyright is there to protect producers of content and to ensure that they will derive reliable and effective compensation for their innovative works. However, as the digital technology around us has become more affordable, more integrated into our daily lives and more relied upon for everyday services, the Copyright Act has become increasingly influential on these items throughout this process.

As an example, if people had a washer or dryer in the 1960s, it had no digital technology in it, no code and no software. It had nothing that could have been or would have been copyrighted. Today we see the introduction of smart appliances, including smart washers and dryers, that have thousands of lines of code within them, all of which are protected by copyright and may have many technological protection measures, otherwise known as TPMs, that prevent doing repairs without breaking copyright. The cost of easy repairs has gone up, and if the owner of the appliance circumvents any of those TPMs to conduct a repair, it would be illegal. These technological protection measures are everywhere and are increasing as more devices incorporate them.

Copyright is supposed to prevent people from essentially stealing the ideas and works of authors, artists, engineers and others. It also protects the works of programmers, as the code that all of our cell-phones, televisions, computers and so forth have within them are copyrighted. TPMs include everything from encryption to password locks. They prevent access or modification of these works, and it is illegal to circumvent them in Canada.

The system works well for the most part, but if people attempt to repair something they own, these TPMs may work to prevent the repair from being completed or beginning in the first place. Many vehicles and appliances are not able to be repaired without entering some form of reset code or modifying the code to accept a new part that was installed.

I will give a quick example. There is a popular video game console that has a disk drive and a motherboard. Inside there are matching serial numbers in order for it to function. One cannot simply replace the disk drive without replacing the motherboard with a matching one, even though there is no technical reason for this since drives are changed in computers all the time. This is resulting in more of these devices ending up in landfills and is making what should be a simple repair difficult or sometimes illegal. One cannot make the switch without violating a technological protection measure.

Private Members' Business

• (1830)

Of course, everyone will be familiar with these systems because they are present in many of our cars and trucks, as well as other items we typically take to get repaired by manufacturers and dealerships. These challenges existed in the automotive industry before the industry came to a voluntary agreement to allow for repairs by local repair shops. This system functions well today for almost all Canadians, although, because it is voluntary, there are still some ongoing issues.

I ask members to consider this scenario: Farmers across Canada pride themselves on their ability to repair their own equipment because they must be able to not just for their own livelihoods but, frankly, to feed our country. However, agriculture and farming equipment does not have the same agreement as automotive, so they are blocked by TPMs in many cases from making repairs. A recent article spoke about these differences between farming equipment and automobiles. The author, a gentleman by the name of Scott Smith, is an electronics technician who works in the agriculture industry. He wrote:

All vehicles made since 1996 have had onboard diagnostic systems. Initially, the only way to get the information was with a dealer service tool. Neither the vehicle owner or local repair shops had access to the system.

This system was eventually challenged and overcome. The tools and information are now readily available.

Farmers need the same level of access. Whether they do the work themselves or use a local repair shop do the work, the farming community needs to be given options.

Bill C-272 would work to prevent these kinds of issues by carving out a specific and very limited allowance for consumers to circumvent a TPM, but only for the purpose of diagnosis, maintenance or repair. This bill is not a sweeping change to the Copyright Act, but a rather limited change designed to give a small amount of control back to the consumer.

As always, it is important to remember that consumers are quite often motivated by price, and the free market is critical for people to continue innovating and bringing new and better products to market. Individuals will seek out their most cost-effective option when repairing or replacing a product. If outright replacement is cheapest, people will replace things. If repair is cheaper, then they will repair. People will take the least expensive option.

However, in some cases even simple repairs can cost thousands of dollars when consumers or local repair shops are prevented from making these repairs due to misapplication of the intent of copyright. This means higher costs and more items being sent to landfill well before they should. This is why Bill C-272 is critical. Our constituents want these changes. Overwhelmingly, Canadians are supportive of the right to repair.

A recent survey tells us that three-quarters of all Canadians would support a right-to-repair law in Canada that would allow them to repair their own devices more freely. However, Bill C-272 is not just about this problem today. It is about what is coming next in our society as the Internet of things becomes evermore present. We know that the Internet will connect our appliances, our wearables and our vehicles, and that ever smaller and less expensive devices will be able to be networked in the future.

We must, as consumers, have the ability to conduct basic repairs on the objects that we own. We must have the ability to replace a part without risking charges under the Copyright Act. If we do not, we are dooming many more devices to the junkyard, to the detriment of our pocketbooks.

We also run the risk of inadvertently making criminals of many Canadians. Bill C-272 is about preventing planned obsolescence and a proper reconsideration about what the legal limits of copyright must be.

• (1835)

We are far behind our counterparts in Europe in legislating in this area, and a number of U.S. states are actively considering right-to-repair legislation. The time is right for action to address this issue here in Canada. We must address it clearly and openly as well so that manufacturers, repair shops, technologists and retailers know the direction that industry must take.

The right to repair has also come up in Ontario with recent proposed legislation, but the changes under Bill C-272 that I am proposing would change federal law in Canada as a key step in allowing provinces to be able to create their own right-to-repair legislation as they see fit. Bill C-272 is part of the federal responsibility within the broader right-to-repair legislative framework. I want to stress that much of this responsibility does, in fact, lie in the provincial sphere.

However, this is one part of the federal responsibility that must be addressed in order for meaningful right-to-repair legislation to exist in Canada. We must, as legislators, review what the intent of copyright must be. It is there to protect works: to ensure that their authors can derive a profit, to ensure programmers, writers and artists can make a living from their works, and of course to prevent piracy.

None of these copyright protections is an issue with respect to repairs, and the spirit of the Copyright Act is not intended to speak to the repair of physical devices at all. Interpreting it this way is widely outside the scope of the intent of copyright. The legislation is frankly out of date and is being misused as a result.

The need to address these issues has been more important than ever during this pandemic, when repair professionals are often unable to visit homes or even farms. It is critical that Canadians have a legal ability to conduct the repairs they are able to on the spot. This need for repair is even more critical for people in rural or remote locations who likely do not have quick access to dealerships or manufacturers. Their cost for travel to repair facilities might already be in the hundreds of dollars and that is, of course, before the cost of the repairs.

Private Members' Business

I am unable to get into every single example of the importance of this bill with the time that I have, but I trust that everyone will see its far-reaching implications. Digital technology lies in all of these systems and technologies and ties all this together, and copyright covers the gamut.

I want to take a moment to be clear on the limits of Bill C-272 in order to address the concerns that I am certain will be pressed upon the members of this House. The circumvention of TPMs discussed and allowed under Bill C-272 is only for repair, maintenance or diagnosis. Any other circumvention would remain illegal under the Copyright Act. Bill C-272 is not a rewriting of the act and does not allow TPMs to be circumvented under other circumstances. The rights of copyright holders are maintained and appropriate legal remedies are available for those who wilfully violate the Copyright Act for illegal purposes.

It is of course my hope that members of the House agree with me and that they take a few moments to review the legislation and vote in support. I look forward to questions and subsequent debate. Furthermore, I am always happy to take calls and emails if anyone would like to discuss this matter further.

• (1840)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for introducing this bill. As a member of Parliament who comes from a family of five generations of agricultural producers in Alberta, certainly the conversation around the right to repair is important. Some of the concerns I have heard from dealers, equipment manufacturers and producers who buy service contracts with local dealers are about disincentivizing some of the development that is taking place within the agriculture and agricultural technologies.

