



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Friday, May 3, 2019**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 3, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES ACT

The House resumed from March 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I rise to speak to Bill C-92, which, if passed, would be a significant step forward in the process of reconciliation and in the renewal of the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples.

Bill C-92 sets out the legislative framework and the principles needed to guide work among first nations, Inuit and Métis nations, provincial and territorial partners, and the Government of Canada to achieve truly meaningful reform in child and family services.

The bill before us follows wide-ranging and intensive engagement with indigenous partners, provincial and territorial representatives, youth, in particular youth who have lived experience in the child and family welfare system, and experts and advocates.

[*Translation*]

In January 2018, our government held an emergency national meeting on indigenous child and family services to collaborate on finding solutions to keep families together. In the report on the emergency meeting, the overarching theme that emerged was summarized as follows: “It is clear that the time is now to work towards transferring jurisdictional control from the federal government to First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis Nation through legislation”.

The minutes go on to say:

[*English*]

Legislative reforms are needed that respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples to lead the systems, developing standards and practices that reflect Indigenous laws and cultural practices, where the First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation have the right to look after their children and children and youth have rights to be raised in language and culture.

[*Translation*]

Legislative reforms are needed that respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples to lead the systems, developing standards and practices that reflect Indigenous laws and cultural practices.

At the end of the emergency meeting, the Government of Canada made six commitments to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children and youth in care in Canada.

First, it will continue to fully implement the orders from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, including Jordan's principle, and reform first nations child and family services, including by moving to a flexible funding model.

Second, it will work with partners to shift the focus of programming to culturally appropriate prevention, early intervention and family reunification.

Third, it will also work with our partners to support communities in drawing down jurisdiction in child and family services, including exploring co-developed federal legislation.

Fourth, it will participate in and accelerate the work at tripartite and technical tables that are in place across the country in supporting reform.

Fifth, it will support Inuit and Métis leadership in their work to advance meaningful, culturally appropriate reform of child and family services.

Sixth, it will create a data strategy with the provinces, territories and indigenous partners to increase interjurisdictional data collection, sharing and reporting to better understand the rates and reasons for apprehension.

[*English*]

Similar calls for legislation have come from call to action 4 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as the National Advisory Committee on First Nations Child and Family Services and were reflected in the Assembly of First Nations' resolutions of May and December 2018, to name a few.

### *Government Orders*

Throughout the summer and fall of that year, this government actively engaged with national, regional and community organizations and with individuals, nearly 2,000 across 65 meetings, to co-develop a legislative approach that has brought us to this point.

As a result of this intensive engagement process, on November 30, 2018, the former minister of Indigenous Services stood together with national indigenous leaders to announce that the Government of Canada would introduce co-developed federal legislation on indigenous child and family services.

I am heartened to share the words of Senator Murray Sinclair, former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, who called these engagements “a model for implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Call-to-Actions in a meaningful and direct way.”

This is engagement that will continue as the legislation is implemented and afterward through the exploration of a national transition governance structure, with a distinctions-based underpinning, that would have representation from indigenous partners, provinces and territories.

The group could, for example, identify tools and processes to help increase the capacity of communities as they make progress toward assuming responsibility for child and family services. Such a committee could also assess gaps and recommend mechanisms, as needed, to assist with implementation, in the spirit of partnership and in the spirit of co-operation. In addition, Bill C-92 would provide a review of the legislation every five years, in collaboration with Métis, Inuit and first nation partners.

The bill is entirely consistent with our government's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and our commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The bill has two objectives. First is to affirm the inherent right of indigenous peoples to self-determination in relation to child and family services. The bill is formed on that foundation and would provide flexible pathways for indigenous groups across Canada to determine a way forward that would best meet the needs of their children, families and communities. Second, the bill would set out guiding principles that would guide the provision of child and family services to indigenous children in nearly every region and every jurisdiction throughout this great country.

These principles are national in scope. They are a base standard to ensure that all services for first nation, Inuit and Métis children are provided in a manner that takes into account the individual child's needs, including the need to be raised with a strong connection to the child's family, culture, language and community.

These principles are the following: the best interests of the child, cultural continuity and substantive equality. Setting these standards is in line with TRC call to action 4, which calls for the establishment of national standards, and with what we heard from partners and community members during the extensive engagement process across Canada. To be clear, these are minimum base standards that can be built upon and adapted by communities to meet their unique cultures as well as their unique traditions.

Participants also agreed that the proposed legislation should emphasize the importance of keeping indigenous families together through the implementation of prevention services and early intervention, measures that promote family preservation and reunification.

The legislation would propose an order of preference for placement: first, the family; then the extended family, other members of the community and other indigenous families; then a non-indigenous adult. The placement order is intended to ensure that children remain connected to their culture and their community and that they preserve their attachment and emotional ties to the family.

The bill would establish the importance of preventive care over apprehension. This legislation would give priority to child and family services that promote preventive care, including prenatal services, over the provision of services that promote the removal of a child at the time of birth.

- (1010)

Focusing on preventive care would help promote bonding between mothers and newborns and family unification and attachment and would prevent the removal of newborns. These principles, child-centred and family-centred, were referenced repeatedly throughout the engagement sessions, as was the critical importance of prevention programs.

- (1015)

It is clear that services provided to indigenous children and families should respect and respond in a way that is tailored to their needs and unique cultural experiences. Considerable emphasis was placed on the importance of culture and maintaining the health and well-being of children and families, including through community support networks and the involvement of elders.

It was also clear from the engagement process that federal legislation must respect the inherent right of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to self-determination.

This legislation starts at the point of affirming the inherent right of indigenous peoples to oversee child and family services and sets out flexible pathways for indigenous groups to create their own laws that best meet the needs of their children and their communities. Indeed, if an indigenous group chose to establish its own laws through this mechanism, the legislation makes it clear that in the case of a conflict between indigenous law and a provincial or a federal law, the indigenous law would prevail. For added clarity, the bill would not prevail over any existing treaties, self-government agreements or other agreements that already address indigenous child and family services, though communities could choose to adopt it in these situations.

Partners emphasized that the concept of one-size-fits-all is entirely inappropriate in this situation. Any federal legislation on child and family services must recognize that the needs, desires and priorities of indigenous communities in child and family services vary from one community to another and from one province to another and can evolve and change over time. As a result, there was broad consensus that federal, provincial and territorial mechanisms to support indigenous child and family services should have the flexibility needed to address a range of circumstances and variables.

*Government Orders*

Importantly, the bill also states that an indigenous child would not be apprehended on the basis of socio-economic conditions alone. This is something we heard loud and clear from partners during the consultation process. Indeed, the principle of substantive equality, the third of the guiding principles, is critical to ensuring that the focus of all providers remains on achieving equitable outcomes and equal opportunities for indigenous children and their families.

Substantive equality is the underpinning of other important initiatives, such as Jordan's principle, which ensures that first nations children across Canada can access the services, products and supports they need when they need them. Since 2016, our government has committed \$680 million to support requests through Jordan's principle, which has helped provide first nations youth with a wide range of services to meet their health, social and educational needs.

The positive impact is undeniable. As of January 31 of this year, more than 214,000 requests for services and supports have been approved for first nations children under Jordan's principle. Our government is committed to ensuring that this important work continues. I had the pleasure of being with the minister last week in Winnipeg, with several other MPs, where he announced \$1.2 billion for Jordan's principle going forward.

[*Translation*]

We are all aware that indigenous peoples have been treated atrociously. We are all familiar with the horror of residential schools and the sixties scoop.

Even so, first nations, Inuit and Métis children are still being taken away from their families, their communities, their language and their culture at an alarming and unjustifiable rate. More than half of the foster children in Canada are indigenous. There are many factors involved, of course, but there is no doubt that the system is failing indigenous children, indigenous families and indigenous communities.

● (1020)

[*English*]

We are all aware of the appalling treatment of indigenous peoples, exemplified by the horror of residential schools and by the tragedy of the sixties scoop. Over the course of the last three years, significant investments have been made to begin addressing these issues. Our government has nearly doubled the annual funding for indigenous child and family services since we took office, bringing it to more than \$1.1 billion annually.

Through budget 2016, we provided \$635 million over five years as a first step in addressing funding gaps in first nations child and family services. These funds have been used to support agency service providers, including enhanced funding for smaller agencies. It has supported the rollout of prevention-focused funding models across the country and more front-line service providers.

These funds are already at work. For example, last August, we announced that the Huu-ay-aht First Nation in British Columbia would receive \$4.2 million, close to \$850,000 a year for five years, to support new child and family services initiatives. Some 20% of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation children were in a form of government care, a situation that led the community leadership to declare a public

health emergency and undertake a major study to identify solutions. With funding from Canada and other partners, the Huu-ay-aht First Nation is now implementing the 30 recommendations of this study, entitled "Safe, Healthy and Connected, Bringing Huu-ay-aht Children Home".

Existing pregnancy support and parenting education programs are being expanded. Family and protection support workers are being hired. New opportunities for youth engagement and cultural awareness are being developed. In February 2018, we also changed policies to fund the actual costs of indigenous-led CFS agencies, meaning that they can focus on prevention and services to better support families and reduce the number of children in care.

In budget 2018, the government committed a further \$1.4 billion in new funding over six years to address the funding pressures facing first nations CFS agencies. This includes funding to increase prevention resources for communities so that children are safe and families can stay together. As part of the ongoing efforts toward program reform, a total of \$105 million of funding in the current year has been allocated to the community well-being and jurisdiction initiative. This new funding stream focuses on supporting first nations communities to undertake prevention activities to help families at risk stay together in communities whenever possible and, at the same time, allow communities to exercise their rightful jurisdiction over child and family services.

Funding and innovation can only go so far when dealing with a broken and failing system. It is failing generations of indigenous children and it must be reformed. The existing indigenous child and family services system has led to what has rightly been described as a humanitarian crisis. This bill represents a critical step in addressing that crisis, and I urge all members to join me in supporting it.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to what the hon. member on the government side has listed with regard to the achievements of the indigenous communities and the programs.