Can the member comment on that?

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I have heard this argument in the research I conducted for the bill, and it is a common one.

I would argue that the innovation of automotive has clearly not slowed down as a result of the voluntary changes to the repair of vehicles. Imagine if we were to say to Canadians that they can only take their vehicles back to the dealerships, that this is their only option for repairs. It would not be acceptable, and I do not think it should be acceptable for farmers to have to manage that as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Cambridge on his leadership.

My question for him is simple. Are there legislative measures we can take to stop planned obsolescence? What are the environmental impacts? What can we do? How can his bill help us combat planned obsolescence?

[English]

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak a bit more about this. It is easily one of the top reasons I moved on this bill. We have seen such a massive increase over the last number of years of toxic e-waste landing in landfills. The reali-

ty is that repairing these devices is more expensive than buying new ones, and that is the challenge I hope is understood.

We need to make these repairs an option for people. If people have the option to repair their devices, the cost of repairing will come down and it becomes a more viable option. We are seeing far too many pieces of equipment, such as televisions, gaming consoles and cellphones, ending up in landfills when they could very easily be repaired.

• (1845)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as some will have noted, although we do not mention our names in this place, the hon. member for Cambridge and I might be mistaken as family members. I would be proud to claim him as a close cousin, because this bill is fantastic.

The right to repair is part of Green Party policy, and there is in fact a movement globally on this. There is a case where Apple, the giant Apple corporation, sued the owner of a little tiny Norwegian repair shop, Henrik Huseby, because he had the gall to think he could repair some of its products. This is important legislation. I hope to support it in seeing it all the way through to report stage and third reading.

Has the hon. member heard of that case? This is a global movement and I am proud to be part of it.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, it is great to see my very distant cousin on the screen asking a question of me.

I have, in fact, heard of that and many other cases where some of the biggest corporations in the world have a strangle hold. They are using copyright in a way it was not intended. The point of Bill C-272 is to simply make a slight adjustment in the Copyright Act so folks have the opportunity to repair their own devices or take them to a repair shop.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Cambridge for presenting this bill. As he alluded to quite nicely in his speech, it has a very far-reaching impact into rural Canada and to our farming communities.

It is important because our Copyright Act, as he also mentioned, is very outdated. It was written long ago, and it needs to be updated. It needs to be more flexible, and it needs to be able to respond more quickly to the needs of industry and, quite frankly, to the new reality we live in with everything being digitized. A lot of the things written in the Copyright Act go back prior to the time when everything was as digitized as it is here.

I am going to touch a little on the right to repair as it pertains to farmers. I grew up on a family farm down in southwest Saskatchewan. I am going to talk about my experience. I remember many times, in the middle of August, my dad would be out on the combine, the John Deere 9500 model that we had, and something would break down.

Private Members' Business

My dad is a very innovative fellow and is able to repair a lot of things. He is a jack of all trades, as he calls himself. He would spend some time trying to figure out what the issue was, and he would be able to identify the problem. This was prior to all the digital diagnostics that exist nowadays. He would figure out what part he needed, and he would radio back to the house and ask my mom if she could start calling all the different dealers in the area to see if we could find the part. Yes, I am old enough that we still talked on two-way radios and CB radios on the farm. It was one of the joys of childhood.

My mom would get on the phone and start calling all the different places. She would call the first John Deere dealer, which would be about an hour away, and they would not have the part. Then she would phone the next one, about an hour and a half away, and they would not have the part. She would call and call, and finally she would find out where the part was. Then we would have to drive four or five hours to get that part, because nobody but John Deere made that part.

Right to repair for a lot of people is a lot more than just a digital screen or an Xbox or an iPhone or things like that. The right to repair goes back prior to the digital age that we live in now.

Going back to the story, we would hop in a vehicle at about two o'clock in the afternoon, in the middle of August, and we would drive to wherever we were going, whether it be Saskatoon or wherever, to pick up one part, quickly turn around and drive four or five hours back home. We would get home late at night. My dad would get up at five o'clock in the morning to get that part into the machine so that everything could be up and running by 7 a.m. and we could get on with the harvest.

For a lot of people, that is the reality of the situation. First of all, people did not have access to the parts, because they were controlled by the big manufacturers. Now, with everything being digitized, the first tool is a computer or the diagnostics that exist within the machine. It can only be done by the OEM, the mainline company, and they are the only ones who can repair it.

That is the situation we are facing here now. It is a big impediment for people who live out in the rural regions of our country. As was alluded to by the previous speaker, it is a big part of the security of our food production here in this country.

The innovative spirit of farmers, as we all know, is legendary. They are all very good at being able to make a lot of things work with what they have in front of them. This legislation is important. Even if farmers had their own repair shops, if there was an old enough piece of equipment, it could be taken to their shop and they could fix it and get it up and running again.

Those are the kinds of issues at stake here. I appreciate that we are trying to get the Copyright Act to be a little more responsive. This is one of many things that need to be amended in the Copyright Act. There are other areas of the Copyright Act that need to be changed. I am going to talk a little about that. It would help aid manufacturing, too, because there is a similar issue with being able to make products that interoperate with one another. I think it is important that we have this exemption carved out for right to repair. It

would help to pave the way for more certainty in manufacturing as we go forward.

As we look at the steam right to repair is gaining, we can look to the United States. There was an article written by VICE Magazine, and the headline said, "The Right to Repair Movement Is Poised to Explode in 2021". At that time, there were 14 states in the U.S. that were looking at right to repair legislation. The article had to be updated, because about a month later it reported that the number had almost doubled and upwards of 25 states were considering right to repair.

● (1850)

As has been pointed out, it is extremely important to recognize that this is not just a localized issue, or an issue that is unique to our country or to different regions of Canada; it is around the world. It is important that we properly give consideration to this. We are gaining some momentum in Canada with this debate today.

As already mentioned, these TPMs have, at least in some cases, included unnecessary burdens for consumers and users, in particular Canadian farmers. They go past what is fair and reasonable for protecting their interests and they end up putting their customers and users in a bind, the same people who these companies are supposed to be serving.

Quite frankly, as we alluded to, it is people who are left at the whims of the OEMs on whether they can diagnose the machines. The main manufacturers are the only ones that have the diagnostic capability for these machines. That was different with automotive. People can get a code reader for their truck, but we cannot get it for agricultural equipment. That is part of what the bill tries to address.

Another part of it, and the member for Cambridge made a good job pointing out, a lot of consumer and competition protections are within provincial boundaries. With his bill, he is trying to provide a bit of certainty at the federal level that will allow for further enforcement of these anti-competitive and bad measures against consumers, and that is good.

On the benefits of law in the market, competition and innovation are well known. Unfortunately, some of the bigger players are using their rights and ownership over their products. In this case, as was with copyright, it is the software to create unfair disadvantages to their competition. We are in some ways at the risk of moving toward the problems of monopolies and what that means for our farmers and for the end users. This eventually hurts consumers as well as those businesses, so it goes beyond just farmers, whether it be phones, video game consoles, computers and different things.

Private Members' Business

Along with the terms of TPMs this is also sometimes done through the warranty side of things. I am sure we have all seen this, that our warranties are voided if opened. In Canadian law, technically, that statement cannot be made because it is an anti-competitive, anti-consumer principle. However, we do not see the enforcement of these laws coming into effect. That needs to be addressed as well. I do not know if the bill necessarily addresses that issue, but it starts us the right direction to allow for better certainty in our competition and consumer acts.

Some would argue that this might already be excluded in Canadian law, at least as an implicit principle, but the situation is apparently not clear enough for the legality or the adequate enforcement, as I alluded to.

As we go forward, the bill is a step in the right direction. As I said at the start, our Copyright Act needs to be more responsive. It needs to be able to act quickly and we need to be able to make changes as needed to ensure we provide certainty in the marketplace.

Again, I want to acknowledge that the member has done a good job by going in the right direction. There are a few things we can do that maybe would help provide more certainty in the bill. It is a bill we can work with, but going forward it puts us on the right track. I commend the member for putting the bill forward.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Copyright Act is intended to ensure that artists can earn a living from their art and to protect their work from being copied or used in ways they do not approve of.

In fact, discussions with associations like Copibec and Access Copyright have helped me identify issues that need to be brought to our attention, such as fair compensation for creators and publishers for the educational use of their work, as well as the loss of sales revenue associated with the education sector, especially the Canadian university environment.

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry should consider reviewing the act. Many stakeholders are calling for just that, particularly when the work is protected from pirates by a digital lock. The law prohibits breaking that lock to reproduce or alter the work without the consent of the copyright owner, which is good.

Now companies have decided to use the Copyright Act for other purposes, namely industrial and commercial purposes. When a consumer product contains electronic components, which is the case with almost everything today, many companies have included a digital device to prevent repairs from being made, unless the company has expressly provided the codes.

According to these companies, a repair person who overrides a digital lock to fix our phone, car or tractor without the consent of the company commits an offence under the Copyright Act. Thus, it becomes impossible to fix an item that belongs to us, is broken or not working properly, unless we go to one of the company's dealers.

In some cases, obtaining replacement parts from a third party is considered an infringement, and this discourages any expert or

company from providing this service. Even worse, in many cases the company will have several reasons for refusing to repair the item, which forces us to buy a new product. That is programmed obsolescence, which is a terrible source of waste both financially and environmentally.

Given that technological waste represents a growing environmental concern, several measures should be looked at. Today's debate concerns a small part of this burden, but we must consider making changes to laws to allow the repair, diagnostics and maintenance of electronic devices in particular.

Bill C-272 seeks to amend the Copyright Act to allow a person to circumvent a technological protection measure in a computer program if the circumvention is solely for the purpose of diagnosis, maintenance or repair of a product in which the program is embedded.

The member for Cambridge will be pleased to hear that the Bloc Québécois supports this bill. We believe that the amendments that we are debating today will prevent the act from being twisted for economic and industrial ends, especially when it is intended to protect artists. This is a worthwhile bill that confirms that we have the right to repair products that belong to us or to have them repaired. The people doing the repairs, whether they be mechanics or computer specialists, will no longer risk being sued for copyright infringement. This will open the door to healthy competition and the development of the SMEs that we are so proud of in Quebec.

Once we are no longer at the mercy of the company's authorized retailer, we will likely be able to save a fortune. The bill will be particularly useful in the regions, where large corporations do not open stores, which means residents have no way to get their products repaired. I find that is particularly true of Apple.

By fixing a provision in the Copyright Act that manufacturers used to prevent people from repairing their products, the bill establishes the right to repair one's possessions. Bill C-272 clarifies that a person can circumvent a protection measure for the purpose of diagnosis, maintenance or repair. This will democratize repair businesses, help grow our local businesses and support healthy competition. It will apply to electronic, computer and mechanical devices, such as John Deere tractors, which the company insists on repairing itself.

Private Members' Business

My region is overflowing with talent, but our population is not large enough for big corporations like Apple to open stores there, even though most of our residents own one of its devices. We have few options when one of our devices breaks down. We can travel 600 kilometres to the nearest store; mail in the device, which means we cannot use it for some time; or, sadly, just get a new one, even if the old one only needed a minor repair.

• (1900)

Still, there is no shortage of talent in my region. We have many small businesses that could do the work, but they do not have the right to do it or do not have access to the parts to do it. In that sense, the bill is a step in the right direction towards supporting the development of our local businesses and establishing the terms and conditions that will foster healthy competition.

The Bloc Québécois supports the changes proposed in Bill C-272, because they promote healthy competition and the development of our economic ecosystem in the regions and in major centres. For consumers, it also allows for freedom of choice and full ownership of the items they have purchased.

For all the reasons previously mentioned, we believe that it is important to preserve the very essence of the foundation of the Copyright Act, which aims to protect the rights of individuals who own literary and artistic property and which encourages fair compensation for the work they do. Using this legislation as a ploy in an industry to limit competition distorts its nature and, in that sense, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-272, introduced by the member for Cambridge.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-272, a right to repair bill. It is actually very similar to one that I had passed in the House of Commons and I will talk about that in a little bit.

I want to congratulate the member for bringing this forward, because it is part of a cultural shift we have had in economics. It is about our economy, of course. It is also about rights and it is about a series of different things that are important. It is about competition too. Today, we had a boost for competition. I want to thank all those who were involved in the campaign to stop Nav Canada from closing airports.

In Windsor, we had this case brought forward and I want to thank Mayor Drew Dilkens, the Windsor Flying Club, Rakesh Naidu from the chamber of commerce, Brian Hogan from the labour council, and pilots Karan D'Souza and Dante Albano, just to mention a few. There are many others. I could go on and on.

I do not want to spend my whole time on that, but I do want to recognize them because they fought for public safety and for competition. We were successful today, when the government said that it could not do anything and there was no way to intervene. I offered a private member's bill, and even questioned the Prime Minister yesterday, and today we were successful in stopping that process. Again, this is about competition, fairness and public safety.

I had my original bill, Bill C-425, and also then reintroduced Bill C-273, which was passed in the House of Commons under a minor-

ity Conservative government. It went to committee, came out of committee and we reached a voluntary agreement. It provided information for the automotive aftermarket. Canada was being treated differently from many other countries in the world by some corporations. We were being treated as a colony, quite frankly. The United States was getting information to help fix vehicles in the aftermarket because it had provisions on the Environmental Protection Agency and through some of its consumer legislation. In Windsor, people could drive their car over into Detroit and get it fixed in the aftermarket. Meanwhile, over here in Windsor, flash software, which was important to reset the car, was denied, training was denied, and tools and other things were denied to the aftermarket, affecting hundreds of thousands of jobs across this country. In fact, my bill took me everywhere from the east coast to the west coast and even to some parts of the north. We found that many Canadians were losing out.

As I mentioned, competition is not just with regard to jobs for people in the aftermarket fixing the products and services, it is also about jobs related to servicing the industries. People were driving vehicles that threatened public safety because they were not fixed. They would have to wait for an opening in a shop to get it done, or have it towed somewhere to be safe. Environmentally, there was an impact: cars were on the road even longer and they were higher polluters. I commend the member for bringing this forward because it is more robust in many respects. It would provide some fairness and competition that is necessary.

Right now we are grappling with electronic waste. There is so much unnecessary ending of the life of products and services, in particular, hardware and devices. Later on, the small shops and small and medium-sized businesses are shut out. They cannot get the right information because of a monopolistic approach by some of the larger corporations.