The question is very obvious, from Canadians and from indigenous communities. Despite all these achievements, we still hear lots of complaints and dissatisfaction from the same communities over the government's performance. Can the hon. member explain how those two results match: what he is saying and what we are hearing from the public?

*Government Orders*

●(1025)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I am very proud of the consultation process we had with indigenous communities across Canada. There were over 65 individual meetings across Canada, and well over 2,000 people participated. I am proud to say that we have the support of the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, as well as ITK. However, diversity in indigenous communities is sometimes underestimated. We are committed. We know there are concerns out there. We have started a pre-study at the indigenous and northern affairs committee. I note that the Senate has also started a pre-study.

We are going to use the committee phase the way it should be used: to listen to people's concerns and support. When it is applicable and when it makes sense, the committee is open to amendments. We are committed to the co-development process, not only to this point but beyond, at committee and working with other levels of government and certainly the different nations, whether it is Métis, first nations or Inuit.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I share the time with the member in committee listening to testimony on this particular piece of legislation and the pre-study that is occurring right now.

One major concern that has come forward is the fact that the funding is not mentioned in a wholesome way within the legislation directly. There have been several recommendations about how to do that, but the strongest recommendation is really about making sure that the language is in the legislation, not in the preamble but in the legislation.

Cindy Blackstock, the amazing woman who has done so much work on this, not only in her own organization but consulting and working with organizations and communities across Canada, has suggested that we make sure that the language in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision around equality of funding is included in the legislation. It is not about a number figure; it is about the principles that need to be in the legislation to make sure that indigenous children in this country are finally funded at the same level as all other Canadian children.

I would like the member to speak to that important piece, because if that is not done, then we will not see what we all want to see in the House, which is all Canadian children treated exactly the same and given a chance at a hopeful, bright future.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her commitment to this bill and her positive contributions at committee toward making this a better bill.

There are a couple of things. Number one, it is important to understand that we are reforming the way child welfare is delivered across Canada in indigenous communities. That may mean that some nations will want to put a large emphasis on prevention and less on removal. Initially, the thought was that when we are revamping the system in partnership with indigenous communities, it would be premature to identify specific funding in the bill.

It is also important to note that since we were elected in 2015, we have doubled the funding for the indigenous child welfare system to

\$1.2 billion a year. That is significant. That fact alone demonstrates that we are serious.

I was at those committee meetings and heard the recommendations. I cannot foretell what the committee is going to make a recommendation on, but at this point the legislative process is unfolding as it should and that is going to be considered in the final recommendations of not only the committee in the House of Commons but the committee in the Senate.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the need for the legislation. My colleague and I are from the province of Manitoba, where I believe the need is the greatest. In Manitoba, there are well over 10,000 children in foster care. Based on a provincial population of 1.2 million or 1.3 million people, there are over 10,000 children in foster care and the vast majority of those children are of indigenous background. When we look at this legislation, we recognize that at the very least, it is providing hope, in that finally there is a government, whether at the provincial level or the federal level, that is recognizing the need to take action. When we talk about reconciliation, this is a very positive step forward with respect to that issue.

I would ask my colleague and friend to provide his thoughts on that.

●(1030)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is absolutely right. Every day in this country indigenous children are separated from their families and communities. That simply has to stop.

This is the start of a process. Nobody is saying that this is going to be the be-all and end-all to address the issue. We understand that; first nations understand that; Métis and Inuit communities understand that.

Indigenous children across Canada make up more than 50% of all children in care, while at the same time indigenous children make up 8% of the entire population of children across the country. That is not right. We need to change that. We know that the issue really comes down to the social determinants of health and well-being. That is why, over the last four years, our government has invested over \$21 billion of new money, not only in child and family services, but in health, education and infrastructure services, to try to close the gap in indigenous communities on the basic determinants of health. This is the beginning of a process. This is not the end.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary.

This problem affects us all. We all care about the well-being of all Canadians. We all care about the well-being of first nations and their children.

What this bill seeks to do is ensure that, when these children face certain unfortunate difficulties, places will be available to them closer to home where they will receive better treatment.

*Government Orders*

The thing is, we all know there are jurisdictional issues involved. We certainly do not want this laudable goal to be undermined by procedural issues that would interfere with enacting this law, nor would we want administrative formalities to snuff out the objective.

I would therefore like my colleague to tell me what the government has done to ensure that this legislation can take effect without conflicting with provincial, federal or first nations jurisdiction.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

As members know, off-reserve child and family services have traditionally been a provincial responsibility. That is why we have been working with all provinces from coast to coast from the very beginning.

I personally attended a meeting with the former minister and the Manitoba minister responsible for children and families. That is important, and now their own minister is doing the same thing across Canada.

As I said earlier, this is the beginning of a process. An implementation committee will be created, which should include the provinces, territories and of course the Métis and Inuit nations. Technical discussions regarding responsibility will continue there.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Bow River, in Alberta. I look forward to hearing his remarks. His constituents include first nations representatives, as do mine, in fact. I will come back to that near the end of my speech.

I am pleased to speak at this stage of the bill.

• (1035)

[*English*]

This piece of legislation is quite important. As I said a few minutes ago, the meaning or spirit behind it is good. Everyone here supports the fact that we want the best for Canada and Canadians. We want the best for our first nations people, especially for first nations youth. Yes, there are some issues. Unfortunately, too many first nations young people experience family problems.

[*Translation*]

It is sad to see that, unfortunately, nearly 50% of first nations children from many communities do not live with their parents. They have been placed in foster families to protect them or “for their own good”, as my mother used to say to me when I was in trouble. She would tell me that what she was doing was for my own good. I did not necessarily agree, but of course, in the end, my mother always knew best.

We understand that this is a troubling reality and that we need to ensure that first nations youth are treated properly. We also recognize that, in order to help children, whoever they may be or whatever nation or group they may be from, it is better to give them an environment they can relate to. That will make it much easier for them to get back on track and reach their full potential.

The problem is that children who are placed in foster families do not always get to stay in their own community, and that creates serious problems with healing.

[*English*]

The target is important, but we are very concerned with the fact that this issue is very touchy. Everybody would support the spirit of it, but the technical problems that could arise from that could hurt the spirit itself.

[*Translation*]

That is why we are so concerned. As the parliamentary secretary said earlier, we know that child welfare falls under provincial jurisdiction. We also know that first nations fall under federal jurisdiction. Naturally, this particular combination may lead to conflicts. There are provincial laws that may apply, but there also federal laws that pertain to first nations children.

We are not here to create problems. We are here to solve them. The bill is at second reading stage. The next step will, of course, be committee. We, on this side of the House, will do our part to ensure that no technical problems hurt the spirit of this bill, and I am sure all other members will do the same.

Since this pertains to children, jurisdictions and the fact that, unfortunately, jurisdictions sometimes collide, I feel compelled to mention the unspeakable tragedy that has shaken Quebec for the past two days. A seven-year-old girl suffered unimaginable abuse her whole life. This situation has gripped Quebec. Yesterday we were very pleased to see members of the National Assembly and people throughout Quebec come together to try to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. My thoughts are with the loved ones of this poor victim.

We cannot look at this bill without being reminded of the fact that indigenous children are suffering through serious social problems that originate with the Canadian government and the residential school tragedy of nearly 100 years. For nearly 100 years, some 150 indigenous children were ripped from their families and placed without their consent in residential schools that had two primary objectives: to stamp out their indigenous knowledge and traditions and assimilate them into the new world, the world we are currently living in.

The scars from this tragedy are unfortunately still present today. This is why, in an extraordinary moment on June 11, 2008, right here in the House of Commons, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, the former prime minister of Canada, issued an official apology to the first nations on behalf of all Canadians for this tragedy. It was a magical moment, but it was, unfortunately, necessary because we had put far too many indigenous peoples through this.

I want to read two excerpts from the Government of Canada's apology to the first nations. Prime Minister Harper said:

### *Government Orders*

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today. It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

Today we are studying this bill because, as Prime Minister Harper expressed so well at the time, a message that was echoed by the country, parents raising their children today are suffering from the horrors they and their ancestors have been forced to endure over the past 100 years. I will share another quote from Prime Minister Harper:

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions.... We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

This is why we are studying a bill today to help the victims of a government approach that we strongly oppose today. We will keep a positive attitude in our study of this bill, while remaining serious, to ensure that no jurisdictional issues will affect or slow the momentum of this bill.

Earlier, I had the pleasure of saying that it will soon be four years since I was elected to the House of Commons, and it will soon be 11 years that I have served in politics at the provincial and federal level. I was the MLA for the indigenous community in Wendake, which I now represent federally. I am very proud to have represented them in the National Assembly and to be their MP here in the House of Commons. These people have lived in the Nionwentsio for millennia, but over 320 years ago they settled permanently in Loretteville, not far from where I was born and raised.

This community is not very big and has a population of about 2,000. However it is extraordinarily positive and successful on an economic, social, historical and personal level. These people live peacefully with everyone. They are a model and an inspiration for all first nations on how people can get along. It is with great honour and pride that I represent them in the House; I have them in mind as we debate this piece of legislation.

● (1040)

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

When drafting a bill of this scope and significance, we know that consultations are very important. Before the bill was introduced, we held 65 meetings with indigenous groups, not just with the chiefs but with 2,000 community members as well. We have the backing of the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Could the member comment on the importance of holding consultations before introducing such an important bill?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am blown away by how well my colleague speaks both official languages. I am truly impressed.

The worst thing we could do would be to rush this kind of legislation. We are all well-intentioned, but we need to do things properly.

I am pleased to know that thousands of people were consulted about this and that various groups have had their say and support this bill. Being well-intentioned is all well and good, but, as we all know, especially those of us in the House of Commons, when we are debating and passing laws, unfortunately the devil is in the details. That is why we need to be thorough and do things by the book, and that work needs to be done by a parliamentary committee. I am sure everyone agrees with that approach.

● (1045)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to realize that there are some flaws in the bill, as I have heard from other members this morning. The government claims to have had many consultations, but it seems like there was not enough consultation, and that is why we have these flaws.

Could my hon. colleague highlight some of the flaws that will be critical toward having a good bill?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, the main issue in that case is the fact that we do not and should not push too hard and too fast on this. It is important legislation, so we cannot let things go on and then ask what will happen. As I said earlier in French, the devil is in the details.

[*Translation*]

If the French version is an anglicism, I apologize for using that anglicism earlier.

[*English*]

The legislation is so important for first nations people. The first thing that all of us in the House of Commons should have in mind is to ensure we do it correctly.

Sometimes we have to consult and consult again to ensure, based on the argument tabled by the lawyers, we are on good ground, especially for first nations.

There are some technical fights between the federal jurisdiction and the provincial jurisdiction. There is a lot of difficulty in being able to address each and every issue with respect to the first nations file. We need to take our time to ensure to do it correctly.

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is stunning to hear the difference in the Conservative Party of this Parliament versus the Conservative Party of the past. The Conservative government fought first nations child and family services and fought indigenous kids in court.

Why did the Conservative government never act to reform the first nations child and family services program, instead fight it in court for years?



*Government Orders*

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour for me to remind each and every Canadian that the first time first nation leaders addressed members of the House of Commons was under former prime minister Stephen Harper. On June 11, 2008, prime minister Stephen Harper tabled a formal apology on behalf of all Canadians and let first nations leaders address the House of Commons.

I am very proud of what we have done.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Bill C-92, an act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

As part of that, I need to refer to an interesting production that I was able to attend a few weeks ago, the New Blood dance show. New Blood is a story of reconciliation, and it was a phenomenal presentation. This widely acclaimed production blends Blackfoot music and contemporary music by Peter Gabriel to create an amazing piece of theatre celebrating Blackfoot history and traditions.

For all those who might be interested in seeing it, it is a high school group that is connected closely with Siksika. There are a lot of students in it. It was first performed in 2014, and it is performed annually, with new students as participants. It has been viewed in many places in southern Alberta and in some in British Columbia. It is based on a chief's life, going through reconciliation and becoming a chief of his people, and the ultimate goal of the teacher who developed this production was to hopefully bring it to Ottawa so that more people could see it.

I think it is fantastic, and hopefully Heritage Canada understands how important this type of production is, as it is done by indigenous youth in our country.

The legislation that we have in front of us comes on the heels of Bill C-91, which was sent back to the House from the heritage committee.

I was fundamentally supportive of Bill C-91's objectives. Its objectives were important to constituents in my riding.

Siksika Nation, which is located in Bow River, has already taken steps to offer an immersion program in the Blackfoot language for the first time this September. The program will be offered to kindergarten and grade 1 students to start. This is an incredible step in ensuring their language and culture are strengthened through future generations. The students need to be there. I hope this program is a great success.

However, even though I fundamentally supported Bill C-91, the way the government rushed through the legislation was unacceptable. As with Bill C-92, the government introduced Bill C-91 late in its mandate. This has left the government scrambling to force the legislation's passage. In fact, as we were in committee, about 15 minutes before we were scheduled to meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-91, we received over 20 new Liberal amendments to that piece of legislation.

Previously, when we were discussing the bill and hearing witnesses, I had pointed out some of the constitutional challenges that I felt Bill C-91 would have. Then we had constitutional lawyers appear before the committee as witnesses, and they pointed out the

same problems. They believed that this legislation would not stand in court the way it was written.

Some amendments were made and maybe that will fix the legislation, but that is the problem with both Bill C-91 and Bill C-92. They were written too hurriedly and too late. Constitutional lawyers did not have an opportunity to deal with the amendments to make this legislation better or more correct so that it does not end up in litigation for years in court.

This pattern should not be repeated with Bill C-92, but I understand that the committee is conducting a pre-study and going through the same process. It was a piece of legislation that was rushed too quickly.

I understand that Bill C-92 seeks to affirm the rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services by establishing national principles, such as best interests of the child, cultural continuity, and substantive equality to guide the interpretation and administration of the bill.

These principles are intended to guide indigenous communities on the delivery of child and family services. If the legislation meets its objectives, it would keep extended families together and in their communities, which is a critical part of the goals, but I do not know if the legislation is going to achieve that. I do not think anyone would be opposed to that goal.

Consistent with the 2008 residential school apology delivered by Prime Minister Harper, Conservatives believe steps must be taken to reduce the number of indigenous children in care. Amends need to be made for residential schools and the sixties scoop.

● (1050)

My mother, for example, was one of the first teachers after the transition out of residential schools to teach in what it was called a day head start program for four- and five-year-olds for indigenous children on the Blood reserve. It was the first transition for students of that age to be at home and not in a residential school.

Ultimately, this legislation can reduce the number of indigenous children in care. It is well designed, but what did we see on Bill C-91? On Bill C-91 we heard from many witnesses that they had not been consulted or that their advice was unheeded. First of all, we heard on Bill C-91 that there had been extensive consultation. Then witnesses talked about six months. Then it got down to the fact that it was actually only for three months that there was an attempt at consultations, and then we heard that it was only weeks, so it is a challenge for us to know what really happened when we hear that extensive consultations have been done.

Given that Bill C-92 aims to give indigenous communities more jurisdiction over their foster care program, I would hope that the government will actually listen to the witnesses that are coming to committee. Otherwise, this is just one more example of colonialism by the government, which the government claims it is trying to avoid.

*Statements by Members*

On Bill C-91 there were a lot of witnesses with a variety of opinions that did not match the legislation. They needed more consultation. As well, when I was at committee, we once again had a tremendous variety of witnesses with different opinions on National Indigenous Peoples Day, and again it was the government making the decision with its legislation.

I understand that the first nations, Inuit and Métis continue to be overrepresented in Canada's foster care system. According to the 2016 census data from Stats Canada, there are almost 15,000 foster children in private homes under the age of 15 who are indigenous, which is 52% of foster children in Canada. Obviously, the current system is not working well for indigenous youth.

I respect the fact that the government is taking measures it believes will address the situation, even though the government waited until the very last minute to introduce this legislation. Bill C-92 emphasizes a need to focus on prevention, rather than on apprehension. When apprehension has been deemed in a child's best interest, the legislation provides an order of preference for the placement of an indigenous child with a family member or a member of their community and stresses that siblings should be kept together when it is in their best interests. That seems like a good approach, but will it work?

While I have only recently reviewed the legislation, I look forward to learning more about the government's intentions to execute this plan. That is where we will find out if it works. Just as there were flaws in Bill C-91, I trust that the committee is receiving valuable testimony from witnesses on how to fix the potential flaws in the bill and how to make it better.

I do have a particular concern about coordination of this legislation with the provinces and territories. I understand that on the day the bill was tabled, Saskatchewan's Minister of Social Services, Paul Merriman, told APTN that the federal government chose not to collaborate with the provinces and territories to develop this legislation. In the development of Bill C-91, what we heard from people from the grassroots in the education systems in indigenous communities was that there was no consultation with them, and again the provinces are saying that there was no consultation with them. This is a problem.

Jurisdiction over this file may get complicated. I hope this issue will be addressed at committee. Bill C-92 will be a better piece of legislation if the committee actually addresses some of the problems, just like in Bill C-91. The last thing we want to do is spend this time on legislation and then have it end up in the courts under appeal.

●(1055)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** We seem to have a little bit of time. We have time for one question and then we will come back for more questions after.

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. I know that jurisdiction has been front and centre in some of the discussion on the other side.

I think it is important to involve provinces and territories, but does the hon. member agree that the ultimate jurisdictional issue is that the jurisdiction belongs inherently to indigenous nations?

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Mr. Speaker, during the development Bill C-91, the constitutional lawyers we heard from said that the legislation was not written for that to occur, as there were problems with jurisdiction. That was one of the problems of Bill C-91. In Bill C-92, I hope the legislation is written to actually do that, because in the case of Bill C-91, constitutional lawyers said that because of the way it was written, there was a problem as to who holds authority.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### SINHALESE HERITAGE DAY

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to host the first very successful Sinhalese Heritage Day on Parliament Hill on April 27 with about 500 Sinhalese Canadians.

I would like to thank Edward Anura Ferdinand and his team at the Sri Lanka Canada Association of Ottawa for their dedication in organizing this.

I would also like to recognize the SLCAO Seniors Group, the Hilda Jayewardenaramaya temple of Ottawa, the Sri Lanka United National Association of Canada in Toronto, the Sinhalese Association of Canada, the Canada Sri Lanka Association of Toronto, the Sri Lanka Canada Association of the Atlantic Region, the Sri Lankan Association of Manitoba, the Sri Lanka Canada Association of Montreal and the Toronto Sri Lankan Student Alumni Alliance.

The event showed that while integrating into Canadian society, we do keep in touch with our heritage.

\* \* \*

●(1100)

### ROBERT WAGNER DOWLING

**Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to say farewell to Robert Wagner Dowling, who passed away at age 95, leaving behind his wife Olga and his two children, Lori and Robert.

Bob grew up on a farm in Ohaton, Alberta. He was an avid baseball player, an award-winning singer, an explorer, a Royal Canadian Air Force pilot during World War II, a pharmacist, a politician, and most of all, a husband and father.

His love for the mountains brought him to Jasper, where he served the community as a pharmacist and was an active volunteer in so many organizations. He was a member of the Legislation Assembly of Alberta, a cabinet minister, president of the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, a board member of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and a lifelong Legion supporter. He was just a great human being who gave his all to the community of Jasper, the province of Alberta and this great country.

Bob will be profoundly missed by his family and many friends and associates from coast to coast to coast.

Rest well, my friend.

\* \* \*

#### HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

**Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, homelessness in our veteran community is unacceptable in Canada. One homeless veteran is one too many.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and the well-being of the brave women and men who put their lives on the line for our nation is a top priority for me and our government. This is why I introduced a motion last year at the committee to study homelessness in our veteran community.