This bill would help level the playing field. It would not interfere with intellectual property. It would not undermine the production and assembly of the first product to start with. It provides for what we have always had in our societies, which is secondary work on objects that are useful in our society. In the farming community, in the auto manufacturing community where I am, in the software industry or in the electronic device industry, we found multiple and continued uses of products. To have them denied just because of a monopolistic approach by a large corporation that is using basically a back door to prevent that type of an economy is not helpful.

Private Members' Business

We found some companies are very progressive on this. In my case, General Motors officials were open and shared their information. They treated Canada pretty much the same as they treated the United States. Right now, one of the problem companies we have in the automotive aftermarket sector is Tesla. The people at Tesla refused to sign the voluntary agreement that we have in place, and it needs some modernization. I thank the member again because this is going to bring to light some of those issues.

• (1905)

My agreement at the time was made with Tony Clement, who was the minister of industry then. Basically, we had it pass in the House of Commons, and the aftermarket association, at the end of the day, agreed at the time that we would settle with the voluntary agreement instead of bringing it through as an actual law. It is still on the paper and on the books, and it is still enforceable in many respects, but it is not as strong as it could be. However, that was okay. We were compromising to work together as a country and as political parties.

As a New Democrats, we found this to be a step forward right away, and it avoided, of course, the Senate. I have far too often had some of my bills, the sports betting bill, for example, and there are others, die in the Senate for a lot of different, complicated, and some not so complicated, reasons.

At that point in time, we decided to go that path, but that needs to be renewed and looked as well. Bill C-272 is an opportunity to build upon that agreement because it is about 10 years old. Now we are dealing with software, personal information and a whole series of different things that are more complex than they were a decade ago.

Again, the bill, if passed, would prevent, for example, electronic waste. How much money do members of the public, municipalities and taxpayers actually have to spend for the disposal of electronic waste that does not have the proper life cycle because companies will not provide the information or software, or they block the equipment, tools or the capacity to repair those things? I think we have all had frustration over phones or other electronic devices that had a cracked screen or something like that, which is a very modest problem, but it becomes a big complication for some devices just because of the proprietary nature of some of the organizations that will not allow a smaller shop or workplace to deal with it.

What is really important about this bill, which is kind of under-characterized and sometimes under-reported, is that some of our young people who are very innovative, creative and tech savvy are looking at new parts of the economy and are very engaged in dealing with the new aftermarket devices. We do not want to stymie that type of innovation because they use it to bounce further innovation and further development of products and services that are very important for us.

We have seen how hard it is for young entrepreneurs to get going. Can members imagine, for example, if back in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s we were told that we could never have a shop that could even touch a vehicle, other than the major automotive companies?

However, Bill C-272 also deals with farm equipment, which was, sadly, left out in my proposed legislation. This is an improvement, because there is high tech involved in that equipment, which is very important. As well, we have the whole aftermarket for vehicles, such as emergency vehicles, heavy equipment and a series of things that were really left out.

As New Democrats, we are very proud to support Bill C-272, because it builds upon what we believe is very solid consumer protection, very solid environmental protection and very solid competition elements. In the industry committee, we have been dealing with the competition in this country, and our Competition Act is far outdated. It needs a lot of work and needs to be revived basically from the front to the back cover. Canada, at one point, was a leader in competition, but we basically left that on the shelf.

What are we going to do in the meantime? We only have limited opportunities to put on the pressure to get some good change for the economy and for the consumers, and Bill C-272 is part of that. There are elements that we could probably find some agreement on for the Competition Act right now that could pass rather quickly. However, other things that are much more complicated and complex, but the bill before us is not that. The bill is actually part of something that could, right away, protect consumers and a lot of jobs.

I am going to conclude by saying that Bill C-272 is more important than it might seem on the surface. It is not just about fixing a device in the kitchen, a phone, or any other electronic device. It is much more complex than that. It is about hundreds of thousands of jobs across this country that are at risk.

It is also about public safety, because many devices continue to be used improperly or are tinkered with and not fixed correctly because of not having a good third-party that is actually responsible in getting the proper parts, services and information from the supplier. As well, environmentally, it would very much be an improvement, because we would extend the lifespan of things.

Again, I congratulate the member for putting this bill forward. I really appreciate it.

• (1910)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to be a part of the consensus I am seeing inside the chamber. Some of my New Democrat, Bloc and Conservative colleagues are saying that my friend and colleague for Cambridge has done a great service to this chamber by bringing forward such progressive legislation as a private member's bill. When I think of members being able to contribute to broader society, the member has hit it right on. I applaud him on the initiative.

Private Members' Business

I am not 100% sure where he came up with the idea, or the people he worked with, but I suspect, knowing the member for Cambridge, that this is something that is exceptionally well-thought-out, as he would have consulted and worked with a number of people on a great idea. I am really hopeful it will get to the committee stage. Having one of our standing committees, at the very least, deal with it would do a great service to Canadians. I believe we could even go beyond that, but for now I would be very happy to see it go to the committee stage.

As has been pointed out, the right to repair has been a bit of a public issue in different forums that go beyond our national borders. We have seen other jurisdictions attempt to deal with it. Over the last decade, this is the first time I am really seeing this debate be brought to the floor. As we have seen other jurisdictions attempt to deal with it, I think it is appropriate that we also deal with it.

We have to take a holistic approach to dealing with copyright. The framework's size is significant, and we have to appreciate that. I think this debate and the discussions we could see at committee would go a long way to improving the overall framework. I know a couple of our ministers have been doing consulting on the issue. What we are seeing today would add value to the consultations those ministers and the government have been looking at.

When I think of copyright, three areas come to mind. I have a personal favourite, as I suspect many members of the House might have, which is consumers. We need to think of our consumers. That is my number one priority.

Protecting the rights of creators is my second priority. It is something we have to be aware of when having any discussions in the House. The third point is that it is important, as a government, that we understand and appreciate innovation and create an environment that promotes and encourages it. I liked that the member for Cambridge addressed all three of those points in his comments, if not directly then indirectly. In doing so, he alleviated many of the concerns that people might have. The prohibition against circumventing copyrights and technology protection measures, or TPMs, makes me a little nervous, I must say. I may be dating myself.

• (1915)

I was born in the early sixties, in 1962 to be more precise, and I can remember my first car, which I think was a 1968 Rambler. I first started to play around with it as a very young person, when I took an interest in automobiles. Computers were not even imagined then, and when I would pop the hood of my vehicle, there was no technology. There were pistons, piston rings and spark plugs, and when I would put some gas in it, there was a bit of an expulsion of gas and the car somehow ran.

Over the years, there were thousands of people like me who took an interest in cars and had a passion for them. We understood that if something broke it was no problem. We could go to Canadian Tire, pick up the part and fix it ourselves. I spend a lot of time on computers nowadays, as I know all of us do, but as much as I love them and appreciate the technology, I can honestly say that to a certain degree I miss the days when I could pop the hood of my Mustang and play around with it, fix it up and get that sense of pride from getting something done.

Computer technology has really changed that. Innovations have changed that. For the most part, this has been for good. We see, for example, more efficient vehicles. Vehicles are healthier for our environment because of some of the technological gains we put into place. Here is a sad story: I remember the days where I could get a drill, put it in reverse and backpedal the speedometer. We cannot do that nowadays because of technology.