After working collaboratively with colleagues from all sides on this study, I am proud to share that this week our committee tabled our report, entitled “Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans”. In our report, we submitted 10 concrete recommendations to address homelessness in our veteran community. Currently, there are 3,000 to 5,000 veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Canada. This is a problem that can be solved, and the time to act is now.

I want to thank all the witnesses who appeared before our committee and shared their personal and powerful stories. They were prepared to lay down their lives for our country, and we are prepared to fulfill our sacred obligation to them.

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#### FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, happy World Press Freedom Day, a day we recommit ourselves to truly free and independent media.

While some of us in politics can relate to the sentiment from Napoleon that said “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets”, we all must remain dedicated to that free expression.

However, around the world, the trend is troubling. The recent report from Reporters Without Borders shows that only a quarter of the world enjoys a truly free press. Far too many journalists continue to face persecution and even death when trying to expose the truth in repressive regimes.

Here in Canada, critical stories like the opioid crisis, the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the SNC-Lavalin debacle were all exposed by a professional and determined press corps.

#### Statements by Members

As Albert Camus once said, “A free press can, of course, be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom the press will never be anything but bad.”

We thank our colleagues in the media for their diligence, dedication and passion.

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[Translation]

#### FLOODING IN RIVIÈRE-DES-MILLES-ÎLES

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for over two weeks now, people living along the shores of the Mille Îles river have experienced massive and even record-breaking floods.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work being done by the mayors and municipal councillors in my region, who have been working tirelessly to help and support their fellow citizens. I also want to thank the municipal employees, first responders, firefighters, police officers, Canadian Armed Forces personnel, MNAs and, above all, the many volunteers who have spared no effort to assist the flood victims.

I also want to acknowledge the city of Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac, located right next to my riding, for immediately offering their assistance.

On behalf of all flood victims and everyone directly or indirectly affected by the flooding, I want to sincerely thank everyone who donated their time and energy. Since the work has only just begun, however, it is critical that we keep helping one another.

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[English]

#### AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a shout-out to Canadian farmers, ranchers and the whole agricultural industry.

In April, I had the opportunity to attend the Canadian Produce Marketing Association trade show in Montreal.

I have been around agriculture for a long time, but it continues to amaze me. Canadian agriculture is high-tech, environmentally beneficial and it is a front runner in the world for safe, nutritious quality.

Also, from April 30 to May 5, 4-H Canada youth are in Ottawa for their annual citizenship congress. As a 4H alumni, we all want to welcome them. The knowledge and experience they gain will last a lifetime.

As students also prepare for college and university, they should remember that the agricultural industry is an exciting and rewarding career with a broad reach, from robotics to biochemistry to business management. Also, for each graduate, there are four jobs available.

I thank all Canadian agricultural producers for what they do for our families.

*Statements by Members*

●(1105)

**SEAFOOD INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is setting day back home on the Northumberland Strait. After being delayed by weather throughout this week, the boats are finally going to hit the water to haul in our precious and world-class Nova Scotia lobster.

Last week, fishing boats along the beautiful eastern shore headed out to set their traps. Today, fishermen on the blue waters of the Northumberland Strait are doing the same.

The seafood caught off our shores gets exported to markets in Europe, Asia, the United States and beyond. Last year alone, Nova Scotia exports in the industry were valued at more than \$2 billion dollars. Simply put, our seafood is the best in the world and people know about it.

To support the sector, we have made investments, like the \$325-million Atlantic fisheries fund. We have repaired or replaced nine local wharves. We are adding new cold storage facilities at the Halifax airport and Ballantyne's Cove. We are legislating protection of the owner-operator model for the inshore fishery. We are ensuring the sector has the tools and support it needs to succeed for generations and to help keep rural communities alive.

For everybody back home who are setting traps today or hauling in a catch, I wish them a safe and bountiful season. I encourage all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come visit me at home and enjoy a taste of world-famous Nova Scotia lobster.

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**EYE LEVEL ORATORICAL SPEECH CONTEST**

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in the House to talk about an incredible young girl from my riding of Sudbury.

Daniela Grotoli, a grade 5 student at R. L. Beattie Public School, took part in the Eye Level Oratorical speech contest and won one of four gold medals in North America.

This year's subject was about one thing she could change in the world. Originally, her speech was to be about gender parity, but while she was at the grocery store, she was inspired by another subject. She decided to talk about eliminating hunger. She said, "It is sad to think of even one child going to bed hungry. To know millions will be heartbreaking. We need to do better. Everybody deserves to eat." I could not agree with her more.

Daniela's public-speaking journey is far from done as she has been invited to take part in the Eye Level Model UN Camp in South Korea this August.

Not only does Daniela make Sudbury proud, but she makes Canada proud. I agree with her that we need to do better to eliminate hunger.

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**CANADA SUMMER JOBS INITIATIVE**

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister participated in the National Prayer Breakfast

and chose to read from Matthew 25. It speaks of caring for those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, those ill and in prison. Whatever one did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Christ's, one did for him. This scripture is the essence of the Christian community in Canada.

Matthew 5:37 states, "Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will' or 'No, I won't'", be honest, simply speak the truth. The Prime Minister said that the 2019 Canada summer jobs application would be different and that accidental overreach would be fixed. When I signed off on the 2019 funds awarded in my riding, Christian summer camps were included. Both they and I were deceived. They were subsequently asked for additional information and lost their funding.

The Prime Minister has misled Canadians, giving the impression of inclusiveness within diversity when he is clearly punishing and excluding millions of Canadians who meet the needs of the very people he read about in Matthew 25. Sadly, the Prime Minister is not as advertised.

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[*Translation*]**FLOODING IN PONTIAC**

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House of Commons to acknowledge and commend the resilience and solidarity of the people affected by the flooding throughout the Outaouais.

Although thousands of sandbags were filled, hundreds of people have lost their homes. In the riding of Pontiac, more than seven municipalities have declared a state of emergency and hundreds of families have had to evacuate their homes. It is devastating.

However, these numbers would be even worse without the help of our local heroes. I am talking about volunteers of all ages, our local elected officials, our firefighters, our police officers, our first responders, our neighbours, and especially our Canadian Armed Forces, who brought so much relief and assistance in our region.

●(1110)

[*English*]

From filling sandbags to protecting homes to feeding hungry volunteers, these local heroes have been relentless as they helped those in need. I have witnessed so many stressful situations and heard so many stories of urgent evacuations. The community support has been nothing short of spectacular.

As water levels have risen, so have the Pontiac's community efforts grown.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC TRANSIT IN MONT TREMBLANT**

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Mont-Tremblant, Luc Brisebois, just announced that, as of June 21, the local bus service will be free for everyone all the time. This measure benefits everyone: workers, employers, students, families, seniors, and even tourists.

This will help cut greenhouse gas emissions. It is a measure that shows that economic development and environmental protection can and must go hand in hand. Everything we do, individually as well as collectively, has a significant impact on the fight against climate change. Public transit is one of the best ways to help the environment.

The town of Mont-Tremblant is at the leading edge of rural public transit. By offering it for free, they are sending an even stronger message about what we can do for the future when we are bold enough to fight for it.

To the leaders of Mont-Tremblant and all the current and future bus riders, I say bravo and thank you.

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**PROMISES MADE TO QUEBEC**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Prime Minister arrived with a whole lot of promises. He led Quebecers to believe that he would save them from Stephen Harper and that Quebec would prosper under his leadership. Four years later, many Quebecers have realized that, like his father, the Prime Minister does not like Quebec.

Let us take a look at the facts. Instead of helping the Davie workers, the Liberals have been undermining them by trying to cancel the *Asterix* contract. The government promised to find a solution for the Quebec Bridge by June 2016, but here we are in 2019 and nothing has happened. The Prime Minister legalized marijuana, but Quebec and the other provinces are paying the price: they are still waiting to be paid their share. Quebec signed an agreement with the federal government to maintain Quebec's demographic weight and to guarantee its distinct character. However, now that illegal migrants are entering Quebec at will, the agreement is not worth the paper it is written on. Even a simple request like having a single tax return is rejected outright without a reason or an explanation.

Quebeckers deserve better.

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[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a community where so many of my constituents, in addition to their advocacy on environmental issues, make environmentally conscious choices in their day-to-day lives, such as reducing their usage of plastic or driving zero-emission vehicles. We know more Canadians are choosing to drive zero-emission vehicles as an increasing number of models become available and prices decline.

Regrettably, last year the Conservatives in Ontario cancelled the electric and hydrogen vehicle incentive program, and a number of my constituents reached out to me to share their disappointment and frustration.

Fortunately, our government is taking action. It has proposed strategic investments to help more Canadians choose zero-emission vehicles, including \$300 million over three years to introduce a new federal purchase incentive, which came into effect May 1, of up to \$5,000 for electric battery or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles with a retail price of less than \$45,000.

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**SENIORS**

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about challenges facing many of my constituents who are older adults. They are living on pensions that have not kept up with the rising costs of living and are inadequate in meeting their needs. Some are struggling to stay in their family homes, while others face major challenges finding affordable housing.

Phone and internet costs in Canada are among the highest in the world. Seniors struggle to afford these services on a fixed income, yet they are necessary for safety reasons, maintaining family and social connections or accessing government services.

I recently heard from a constituent that the medical benefits she received at work were unfairly discontinued when she turned 65. The high cost of prescription drugs in Canada is another major burden for seniors.

The NDP has a plan to build more affordable housing, lower telecommunication fees and implement universal, comprehensive public pharmacare. In addition, we are calling for a national seniors strategy so all Canadians can retire and age with dignity. Older adults deserve no less.

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**GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 2015, many Canadians voted for the Prime Minister and his promised sunny ways. He advertised himself to Canadians as a new kind of politician. He promised to be ethical and transparent, but he and the Liberals have faced five ethics investigations and the Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking the law. He even used his majority to shut down two investigations into his scandals.

The Prime Minister promised to help ordinary Canadians get ahead and to lower taxes. However, he is handing out millions of dollars to his billionaire friends and forcing everyday Canadians to pay for it through higher prices on necessities with his carbon tax-grab.

*Oral Questions*

He promised to balance the budget by 2019, or was it going to balance itself? Either way, Canadians are still stuck with a massive deficit. The deficits caused by the Prime Minister's reckless spending are condemning future generations of Canadians to higher taxes to pay for his broken promises.

The Prime Minister's promises of sunny ways are long gone. As it turns out, the Prime Minister is not as advertised.

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• (1115)

**NEW BRUNSWICK FLOODS**

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, communities across New Brunswick are feeling the impact of springtime floods. This year, flooding along the Saint John River has once again reached historic levels. Last week, in Fredericton alone, the water level caused the closure of much of the downtown.

[*Translation*]

Offices, schools and streets have all been closed. Nearly 500 people were forced to leave their homes. We thank the first responders, the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and particularly the volunteers, who are working hard to keep us safe and secure.

[*English*]

Our government stands shoulder to shoulder with the communities affected. We will cover the cost of deploying Canadian troops, because we know their work at home is as valuable and vital as it is abroad.

We are working together to solve the immediate problems caused by this flood, but we are also looking at the long term. These record floods and their frequency are not a coincidence. They are the result of climate change. We are working to mitigate their damage and ensure future generations do not need to bear their terrible burden.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*English*]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, canola and now pork producers are being punished by the Chinese government because of Liberal incompetence, but rather than acknowledging that China is blocking our agriculture products for political reasons, the minister is blaming the pork industry, saying that after exporting pork to China for decades, our farmers have suddenly become incompetent and are filling out paperwork incorrectly, a claim based on nothing more than propaganda from the Chinese government.

When will the Liberals stop repeating Beijing's spin and start fighting for the Canadian pork industry?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

Canadian farmers produce world-class pork. The Canadian pork that is exported to China is subject to routine inspections.

On May 1, the Canadian embassy was informed that China had temporarily suspended imports from two Canadian pork plants because of package mislabelling. The current suspension affects only two pork plants. Nothing has changed for all the other approved facilities that are eligible to export pork to China.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is looking into the matter and working with Chinese customs authorities to have the suspension lifted.

[*English*]

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** That is incredibly naive, Mr. Speaker. It is time we started pushing back against these bullies and what they are doing to our producers. Conservatives have suggested a number of ways to do that, including launching a complaint at the WTO, but the Liberal agriculture minister says that they will not launch a challenge because they do not feel it is just the right moment.

Our producers are suffering. Millions of dollars and the livelihoods of thousands are at stake. If now is not the right time to launch a challenge at the WTO, when is the right time?

**Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of International Trade Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we have three pillars of strategy. One is to engage the Chinese at the scientific level. The other is to provide a support program for producers, and there is alignment across the country, including provincial governments, the industry and the canola association itself, and another is to expand our export markets. We intend to do that through trade missions to Japan, to Korea, to Europe and to South America. We understand that this is a very difficult moment for our producers. We stand with them.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** They are failing miserably, Mr. Speaker.

Now we have just learned from The Globe and Mail that the Liberals are funding a research position where applicants who are critical of Huawei are being screened out. They are told that they need not apply. Where have we heard this before, that if one disagrees with dear Liberal leader one had best keep quiet?

Top security experts and governments around the world are putting up warnings and cutting ties with Huawei, but the Liberals are not only ignoring these concerns, they are partnering with Beijing and playing right into China's hands. Why?

*Oral Questions*

• (1120)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, we have been conducting an extensive examination of the whole range of issues around 5G technology. We want to ensure that Canadians get the full benefits of that technology. At the same time, we want to make sure that it is absolutely safe and secure. We will ensure that safety and security in our telecommunications system is never compromised.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at a time when the government has lost control of our borders and is allowing Islamic State traitors to freely walk our streets, we learned today that the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada is screening out any applicants for the adviser position who have strong political opinions against Huawei.

The minister's behaviour is worrisome, because he does not seem to care about Canadian security.

Why do the Liberals not want to let those who are concerned about China and Huawei have their say?

[English]

**Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport and to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility (Accessibility), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, universities across Canada work with various partners on joint research projects across all disciplines. The freedom to pursue ideas across borders and across disciplines is what allows real scientific insight and innovation to take place. Our national security agencies work diligently and efficiently to monitor for security threats and have measures in place to protect Canada's systems. We follow the advice of our public security officials and would only work with partners that had their approval.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the government members and the parliamentary secretary understand the question. The question has to do with the fact that the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada is screening those who have applied to sit on the board of directors, and any candidates who have serious concerns about Huawei are not welcome and are being screened out.

Why is the government preventing those who are critical of Huawei and China from having their say?

[English]

**Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport and to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility (Accessibility), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, science and research are inherently open in nature. Researchers and universities work with industry partners across all sectors of the economy to develop new knowledge and applications that benefit Canadians. When universities partner with an organization, NSERC organizes a peer-review process that avoids individuals who have conflicts or relationships with the applicants or partner organizations,

ensuring that proposals are reviewed solely on the basis of their scientific merit.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us that he would be different, that he would change the way things are done in Ottawa. He said there would be no more partisan appointments. He said he would clean up the Senate. Well, the Liberals are not only running judges through their partisan database to check whether they have donated to the Liberal Party, but they are giving senators the same treatment. So much for transparency. The Liberals have repeatedly made it clear that their priority is not Canadians, it is the Liberal brand.

Are they not the least bit ashamed to be screening all appointments through a partisan filter?

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the process for appointing candidates to the Senate or to Canada's judiciary.

With regard to judicial appointments, just look at our track record. Our record shows that we have used every available means to verify the candidates' merit and quality. That is the first thing. The second thing is that we have ended up with the largest number of people from diverse communities, such as women, visible minorities, indigenous peoples and the LGBTQ community. That is what Canadians expect of us, of their government. That is what needs to be done to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised Canadians that the nomination process would be open and transparent. Appointments should be based on merit and skill. The Liberals, however, are using a partisan tool to determine whether potential candidates have previously donated to the Liberal Party or whether they voted in the last leadership race. A person's affiliation with the Liberal Party should never sway a judicial or senatorial appointment.

The Prime Minister promised to do politics differently. What happened to that promise?

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for her question.

I want to point out the facts and the exact figures. These are the facts: first of all, we carried out consultations and vetted the candidates carefully; second, we appointed judicial candidates from any Canadian political party. The third thing I want to emphasize is this.

*Oral Questions*

●(1125)

[English]

Seventy-five per cent of the people named as judges in this country have no affiliation to, or donation history with, the Liberal Party of Canada.

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**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his office are spending their time on the Prime Minister's most important relationship, but sadly, it is not with indigenous people. He continues to prioritize helping Liberals get ahead, while indigenous people struggle with the government's broken promises. Communities in my riding are struggling with access to safe and affordable housing, to well-paying local jobs and to quality medical care near home. When will the Prime Minister be true to his word and act to help first nation communities?

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Since being elected in 2015, we have invested \$21 billion of new money in infrastructure, education and employment. We have removed 83 long-term drinking water advisories. We announced \$1.2 billion for Jordan's principle in Winnipeg last week. I am very proud of the work we have done on indigenous issues, with the leadership of our Prime Minister.

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**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal talking points just do not cut it.

The Liberals promised transparency, and instead, what the Liberals have given to Canadians is probably the most cynical government in Canadian history. The current Liberal government is shamelessly, outrageously partisan and runs judges appointments and Senate appointments through a partisan Liberal lens. That is what the Liberals care about. What other appointments have the Prime Minister and the government run through the partisan Liberal-donor database to make sure the person is good for the Liberal Party? Are the Liberals not just a little bit ashamed?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government ran on a platform to make the Senate more independent and more transparent to ensure that Liberal senators would be more able to work independently, unlike the previous government, which appointed partisan people who were completely ingrained in its party.

We have made a difference in the Senate, and the quality of the senators in the other place demonstrates just that.

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I want to remind hon. members of the rules. You ask a question respectfully, and you listen to the answer respectfully. You do not shout while the person is trying to answer, or trying to ask a question, for that matter.

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is restricting snow crab harvesters in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, claiming it is protecting the North Atlantic right whale, but it is actually causing more harm. Heavy ice delays, coupled with the government's decision to reduce the number of traps available, may cause fishermen to fish right through the migration season of the whale.

Will the Minister of Fisheries commit to raising the trap limit so that fishermen in New Brunswick and P.E.I. can get their traps out of the water before the whales arrive?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we worked very closely with fish harvesters in Atlantic Canada as we developed the measures for the fishing season but also with respect to protecting the North Atlantic right whales. We worked very hard to ensure that we incorporated the feedback from fish harvesters and met extensively with them. Those measures, I think, were fairly well received by fish harvesters.

We are working actively through the Canadian Coast Guard to ensure that we are opening up all the harbours as quickly as we possibly can so that the harvesters can get out to fish crab.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals had better work quickly, before the Chinese ban seafood exports.

China has been throwing our citizens in prison and committing others to death, and the response from the Prime Minister has been nothing. Yesterday the government even rejected calls from many voices, including ours, for a WTO trade challenge.

We have no ambassador, and the crisis gets worse every week. Canadians are paying the price for the Prime Minister's weak leadership. When will the Liberals stop the excuses, appoint an ambassador to China and turn around this crisis?

**Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in close contact with the families of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. These cases are about arbitrary decisions by the Chinese government. We are working very hard in a concerted, organized way to address these deeply concerning arbitrary detentions.



The member opposite should understand that by leveraging our international allies, we can make China realize the consequences of its actions. That is why we are constantly engaging with our allies and will continue to work with them, and we thank Australia, the E. U., France, Germany, the U.K., the Netherlands, Lithuania—

• (1130)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Bow River.