There is good there, and I applaud the creative minds that advanced us. I do not want to take away from the innovation that Canadians are so good at. However, having said that, we understand and appreciate that at times we see what some might call corporate greed. There are unpleasant ways of describing people who find ways to prevent local consumers from doing what they believe they should be able to do, and in all fairness, we should allow them to do it.

When I think of the legislation by my colleague from Cambridge, I see an attempt to find a fair balance, respecting what I believe are the three fundamentals: our consumers, our creators and, at the same time, continuing to encourage innovation.

Over the years, one thing I have seen within our government is that there has been, as there will continue to be, very strong representation for protecting consumers. We also see that in part from other members speaking on behalf of other political entities in the House. I can make reference to the framework of the marketplace, recognizing that we have a culture or economy that respects protection. In other words, if we go to people with a copyright law to protect a creator, whether it is for an artistic musical disk or a software program, Canadians as a whole understand why we do that. It is important that we have a public education component so that people understand the benefits of copyright. It is really important.

As we look to modernize our copyright—

• (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That will have to be the subject of another speech.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to address the topic of right to repair. My colleague for Winnipeg North took us down memory lane, sharing his own experiences of working on cars growing up.

This bill brings a certain degree of nostalgia for me as well. I fondly remember, about 10 years ago, working as a staffer in the office of the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, as we responded to the issue that had been brought forward by the member for Windsor West as a private member's bill in the auto sector. Those were great days. I was 22 years old. I owned one suit that I bought second-hand. I wore it every day to the office and dry cleaned it when there were parliamentary recesses. It was a great time, and the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin did not tease me too much about my limited attire. I learned all about right to repair as a university student who had never owned a vehicle.

Adjournment Proceedings

The member for Windsor West had brought forward at this time legislation that proposed bringing in a right to repair for vehicles. It was a contentious issue, with different stakeholders bringing forward different concerns. It was the kind of issue that was non-partisan, but not in the sense that everybody exactly agreed about where we should go with it. There were different points of view, intentions and debates within all of the major parties, certainly within the Conservatives and the Liberals, about the best way forward. There were legitimate competing considerations with the issue of right to repair at the time, recognizing that if people owned a vehicle they should be able to repair it. Today we are talking about other devices. It can be a major challenge for people if they cannot access, or get a reasonable price to access, the support they need in their community to repair their property.

On the other hand, there was a great deal of concern about legislatively mandating the handing over of certain material. There were fears that access to manuals could lead to reverse engineering, which could undermine important aspects of intellectual property protection and could undermine the rights of creators and the importance of innovation.

At the time, we were able to work toward an important solution, which was to have a voluntary agreement among different parts of the sector. I think a combination of a discussion of the issue of pressure, but also the real desire of stakeholders to work together, led to a resolution in the form of a voluntary agreement. There was a framework put in place for the sharing of information.

I appreciated hearing the member for Windsor West talk about the experience of working toward a voluntary agreement, because it created a framework in which everybody's concerns could be respected, and the goal was certainly that people would be able to access the repairs they needed for their vehicles, so that there would be a transfer of information as appropriate in those cases and that there would be compensation. Of course, we do not always have cases where things work out that way, but that was the result in that case. It was a great opportunity for a young staffer, as I was at the time, to have a ringside seat to these conversations that were going on.

The work of different members and the conversations around it were a part of the process because, in the end, the bill was supported by a majority of members of all parties at the second reading stage. It went to committee, and it was at that point that everything was kind of finalized around the voluntary agreement—

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It will have to stay there for the moment.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, how fitting it is that I would follow the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan reminiscing about his one suit. While he might not think I teased him, I just did not tease him to his face about his single suit. We certainly noticed it and I rib him from time to time. He was a great parliamentary secretary assistant, by the way.

The genesis of my speech tonight for four minutes goes back to four questions that I have asked. I asked the same question four times. I asked it in November, December and twice in February. I got non-answers every time and, interestingly, I got the same non-answer three out of the four times. I am going to read the initial question so everyone will have the gist of it. The initial question was as follows:

Mr. Speaker, there is no one in the world more committed to clean energy production than Canadians working in the oil and gas sector, yet because the Liberal government has made it impossible for the private sector to build a pipeline in this country, we continue to import hundreds of thousands of barrels a day. After the U.S., the top source countries in recent years are Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria.

Could the minister tell us if oil imported to Canada from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria is subject to the same rigorous regulation on upstream and downstream emissions as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland?

It is a pretty straightforward question. The parliamentary secretary at the time in November gave a laundry list of completely unrelated projects, a completely incomprehensible response. I cannot even call it an answer. I revisited the question on December 11. I will not read the preamble, but the question will sound very familiar. It was, "Can the government commit that the tens of millions of barrels of oil coming from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Nigeria will be subject to the same rigorous regulations as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland in terms of upstream and downstream emissions?"

This time, interestingly, the parliamentary secretary pretty much read the exact same non-answer from the script that he read the first time I asked the question and threw a couple of things in. He talked about "continuing to make sure we have the highest standards so that when we export, we make sure we have the highest standards in the world." He added that at the end of the same list that he read off the previous time. As for export, we cannot even get it from one province to another. We are not even talking about exporting. We are talking about the fact that we are giving preference to oil coming from places like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria over oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. That makes absolutely no sense to any reasonable Canadian looking at the issue.

I decided, since I did not get any answers the first two times, to ask the question again and I was heartened, actually, because on February 19 when I stood to ask the question, I noticed that the minister was there. The minister is from Newfoundland, so having been briefed about the fact that I had asked this question a couple of times, I thought maybe the parliamentary secretary would be a little sheepish about it. I asked the same question and got the exact same list of projects.

I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary one more time. Could he tell us if oil imported to Canada from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Algeria is subject to the same rigorous regulation on upstream and downstream emissions as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland?

• (1930)

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will attempt to answer the member's questions and also provide a list of some of our accomplishments along those lines.

I will start by saying that, as members know, our government has supported the oil and gas sector and its workers throughout the worst of this pandemic and we will continue to be there for them.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the actions taken by our government to support Canadians through the Canada emergency wage subsidy, more than 500,000 workers were able to keep their jobs in Alberta alone. We also contributed \$1.7 billion to help the provinces clean up orphaned wells.

The funding has already created thousands of jobs and will be good for our environment. That is an important support measure.

[*English*]

For ordinary Canadians, their families and communities and our environment, there has been significant government support for major energy projects like TMX, Line 3, Line 5, NGTL 2021, LNG Canada. That is a list of projects that we have approved. That is a fact.

[*Translation*]

Each of these projects has the potential to create thousands of jobs in our energy sector. For the government, and I am sure for all Canadians too, that is a good thing. We always support the energy sector.

[*English*]

Regarding our oil imports, there is much I would like to discuss with the member.

[*Translation*]

I will note that oil imports to Canada have been falling steadily since 2010, going from 820,000 barrels a day in 2010 to 555,000 barrels a day in 2020.

• (1935)

[*English*]

I will also note, for my hon. colleague, that the majority of the oil imported into Canada, 77% to be precise, comes from our largest energy trading partner, the United States. Maintaining a strong and positive energy relationship with our largest trading partner has been, and will be, a continued effort. Many of the refineries in eastern Canada choose to import crude oil when it is more economic for operations.

Canada remains, indeed, a net exporter of fuels. Some circumstances exist on real imports. This is in keeping with the fact that

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada has a market-based energy framework whereby the private sector makes decisions on imports and exports, including those based on costs.