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#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's plan to phase out the Canadian resource sector has been a disaster in my riding of Bow River. Now his mismanagement of our international relationships is making matters even worse.

Increasing the loan limit for canola farmers is a slow, late start. It does not stop past harvest seed from turning rancid in the bins.

Why does the Liberal government not care enough about canola farmers to appoint an ambassador to China, launch a WTO complaint and stop funding the construction of pipelines? Where? In China.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government cares deeply about the success of canola farmers and farming families. Whereas the opposition has only been interested in canola for a few days, our government has been working on resolving this issue for over two months. We know that Canada produces the best canola in the world, and we have full confidence in our reliable, effective inspection system.

[English]

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, China continues to block canola imports due to baseless claims. For two months, our canola producers have been waiting for the Prime Minister to show some leadership and stand up for their interests. Instead, the Prime Minister has let China walk all over him. Our canola producers are being penalized for the Prime Minister's failed leadership, and now pork farmers are the latest victims of his diplomatic disaster.

When will the Prime Minister stand up to China and defend Canadian producers?

**Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of International Trade Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this federation, when an industry, a sector or a region is suffering pain, the country reacts, as the country reacted this week. It was also the best of Canadian federalism, because not only was it the Government of Canada, it was the Premier of Saskatchewan, it was ministers of trade across the west, it was the Canola Council itself and it was producers working as one. The only ones who are offside are the Conservatives in the House.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 2015, Canada could boast of a trade record with the United States, South Korea and the European Union, but after four years of the Prime Minister's weak leadership, we cannot name a single country with which Canada's relations are better off.

#### Oral Questions

Now we learn that Canada's world-class pork is being targeted by China. Canola was just the beginning. When will the Prime Minister stand up for Canada by challenging China at the WTO and appoint an ambassador to resolve this crisis?

**Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of International Trade Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government came to power, we have signed trade agreements with the European Union, NAFTA 2.0 and the CPTPP, meaning that 1.5 billion customers around the world are in our free trade zone. We are the only G7 country that has a free trade agreement with the other six.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I am having a hard time hearing the answer. Just keep it down for a bit.

**Hon. Jim Carr:** Mr. Speaker, maybe I should speak in softer tones so the members will listen.

We are the only G7 country with a free trade agreement with the other six. We are in an enviable position worldwide. Already the results are in that because of these negotiations, our exports are increasing—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The member for Edmonton Manning.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's relations with China are at a historic low. It is clear that the Prime Minister is in over his head.

Earlier this week, the Liberals took our Conservative leader's advice and finally announced support for Canadian canola farmers, who have been paying the price for the Prime Minister's weak leadership. So far, his failed leadership has only made things worse.

When will the Prime Minister start taking this issue seriously and appoint a new ambassador to China?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the total amount they will be able to borrow will increase from \$400,000 to \$1 million, and the interest-free portion will increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000.

This request came from our partners, the Premier of Saskatchewan and industry representatives, and we are going to keep working with them to get this problem settled as soon as possible for canola farmers. We are committed to fixing this situation.

*Oral Questions*

•(1135)  
[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today students in my riding will be protesting with youth across the country, calling for urgent action to avert a climate catastrophe.

The Liberal climate change plan exempts the biggest polluters and fails to meet even Stephen Harper's weak targets. We need a bold plan that reduces emissions while creating sustainable jobs for workers. We can do this by committing to renewable energy, retrofitting homes, expanding public transit and investing in clean manufacturing.

When will the government stop praising its failed climate plan and commit to a version of a green new deal to ensure a liveable future for all?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the NDP to the conversation that began under our government several years ago.

I want to thank all the young people who are protesting today across Canadian communities, trying to raise awareness about this existential threat to our existence in Canada and across the world. The fact is that we have introduced measures, after negotiating with provinces and territories, indigenous communities, industry and environmental stakeholders, that are going to have a meaningful impact on reducing our emissions.

Our plan includes putting a price on pollution that is going to make life more affordable and bring emissions down. We are making the largest investment in public transit. Our plan has over 50 measures. This is a game-changing plan. It is going to make a difference for our economy and for our country.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the climate emergency is upon us. Now more than ever, we need this government to show leadership. We are still waiting to see some.

The U.K. Parliament just declared a climate emergency. Meanwhile, the Government of Canada is buying an old pipeline and siding with big corporations like Loblaw's.

Canadians are taking to the streets to demand that the government live up to its responsibilities.

When is the Liberal government going to listen to them and take action for the environment?

[English]

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a made-in-Canada plan, and I would invite the hon. member opposite to take a look at the pan-Canadian framework on climate change or the "Clean Canada" report. I have a copy in my desk that I would be pleased to table in this House after question period, should it be allowed.

Our plan includes putting a price on pollution and phasing out coal by 2030. By that year, 90% of electricity in Canada will be

generated from clean resources. We are investing in green infrastructure, green technology. The fact is that we are moving toward a low-carbon economy, because we know it is the right thing for our kids and our grandkids, who deserve to benefit from the same natural environment that too many of us took for granted when we were kids.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to have confidence in the integrity of their government, and right now they do not. My colleague from Thornhill has written to the RCMP to ask it to investigate whether the Prime Minister broke the law when he accepted the gift of a vacation to a tropical island from someone who was lobbying the government.

Canadians deserve answers, and they deserve them now. Will the Prime Minister co-operate with any such investigation?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to officers of Parliament and the independence of the police force, we on this side will always have the utmost respect for them and we will always co-operate with them. As I said yesterday, it is only the Conservatives who would have to ask that question, because for 10 years under Stephen Harper, they spent their time undermining officers of Parliament. Unfortunately, under their new leader they continue to do the same.

When it comes to this matter, there was an investigation and a report was issued. The Prime Minister accepted responsibility and accepted the findings. We have confidence in our institutions, and I encourage the Conservatives to have a little confidence in them as well.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in our glorious 152 years of existence, never in the history of Canada has a sitting Prime Minister been found guilty of ethics violations. This Prime Minister has been found guilty of violating the ethics code five times, four of which involved his relationship with the Aga Khan.

The Aga Khan Foundation is lobbying the government. That is why we are calling for an RCMP investigation.

Could the government ensure that the Prime Minister fully co-operates with this investigation?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, when it comes to officers of Parliament and the independence of the police force, we on this side will always have the utmost respect for them and we always will co-operate with them. We are certain that they can do their work independently from the government.

*Oral Questions*

As we saw yesterday, the hon. member for Carleton and other Conservative members called into question the independence of our officers. We respect their work. We know that the commissioner did his job and submitted his report. We accepted the findings of these—

• (1140)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's efforts in speaking French.

Many will recall the sad day in 2013 when the current Prime Minister expressed confidence in and admiration for China's dictatorship. Now China's dictatorship is showing him how it really feels about its relationship with Canada.

Under this Prime Minister's watch, we have lost an ambassador, two Canadian pork producers can no longer sell to China, two Canadians have been arrested and an embargo has been placed on our canola.

What is the government doing in the meantime? It is continuing with a \$256-million investment over five years in the infrastructure bank—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Conservatives want to continue to turn their back on the world, but under the Prime Minister and our government, we are working with our allies to help build infrastructure in some of the most underdeveloped countries.

We take no lessons from the Conservatives. We will work with our allies. We understand that a strong global economy is good for Canada and good for Canadians.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is good for Canadians is investing in Canadian infrastructure. In Perth—Wellington, there are millions of dollars' worth of critical infrastructure projects left unfunded due to delays by the Liberals, yet while the Liberal government is giving \$250 million to fund infrastructure in China through the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, critical local infrastructure is left to crumble.

Why are the Liberals paying to build roads, bridges and pipelines in China while allowing key local infrastructure here in Canada to crumble?

**Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, how rich from the Conservatives, the Conservatives who never took infrastructure seriously and whose grand accomplishment was a fake lake and a gazebo. Under our government, we have approved four times as many projects. The Conservatives should be talking to

Premier Ford, who right now is blocking infrastructure. Let us get it done.

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I could shout "Order", but I am not sure it does any good. I want to wait for everyone to calm down. I want to remind hon. members that when someone asks a question, we listen respectfully, and when someone answers the question, we want to hear the answer, so we listen respectfully. Now we will try it out again.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, coastal communities in B.C. have suffered through Liberal and Conservative mismanagement of Pacific wild salmon. With cuts to DFO and habitat protection being gutted, our salmon are in danger.

Leaders like Bob Chamberlin who have fought hard for wild salmon want to hear a bold recovery plan. The Liberal government spent billions of dollars on a leaky pipeline that will increase tanker traffic in our sensitive marine environment, putting salmon and whales at risk.

When will the government get its priorities right?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that the gutting of the Fisheries Act by the previous Conservative government was a terrible thing. We are restoring lost protections through the new Fisheries Act, which is presently before the other chamber.

We have invested \$142 million, alongside Premier Horgan of British Columbia, for habitat restoration, which is the largest single investment in salmon habitat restoration in the history of this country. We have worked to ensure that we are managing the fisheries in an effective way. We are convening a broad conversation of stakeholders on issues around predation by seals and sea lions.

We have a bold and comprehensive plan to ensure that we are doing what is necessary to recover and restore salmon populations.

\* \* \*

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, nearly six million people do not have access to high-speed Internet, and the Liberals are telling them to wait until 2030. All people should have access to a strong Internet connection no matter where they are, whether in downtown Toronto or in Essex County on a farm.

Internet and cellphone bills are ridiculous in Canada. We pay more than most countries in the world. In Essex, people need access to reliable, affordable Internet and cell service for work, education and safety.

*Oral Questions*

Why are the Liberals denying rural Canadians, like the people in Essex, affordable, reliable Internet? My question is simple: Why are the Liberals ignoring the needs of rural communities?

• (1145)

**Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member.

Broadband is essential for helping rural Canadians grow their businesses and access services and new skills. Our government has made significant investment in broadband infrastructure. We will connect 90% of households by 2021. Also, in budget 2019, we are making ambitious new commitments to go further with high-speed Internet, connecting 95% of households by 2026.

Where a person lives in Canada should not limit participation in the digital economy. We have a real plan, and we are going to make it happen.

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[Translation]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, May 3, is World Press Freedom Day. As we celebrate media independence, let us not forget that a free press is a cornerstone of our democracy. Let us pay tribute to the journalists who keep doing their excellent work and remember those who have given their lives for their profession.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism remind the House of the measures our government has taken to support the media and stand up for journalists and their independence?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his question. I want to salute the courage of journalists who take risks to keep us informed.

[English]

Too many of them continue to be threatened, jailed, harassed and murdered around the world. In Canada, freedom of the press is a fundamental Canadian value protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We took action to support journalism. We will continue to defend press freedom, both at home and abroad, because it is a pillar of our democracy.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have committed \$250 million to build pipelines, in China. The Liberals are wasting Canadian tax dollars in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which does not benefit Canadian companies or create Canadian jobs. In fact, I was touring the union lodges of boilermakers and pipefitters last week, and 70% of their members are out of work.

Why are the Liberals wasting our tax dollars in China and not building pipelines in Canada to get our skilled tradespeople back to work?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows, we have approved the Line 3 replacement project for the pipeline, and we support Keystone XL.

We are also making sure that we are moving forward in the right way on TMX, something the Conservatives do not understand. The rule of law is something they do not respect. Meaningful engagement with indigenous peoples is something they never even think about.

For us, making sure that we move forward in the right way and in a responsible way is what Canadians expect.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has sent a quarter of a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This means that the Batumi Bypass is getting built in Asia with Canadian dollars. However, there is no money for projects like the Bradford Bypass or the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund in York—Simcoe.

Why is the Prime Minister funding infrastructure projects in other countries instead of supporting projects here in Canada that actually matter to Canadians?

**Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it very surprising that the Conservatives continue to be fixated on an investment that is helping Canadian businesses abroad.

When it comes to infrastructure investments here, we have approved close to 4,800 projects domestically, which are leading to more transit, more housing and more water systems for the victims of the floods. Why? Because we believe climate change is real. It would be helpful if the Conservatives would start making that acknowledgement as well.

We will keep building in his province and in the country for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the finance minister bought Trans Mountain, he said that the Liberals were doing so to ensure construction would begin "immediately". This week, the minister refused to commit to when the Liberals would even make a decision on whether to build Trans Mountain.

Meanwhile, the government is funding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is going to finance a pipeline from Kazakhstan to China.

Will the minister commit to a start date for the Trans Mountain pipeline in Canada and cancel the investment in pipelines in China?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Trans Mountain pipeline, we are focused on getting the process right and doing this in the right way. We have informed communities engaged in the phase III consultations that we have until June 18 to bring the consultations to a respectful conclusion and make a decision on TMX.

The Conservatives voted to de-fund and shelve the TMX process. We know we owe it to Canadians to get this process right.

\* \* \*

• (1150)

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, China has banned canola seed shipments. It has suspended pork products and put up road blocks for pea and soybean exports. It is arbitrarily detaining Canadians.

What else is China doing? It is building pipelines with over \$250 million in Canadian taxpayer money. Those are pipelines, ironically, that the Liberal government cannot seem to get built in Canada.

When will the Prime Minister shelve his admiration for China's basic dictatorship and pull money from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

**Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, the Conservatives are focusing on foreign investments that are helping Canadian interests and Canadian companies abroad and are providing important infrastructure initiatives there. Domestically, we have approved 4,800 projects here. That is creating more transit, more housing and more water systems that are helping the victims of the floods, on which one would think we would be united.

Instead of focusing on the Province of Ontario, which is blocking infrastructure, the Conservatives should be speaking with Premier Ford to unlock those historic dollars. That will be a game changer. We have not see it yet. Why?

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[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first it was GHG reduction targets—

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Order.

I was trying to listen to the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît's question, but I could not hear anything. Would she please start over so I can hear her?

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Mr. Speaker, first the Liberals missed their GHG reduction targets, and now they are going to miss their conservation targets. Without biodiversity, our planet will die. Students are striking for the environment every Friday.

The Liberals are not even close to conserving 17% of terrestrial areas and 10% of marine areas by 2020. In my part of the country,

organizations like Ambioterra are already involved in conservation work, but the Liberals' \$100 million will not be used to raise awareness or to monitor conservation of natural areas.

When will organizations get the funding to do the work on the ground and track conservation efforts?

[English]

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, I was in Montreal with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to host a nature summit. It focused very much on biodiversity issues and the decline of biodiversity globally and in Canada.

We have committed to 17% terrestrial and 10% marine. We have made substantial progress. In fact, at the nature summit, I announced the protection of the Laurentian Channel, which brings us now to 8.3% of the 10% target, far higher than the less than 1% that existed under the previous Conservative government.

We are determined to meet those targets. It is extremely important for the future of the world, and we will—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the world is facing a plastic waste crisis that is filling up our oceans and clogging our landfills. There is over one tonne of plastic waste for every person on the planet. In our lifetime, there will be more plastic than fish by volume in our oceans. Canada's recycling program is not doing the job.

Over 90% of what we put in our blue boxes actually ends up in landfills. However, we have a solution. A citizen-inspired bill, the zero waste packaging act, would require all plastic packaging to be recyclable or compostable. If Liberals are truly serious about dealing with the plastic waste crisis, will they support our bill?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his commitment to the environment. The fact is that plastics are simply choking our oceans right now, and I will undertake to consider the bill he has put forward and return to him with the government's position.

However, in the meantime, we are taking meaningful actions to fight plastic pollution today. We are banning microbeads. We are reducing plastic waste from government operations and eliminating unnecessary single-use plastics within the federal government. We have invested \$100 million toward a marine litter mitigation strategy. Through the G7 presidency, which we held last year, we introduced the G7 ocean plastics charter. We have adopted a zero plastic waste strategy with all our provincial and territorial partners.

*Oral Questions*

The time to act on plastics is now. I am willing to work with the member to ensure we have meaningful progress.

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**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to get confirmation of the Prime Minister's hypocrisy. Potential so-called independent senators are being run through the Liberals' partisan database to determine whether they have had any prior affiliation to the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister wants to know if they have been members of the Liberal Party, attended Liberal events or even had a Liberal lawn sign before he decides on which candidates to appoint.

When will the Prime Minister just admit that his independent Senate is not so independent?

• (1155)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last election, Canadians were fed up with the partisanship in the other place. In fact, they were so done with all of the shenanigans that were taking place under Stephen Harper's leadership that they were proud we would introduce a new merit-based, independent process to appoint senators.

In fact, we now have a majority of senators in the other place who are independent senators, who have an incredible history and talent that they have provided to Canadians. They are diverse, from all locations across the country, and they are doing an excellent job ensuring the other place—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I get a real kick out of listening to the Liberals over there.

In January 2014, the Prime Minister booted Liberal senators out of his caucus. Now he is trying to convince everyone that newly appointed senators are independent.

Liberal blood is thicker than their respect for an independent appointment process, so it is not at all surprising that our newest senators were appointed because they are Liberal Party pals.

When will the Prime Minister stop lying to us, respect the process and tell the truth?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I may have misunderstood, but I think I just heard an unparliamentary comment about a member. I hope the hon. member will withdraw the comment and apologize.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the fact is that we want him to tell the truth.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** That is not really an apology.

The hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when Stephen Harper was in power, Canadians said that the Senate was just a partisan chamber that did the Prime Minister's bidding and that enough was enough.

We changed this process, and public opinion polls show that Canadians have greater trust in the Senate as a result of the changes we made.

The senators we have appointed are doing an excellent job and are independent. Also, there is less partisanship in that chamber.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Yes, the Prime Minister's independent Senate, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, senators, who are not on the Liberal donor list, were trying to move a motion for an independent Senate hearing into the SNC-Lavalin scandal, but who blocked them? Independent senators who the Prime Minister's Office now admits were considered from a partisan Liberal database.

The fake, false and exaggerated pretences of an independent Senate, like everything else the Prime Minister does, is getting tiresome. Why will the Prime Minister not just admit that his independent senators take their marching orders from him?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the history of our country, people from across the country are able to put their names forward to be considered to be senators. It is an open, transparent and merit-based appointment process.

The Conservatives will always yell over us because they do not want to hear the validity of the process. They know the Senate is working. The upper chamber has actually offered amendments to this chamber. We have accepted more amendments on more occasions than the Conservatives ever would have considered.

It is unfortunate, because the Conservatives have never had regard for the upper chamber. That is why their Conservative senators remain in their caucus, so they can instruct and tell them what to do. That is not the case on this side.

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**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an eye-opening statistic that people living on reserve in Canada are 18 times more likely to be evacuated as the result of a natural disaster compared to those living off reserve.

In recent years, thousands of first nations people in my home province of British Columbia, and across the country, have had to evacuate due to wildfires, floods, wind storms and landslides. We have learned from them many of the failures of the emergency management response system, which ignores their knowledge, traditions and experiences.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services please inform the House of the work under way to ensure first nations are made full partners in emergency management—

*Oral Questions*

•(1200)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells for his hard work.

The minister was pleased to join first nations leadership and provincial partners last weekend to sign a tripartite MOU on emergency management in B.C. This agreement recognizes first nations as full partners in emergency management. It ensures ongoing approaches to improve capacity and involves first nations as full partners. This would not have been possible without the leadership of the first nations Leadership Council.

Together we can and we will build a better, safer and more inclusive partnership on emergency management with first nations.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the out-of-touch Liberals are at it again. First it was their \$12-million gift to the billionaire owners of Loblaws. Now they are giving half a billion dollars to subsidize electric vehicles made in Trump's America.

Now whether it is Alberta's oil sands or General Motors in Oshawa, the government seems perfectly happy to drive our businesses and jobs out of Canada.

Why are the Liberals subsidizing wealthy car buyers and U.S. car builders, while everyday Canadians get a carbon tax?