Our government will continue to do the hard work necessary to attract investment and build capacity to market our resources safely, responsibly and sustainably. We will continue working to ensure the energy sector remains an important source of well-paying jobs for Canadians across the country. We will also continue to move forward in the transition to a low-carbon economy on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050 by investing in innovation and delivering economic growth in a competitive industry for clean jobs while protecting the environment.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, after four or five months, and with an army of public servants to give briefings on the issue, there is still absolutely zero attempt to answer the question, which relates to the oil coming from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Nigeria, and other countries such as Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Columbia, Russia and Kazakhstan. The question is whether oil coming from those countries is subject to the same rigorous regulations on upstream and downstream emissions as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland.

I am pretty sure the answer is no. Perhaps the hon. member could simply answer that question and confirm it by answering yes or no.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, all members know that Canada is an energy trading nation, and that we export our natural resources and import from other nations.

[*Translation*]

Members know full well that the United States is one of our most important trade partners, in energy and in other sectors. The same is true for oil imports into Canada, since the majority of our country's imported oil comes from the United States.

[*English*]

This is a long-standing energy trading relationship, which our government is proud of. I will reiterate for members that imports of oil into Canada have steadily declined since 2010, and our government will continue to work hard to ensure we reach net-zero emissions by 2050 while delivering economic growth, competitive industry and clean jobs and protecting our environment.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the house this evening to speak about the question I asked the Minister of Finance, that is, when the next budget will be tabled. It will be tabled next Monday.

Adjournment Proceedings

I also want to talk about vaccines. From the beginning, the Liberal government did not provide Canadians with the vaccines they needed. This failure is rooted in the government's efforts, at the very outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to establish partnerships with China for the development of vaccines. This partnership quickly collapsed and only resulted in a scandalous waste of time.

While the Liberals were busy trying to reach agreements with China, our global allies were signing contracts with Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca. Canada had no choice but to try to catch up because it was so far behind. Since the beginning, the Liberal government has failed to obtain vaccines for Canadians. The government's dithering has only exacerbated the delays and obstacles that we are still facing today in getting Canadians vaccinated. The delays continue to this day. Last week, 850,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine were supposed to arrive in Canada, but they did not. Government officials say that we could be facing a similar delay for 1.2 million doses from Moderna.

In the midst of the third wave, Canadians are still worried about the future and about getting through the pandemic. That is normal. The Prime Minister himself contributed to those worries. He kept promising that all Canadians who wanted a vaccine would get one by the end of September. However, in order for that to happen, 400,000 doses will have to be administered every day until then.

Do we really have confidence that this target can be met? Based on what we have seen so far, I do not think so. It took four months to get the first dose to 20% of Canadians. Compared to our partners, Canada's vaccine rollout and overall management of the pandemic have been complete and utter failures.

The United States has administered nearly 190 million vaccines so far and has fully vaccinated 22% of its population. The United Kingdom has given both doses to 40 million people, which represents 14.5% of its population. By March, half of U.K. residents had received their first doses. In Canada, just 2.1% of the 33.7 million Canadians have been fully vaccinated.

The Liberals are boasting about over-delivering. It is like setting our own targets. The Liberals set a target so low that they would be sure to exceed it. Bad targets lead to bad results. Even if the targets are exceeded, the results will still be poor. This is bad for Canadians.

However, I must say that I am glad the Liberals will finally present a budget on Monday. Canada is the country that has gone the longest without presenting a budget during the pandemic. The other G7 countries and the Canadian provinces have presented theirs.

Why am I delighted to have a budget? It is because the Liberals never adequately responded to the pandemic and thousands of Canadians continue to suffer. Businesses have had to shut down permanently. Millions of Canadians are facing a harsh reality.

The Canadian economy and its workers are still at risk because of the vaccine failures and also because the Liberal government failed to present a real plan—

• (1940)

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

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will point out for my friend and colleague opposite that the question he intended to ask was about the timing of the budget, and I am pleased as well to share that the budget will be tabled this Monday.

On the issue of the timing of the budget, I know he registered some complaints about the fact that there was no federal budget last year, and that should come as no surprise. All parties, in fact, agreed to a specific process when Parliament was not sitting due to an unprecedented public health emergency to have certain emergency powers offered to the COVID-19 committee. As part of the deal that we reached unanimously in Parliament, I might add, the government provided bi-weekly reports on spending measures to deal with the pandemic.

Since that time, Parliament has now resumed and he has had access to the estimates and supplementary estimates. He has had access to a fall economic statement, which was 237 pages, outlining the fiscal position in spending plans of the government. He has also had an opportunity, if he wished, to review the reports of the government operations committee. Frankly, most of the information that will be contained on the fiscal track of the government is actually published online, more or less in real time, according to the spending programs.

He has had some complaints about the level of supports offered by this government, which I find curious given that at the outset of this pandemic the Conservative finance critic indicated that the Conservatives would not support big spending programs and referred to them as “big and fat” government programs. Since that time, his leader has repeatedly come out and criticized the Canada emergency response benefit, which is unthinkable given the fact that it helped sustain over nine million Canadians and helped them keep food on the table.

Other measures we put in place were the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which kept more than five million workers on the payroll in Canadian businesses; the Canada emergency business account or the regional relief and recovery fund, which have been enormously successful and have supported approximately one million businesses to help them literally keep the lights on and the doors open.

He is quite right to point out that the public health emergency will continue to dictate the economic outcomes of Canada. However, I will point to the fact, though he is pointing to the vaccine deployment of the United States, which is a major producer of vaccines, that Canada is third right now in the G20 of countries whose citizens have received at least one dose of the vaccine. We continue to see a record number of vaccines land week by week because, at the beginning of this pandemic, we adopted a strategy to secure the largest portfolio among our comparator countries to ensure no matter which vaccines were first to market, Canada would have access to them.

We will continue to adopt measures that will continue to protect the health and well-being of Canadian households as we also put forward measures that will protect our economy by supporting households and businesses directly.

I am looking forward very much to sharing the details of the forthcoming budget on Monday, as it will continue to support Canadian households and businesses. Most important, we will continue to operate world-class health response to this pandemic and will set the course for a recovery that will serve the interests of Canadians tomorrow and into the future.

• (1945)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's remarks.

The Liberals love to talk about how they have the biggest vaccine portfolio, but they do not like talking about major delays in vaccine delivery. Now Canada is going through a third wave that is worse than the worst of what happened in the United States.

Today the New York Times reported the following:

[*English*]

Canada, which is struggling with a slow vaccine rollout, has recorded more cases per capita than the U.S. "Restrictions have been reimposed in many provinces, with a nightly curfew in parts of Quebec."

[*Translation*]

Those are the facts. That is the Liberals' record on vaccines. That is an important thing to remember.

I should point out that the Conservatives supported targeted measures such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency response benefit because that was what had to be done when they were introduced. In Monday's budget, we expect the Liberals to introduce a realistic plan to get our economy back on track. We are very much looking forward to seeing that.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely false that the Conservative Party supported CERB at the outset of this pandemic. In fact, their leader continues to comment negatively about this program that kept so many households fed during the worst of this pandemic.

Adjournment Proceedings

If he is concerned about the public health response, just hours ago that member and his entire caucus voted against Bill C-14, after delaying it for months, which included \$500 million to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities and additional medical research.

To lay this squarely at the feet of the federal government is absolutely ludicrous. I will point out the fact that it is the same federal government that serves his province of Quebec, the province of Ontario and serves my province of Nova Scotia where we have single digit cases that are tied to travel.

With respect, if provincial governments continued to work with the federal government to offer a world leading public health response as we have had in Atlantic Canada, we would be in a much better place today than we are across the board. I will assure the hon. member that Monday's budget—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here to speak and hopefully get a real answer to my question that I asked just a couple of weeks ago about the sudden decision to stop the sale of frozen-at-sea spot prawns.

This is having a huge impact on coastal communities. I want to personally thank the B.C. Prawn Industry Caucus chair, Emily Orr, who has been in regular contact with my office, connecting us with local folks in the sector and keeping us updated about the concerns that are arising daily.

Since this announcement, prawn fishers and harvesters, their families and members of coastal communities have contacted every member of Parliament in British Columbia about the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' decision. My colleague, the member of Parliament representing Courtenay—Alberni, and I wrote a letter to the minister imploring her to reverse the decision. This is not some big corporation. These are small family businesses, in some cases multi-generational businesses. They do not have the capacity or the resources to manage this type of change, especially when it is so sudden. It is simply not fair.

The important facts are thus: it is the practice of freezing spot prawn tails in tubs at sea and it has been going on for 50 years without any incident and without any concern. We know that prawn size limits are a market issue. They are not a conservation issue, and there is no minimum prawn size regulations for recreational or FSC harvest. The commercial prawn fishery of British Columbia has been consistently recognized, both internally by DFO and externally by a third party assessment, as a sustainable fishery. These are the facts on the record. No one seems to be questioning them, so why is DFO making this decision, and why is it making it now?

Adjournment Proceedings

For no reason that is clear, DFO has recently reinterpreted the existing fishery regulations to assert that a tub of frozen-at-sea spot prawn tails no longer meets its requirement that fish are readily determined for inspection purposes. This is very concerning. There seems to be a redefinition of what “readily determined” is, but no one seems to know what that definition is now. With no clear reason being provided for the reinterpretation and no means of compliance for tubs of prawns frozen at sea being provided, folks are left in a significant lurch.

In my riding I am thinking of people like Kim Mikkelsen and Melissa and Joel Collier, who are all second-generation prawn harvesters. I am thinking of Shane, Mike, Ivan and Loretta, Duane, Jon, Zeke and Randy. These are people who have dedicated years, some of them over 30 years, of their life to this work. By preventing the practice of freezing prawn tails at sea, which is the primary format for domestic sales, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is effectively forcing freezing vessels to create an export-only product.

This is terrible for the stability and economy of prawn fishing operations and undermines local food security. The situation is the fault of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, not the prawn fishers, and DFO must make this right and fix it. The stand-down on this decision for one year is simply not enough. Will the minister—

• (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the parliamentary secretary the opportunity to answer.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here tonight on behalf of my hon. colleague from Burnaby North—Seymour.

Our government supports the precautionary approach to fisheries management, which prioritizes the health and conservation of stocks. The size limits are an important tool for managing the sustainability of the commercial spot prawn fishery and are supported by industry. A size limit allows prawns to grow and reproduce before being harvested, supporting the renewal and long-term sustainability of the stock. In addition, harvesting prawns at a large size increases the average weight and price per pound, improving economic returns for the fishery.

DFO has been working together with the spot prawn industry on market traceability and the packaging and labelling of spot prawn tails that are frozen at sea. Over the course of this work, DFO identified concerns about the packaging of spot prawn tails in tubs of frozen sea-water, a practice that only recently became common in the fishery. This practice can inhibit the ability of our enforcement officials to easily and quickly confirm compliance with the size limits.

I would like to clarify that the requirement of paragraph 36(2)(d) of the Fishery (General) Regulations to pack fish in such a way that the size can be readily determined is not a new or recent regulation, nor has DFO recently changed its interpretation of that regulation.

Any person who catches a fish while commercial fishing must have it packed in a way that allows the species, number, weight and size to be readily determined. This regulation is essential to allow DFO to verify a fisher's catch and properly manage fisheries.

The department and this government recognize the importance of this issue to the prawn industry, especially at a time when international market demand for seafood products has been negatively affected by the COVID pandemic. We are committed to finding a solution to this issue that will support industry's access to local markets. That is why we have been very clear that the conservation and protection enforcement posture this season will be one of awareness and education.

Furthermore, department officials have been meeting with prawn industry representatives on this issue over the past eight weeks. Their most recent meeting was last week. DFO and industry have agreed to convene a working group that would develop and evaluate proposals for addressing this issue as quickly as possible. DFO staff will be working closely and collaboratively with the industry to explore immediate and long-term options to ensure well-managed and sustainable fisheries.

• (1955)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, this was a well-managed and sustainable fishery. This answer is making me think of Kim, who I mentioned earlier, a second-generation prawn fisher for over 30 years. He was there when DFO confirmed this process because fisheries officers agreed it was an easy and sustainable system. He said, “Now thawing a tub of tails for measurement, which takes less than five minutes if you run it under water, is not an option.”

Currently, many prawn fishers are making a significant part of their revenue within the local community. During the time of COVID, that local market has grown and supported these prawn fishers. This decision will destroy the local market. As Kim said, “People need the opportunity to purchase a good, local product. Prawns are a Canadian resource, people should have access to it.”

There are hundreds of spot fishermen who are telling us to listen. I hope the government will.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify that this is not a new or recent regulation, nor has DFO recently changed its interpretation of it. Any person who catches a fish or prawn while fishing commercially must package it in a way that allows for the species, number, weight and size of the fish to be readily determined.

Again, we recognize how important the prawn industry is to B.C. and to Canadians. That is why we have been very clear that the conservation and protection enforcement posture this season will be one of education and awareness.

Adjournment Proceedings

At a recent meeting between DFO officials and industry representatives on March 10, DFO and industry agreed to form a working group to review industry proposals for addressing this issue. I am encouraged by the industry's interest in working with DFO on a speedy solution to it. DFO staff will be working closely and collaboratively with industry to explore both immediate and long-term—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:58 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, April 15, 2021

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States

Mr. Saini 5645

Points of Order

Taking of Screenshot of Parliamentary Proceedings

Mr. Rodriguez 5645

Pest Control Products Act

Mrs. Atwin 5645

Bill C-285. Introduction and first reading 5645

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 5645

Health-Based Approach to Substance Use Act

Mr. Davies 5645

Bill C-286. Introduction and first reading 5645

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 5646

Petitions

Human Rights

Mr. Genuis 5646

Ethiopia

Mr. Genuis 5646

Conversion Therapy

Mr. Genuis 5646

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis 5646

Public Safety

Mr. Dowdall 5646

Chile

Ms. Kwan 5646

Ethiopia

Mr. Reid 5647

The Environment

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 5647

Provincial Autonomy

Mr. Kurek 5647

Fiscal Stabilization Program

Mr. Kurek 5647

Natural Resources

Mr. Kurek 5647

The Senate

Mr. Kurek 5647

Property Rights

Mr. Kurek 5647

Natural Resources

Mr. Kurek 5647

Conversion Therapy

Mr. Kurek 5647

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 5648

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

Bill C-15—Time Allocation Motion

Mrs. Fortier 5648

Motion 5648

Mr. Therrien 5648

Mr. Lametti 5648

Mr. Schmale 5648

Ms. Gazan 5649

Mr. McLean 5649

Mr. Lamoureux 5649

Mr. Angus 5650

Mrs. Atwin 5650

Mr. Vidal 5650

Mr. Gerretsen 5651

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) 5651

Mr. Schmale 5652

Ms. Gazan 5652

Mr. Simard 5652

Motion agreed to 5654

Second reading

Bill C-15. Second reading 5654

Mrs. Gill 5654

Mr. Lamoureux 5656

Ms. Ashton 5656

Mr. Kurek 5657

Ms. McPherson 5657

Ms. Gazan 5658

Mrs. Atwin 5660

Mr. MacGregor 5661

Mr. Angus 5661

Ms. McPherson 5661

Mr. Serré 5662

Mr. Kurek 5663

Mr. Angus 5663

Mrs. Atwin 5664

Mr. Weiler 5664

Mr. Harris 5666

Mr. Lamoureux 5666

Mrs. Atwin 5666

Mr. Vidal 5666

Mr. Lamoureux 5668

Mr. Angus	5668
Mrs. Atwin	5668
Mr. McLean	5668
Mr. Sloan	5670
Mrs. Vignola	5670
Ms. McPherson	5670
Ms. Jones	5671
Mr. MacGregor	5672
Mr. Sloan	5672

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

India

Mr. Arya	5673
----------------	------

Volunteerism

Mr. Brassard	5673
--------------------	------

Wage Subsidy

Mr. Therrien	5673
--------------------	------

Riding of Davenport

Ms. Dzerowicz	5673
---------------------	------

New Horizons for Seniors Program

Mr. Serré	5674
-----------------	------

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Mr. Allison	5674
-------------------	------

Volunteerism

Ms. Jones	5674
-----------------	------

The Great Canadian Baking Show

Mr. van Koeverden	5674
-------------------------	------

The Economy

Ms. Alleslev	5675
--------------------	------

Education Professionals

Mr. Lauzon	5675
------------------	------

Sexual Misconduct

Mr. Gourde	5675
------------------	------

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Hallan	5675
------------------	------

Fire Keeper Patrol

Mr. Angus	5675
-----------------	------

Michel Louvain

Mrs. Desbiens	5676
---------------------	------

Michel Louvain

Mr. Berthold	5676
--------------------	------

Elmira Maple Syrup Festival

Mr. Louis	5676
-----------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health

Ms. Bergen	5676
------------------	------

Mr. Fraser	5677
Ms. Bergen	5677
Ms. Hajdu	5677
Ms. Bergen	5677
Ms. Hajdu	5677

National Defence

Mr. Deltell	5677
Mr. Sajjan	5677
Mr. Deltell	5678
Mr. Sajjan	5678

Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. Perron	5678
Ms. Qualtrough	5678
Mr. Perron	5678
Ms. Qualtrough	5678

Taxation

Mr. Singh	5678
Mrs. Lebouthillier	5678

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Singh	5678
Ms. Anand	5678

Health

Ms. Rempel Garner	5679
Ms. Hajdu	5679
Ms. Rempel Garner	5679
Ms. Hajdu	5679
Ms. Rempel Garner	5679
Ms. Hajdu	5679
Mr. Paul-Hus	5679
Ms. Anand	5679
Mr. Paul-Hus	5679
Ms. Hajdu	5680
Mr. Paul-Hus	5680
Ms. Hajdu	5680

Employment Insurance

Ms. Chabot	5680
Ms. Qualtrough	5680
Ms. Chabot	5680
Ms. Qualtrough	5680
Ms. Chabot	5680
Ms. Qualtrough	5680

Infrastructure

Mr. Scheer	5681
Mr. Fillmore	5681
Mr. Scheer	5681
Mr. Wilkinson	5681
Mr. Scheer	5681
Mr. Wilkinson	5681

Labour

Mr. Boulerice	5681
Ms. Tassi	5682

Foreign Affairs

Ms. McPherson	5682
---------------------	------

Mr. Garneau	5682
Health	
Mr. Van Bynen	5682
Ms. Hajdu	5682
Official Languages	
Mr. Rayes	5683
Mrs. Lalonde	5683
Mr. Rayes	5683
Mrs. Lalonde	5683
National Defence	
Mr. Brassard	5683
Mr. Sajjan	5683
Mr. Brassard	5683
Mr. Sajjan	5683
Post-Secondary Education	
Mr. Bergeron	5684
Mrs. Lalonde	5684
Mr. Bergeron	5684
Mrs. Lalonde	5684
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Davidson	5684
Mr. Miller	5684
Housing	
Mr. Vis	5684
Mr. Hussen	5684
Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Vidal	5684
Ms. Anand	5685
Diversity and Inclusion	
Ms. Lattanzio	5685
Ms. Chagger	5685
Taxation	
Mr. Gourde	5685
Mrs. Lebouthillier	5685
Mr. Kurek	5685
Mr. Fraser	5685
Seniors	
Mr. Dowdall	5685
Mrs. Schulte	5686
International Trade	
Mr. El-Khoury	5686
Ms. Ng	5686
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Cannings	5686
Mr. Miller	5686
The Environment	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5686
Mr. Wilkinson	5686

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2020

Bill C-14. Third reading	5687
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed) ...	5688

Points of Order

Oral Questions

Mr. El-Khoury	5688
Ms. Ng	5688

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Mr. LeBlanc	5688
Mr. Ruff	5689
Mr. MacGregor	5691
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5692

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Deltell	5692
Mr. Lamoureux	5693

Points of Order

Royal Recommendation Requirement for Bill C-265 —Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker	5693
-------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

Bill C-15. Second reading	5693
Mr. Erskine-Smith	5694
Mr. Kurek	5695
Ms. Michaud	5696
Mr. Green	5696
Mrs. Wagantall	5696
Ms. Larouche	5698
Mr. Anandasangaree	5699
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	5699
Mr. Viersen	5699
Mr. Anandasangaree	5700
Ms. Larouche	5701
Mr. Davies	5701
Mr. Van Bynen	5701
Mr. Cannings	5703
Ms. Larouche	5703
Mr. Manly	5703
Mr. Battiste	5704
Mr. Garrison	5705
Ms. Larouche	5705
Mr. Anandasangaree	5705
Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	5705
Mr. van Koeverden	5707

Ms. Normandin	5707
Mr. Genuis	5708
Mr. Battiste	5709
Ms. Michaud	5709
Mr. Green	5710
Ms. Bendayan	5710
Mr. Boudrias	5711
Mr. Davies	5712
Mr. Kurek	5712
Mr. Virani	5712
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5714
Mr. Genuis	5715
Mr. Lemire	5715
Ms. Bérubé	5715
Division on motion deferred	5716

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Copyright Act

Mr. May (Cambridge)	5716
Bill C-272. Second reading	5716

Mr. Kurek	5718
Mr. Lemire	5718
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5718
Mr. Patzer	5718
Mr. Lemire	5720
Mr. Masse	5721
Mr. Lamoureux	5722
Mr. Genuis	5723

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Natural Resources

Mr. Lake	5724
Mr. Serré	5725

Finance

Mr. Berthold	5725
Mr. Fraser	5726

Fisheries and Oceans

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	5727
Mr. Serré	5728

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