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as somebody who believes that climate change is real and that we have an opportunity and an obligation to do something about it, I cannot say how frustrating it is to have been standing up here for the last year answering questions and never once receiving a question from a Conservative member of Parliament asking us to do more to protect our environment.

The fact is that we are making investments in energy efficiency so we can bring emissions down. We are making investments to help make electric vehicles more affordable. We know that is where the future of the industry is. It is also going to help us reduce emissions. We can do this without costing our economy.

I note, in particular, over the past three years our economy has added over 900,000 jobs. The good news that it is not just creating jobs; it is helping people get by and making life more affordable.

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**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, economic prosperity and environmental protection go hand in hand as we grow our economy. My father had a long and distinguished career as a professional forester. He knew that sustainable forests created economic prosperity and played a critical role in the most important issues of our time: climate change, innovation and economic opportunities for rural and indigenous communities.

Will the parliamentary secretary tell us how our government is investing in the forest industry to provide a sustainable environmental and economic future for all Canadians?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his hard work. I recognize as well that professional foresters were the early environmentalists. That is why our government is supporting a competitive and sustainable forest sector. We are investing nearly \$23 million to help FPInnovations, Canada's premier forest sector research institute, to diversify markets and reduce emissions.

While our government is growing the forestry economy and protecting the environment, the Conservatives in Ontario are making reckless cuts to emergency forest firefighting and tree planting programs. These cuts will hurt people, hurt jobs and take us backwards in the fight against climate change.

We will continue to invest in this very important sector.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every year, of the forty recruits trained at the RCMP academy only one is trained solely in French. I did say one. Now, there will be none, because the RCMP is launching a pilot project that will put an end to training in French only. Clearly, this decision goes against the spirit and the letter of the Official Languages Act. The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Official Languages must absolutely overturn this decision immediately.

What are they waiting for?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to learn from the Conservatives about protecting language rights, as we recently saw with what is happening in Ontario with respect to the French fact.

It is important to know that our government wants to strengthen the Official Languages Act because we want to ensure that francophones and francophiles across the country have access to job opportunities with our system. That is why I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to ensure that language rights and the rights of our country's francophones are well protected.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix fiasco has been going on for more than three years. The Government of Canada has been unable to pay its own employees for three years.

This issue continues to drag on, and 80,000 new cases are added every month. These cases all represent families who are suffering massive amounts of stress. This government caused the crisis, so I expect this government to fix it.

Will the government commit to compensating those affected by Phoenix and fixing the problem, not in 10 years, but before the election?

• (1205)

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are obviously committed to fixing this problem left to us by Mr. Harper's Conservatives. They fired 700 public servants and slashed funding.

For the past year we have been working through the list of outstanding transactions and rebuilding the new system that will pay our public servants properly.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as of January 1, foreign web giants are paying their taxes in Quebec like everyone else.

Not only have Internet media services complied with Quebec's demands, but revenues are twice as high as anticipated. Meanwhile, Ottawa is still letting Netflix and its ilk skip paying taxes at the expense of our cultural industries.

Now that we know web giants are willing to pay taxes, why is the government so determined to give them a free ride?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has shown that it supports our artists and creators.

If my colleagues really cared about investments in culture, they would stop asking me the same questions over and over only to get the same answers.

[English]

We have made historic investments of \$3.2 billion in the cultural sector, including to the CBC, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board of Canada.

Due to the previous Conservative government's inaction, our laws on culture predate the Internet, which is why we are—

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Order. The hon. member for Repentigny.

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is also taking a laissez-faire approach to rail transportation. Last week, a train carrying hazardous material derailed in L'Assomption in my riding. Fortunately, nobody was hurt and nothing spilled from any of the cars.

However, on February 16, in Manitoba, nearly a million litres of crude oil spilled in a derailment. On February 4, in British Columbia, three men were killed when a train went off the tracks. Since November, there have been at least eight major incidents that have claimed the lives of six people.

When will the government order a public inquiry on the problems with rail safety?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has made it clear to everyone in this House that rail safety is his number one priority, and that is why he has taken action to invest in the sector, to advance regulations and to ensure that we are continuing to improve safety.

On behalf of everyone in this House, our hearts go out to the family members who were affected by these horrible incidents. We are taking action to make sure that no family has to suffer that kind of incident ever again.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot in this House about SNC-Lavalin, but Saskatchewan people are concerned about another multinational construction company accused of corruption. Vinci Construction took \$2 billion to build a bypass around Regina that was supposed to cost only \$400 million. Will the government investigate to ensure that the federal funds invested in this boondoggle were not misused?

**Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this matter to the attention of the House and look forward to working with him to look into this matter.

In the meantime, I would point out that the government has made an historic amount of investment in the province of Saskatchewan that will see close to \$1 billion flow into that province, including for new transit buses in Regina as well as for investments in the Highway 16 interchange project. With the leadership of the Minister of Public Safety and all our support for the Prairies, we will continue to invest in Saskatchewan for the good people of that province, and I look forward to working with my colleague.



## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "2018-2019 Annual Report on the Administration of the Centennial Flame Research Award Act".

\* \* \*

● (1210)

### PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-445, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (management and direction of the Parliamentary Protective Service).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that would change subsection 79.55(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act relating to the Parliamentary Protective Service. The act reads, in essence, that the director "must be a member of the [RCMP]." This bill would add the word "not" and mandate that the two Speakers, without outside intervention, would jointly select the director of our integrated security force.

While we appreciate the RCMP's efforts to integrate the security forces, this bill would give the Crown three years to complete the transition back to the House. Nothing in this act would prevent the RCMP from continuing to protect the Prime Minister in the House, nor from calling on the RCMP for backup should the need arise. However, all decisions going forward would belong to the House and Senate rather than to the executive. While it is not a matter for legislation, I hope that this would also allow the designated airspace known as CYR537 to be handed over to the Parliamentary Protective Service.

As I consider this to be, first and foremost, a matter of protecting parliamentary privilege, I ask that this bill be ultimately referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I thank the member for Hamilton Centre for seconding this bill, demonstrating the cross-party support it will need to move forward.

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

## Routine Proceedings

### PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table a petition today signed by many constituents in my riding of Perth—Wellington. This petition was initiated by the Hahn family of Monkton, Ontario. The petitioners call on the government to recognize the inherent right of farmers to save, reuse, select, exchange and sell their seeds.

I am very pleased to table this petition.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today by hundreds of residents across Canada who are drawing the attention of the House to the following: the Liberal government has established a prison needle exchange program that will be implemented across Canada by 2019. The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers was not consulted on this plan, which puts their members and the Canadian public at risk.

The previous Conservative government passed the Drug-Free Prisons Act, which revoked parole for those who are caught using drugs behind bars. Under this new regulation, an inmate who is approved for the prison needle exchange program is not required to disclose to the Parole Board that he or she is on the program.

Therefore, the citizens are calling on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety to end the prison needle exchange program and to implement measures that would increase the safety of correctional officers and the surrounding community.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present e-petition 1955, with 5,730 signatures. This petition calls upon our government to further Canada's space exploration and to develop a new space strategy. This strategy is critical for ridings such as mine, where we have companies such as Honeywell, formerly COM DEV, which have been critical to space exploration and to the aerospace industry in Canada.

NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present petitions signed by thousands of Canadians urging the government to support the energy east pipeline. It is time the Liberal government supported hard-working men and women in our energy sector. The jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Canadians depend on pipeline projects to tidewater. The Liberal government needs to start listening to Canadians and support the energy industry from coast to coast to coast.

*Routine Proceedings*

## PENSIONS

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table three petitions from very active members in my constituency.

The first petition is a call to withdraw Bill C-27. This is an important issue for many of my constituents, because before the 2015 federal election, Canadians were clearly promised, in writing, that defined benefit plans, which have already been paid for by employers and pensioners, should not be retroactively changed to target benefit plans. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27.

• (1215)

## OPIOIDS

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to addressing the opioid crisis. This is a very large concern across my riding. Many of these members from my constituency are from small communities, such as Port Hardy and Port McNeill. They want to make sure that the government understands that over 4,000 Canadians died in 2017 and over 2,800 in 2016 due to a preventable opioid overdose resulting from fentanyl-poisoned sources. The number of preventable deaths has surpassed the total number of deaths in all other public health emergencies in the last 20 years. This is a very serious concern. Those who have died as a result of a preventable opioid overdose from fentanyl-poisoned sources were valued citizens of this country: our children, siblings, spouses, parents, family members, clients and friends.

My constituents are asking the Government of Canada to declare the current opioid overdose crisis from fentanyl-poisoning a national public health emergency, to reform the current drug policy to decriminalize personal possession and to create, with urgency and immediacy, a system to provide safe, unadulterated access to substances so that the people who use these substances do not die.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the final petition I have here today is one that is largely from the community of Zeballos, a beautiful community in my riding that I encourage everyone to visit. It was given to the Minister of Rural Economic Development. The petition is specifically with respect to cellular phone service on Highway 19. There are parts of this highway that are not serviceable by cellular phone service. This is an important public safety concern, as it is sometimes necessary to travel more than 30 minutes to reach a cellphone serviced area or land line to contact 911 in case of an accident or the need for roadside assistance. The constituents in my riding are very concerned and hope to see this actively dealt with.

## GATINEAU PARK

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting three petitions today as well.

The first petition is very important to Canadians and everyone who lives in Ottawa and Gatineau. It is related to Gatineau Park. As most people who have been there know, it is a very special place. It has over 90 endangered plants and 50 endangered animal species. It is one of the most visited parks in Canada, yet unbelievably, its

boundaries are not recognized in Canadian law. This is the second petition I have presented on this matter in the last year.

The petition asks the House of Commons to adopt legislation to give Gatineau Park the necessary legal protection to ensure its preservation for future generations. It absolutely deserves more protection. I would like to thank the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ottawa valley chapter, for its ongoing caring for Gatineau Park.

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is related to farming. It concerns the Plant Breeders' Rights Act, which was passed in 2015, which downgraded the farmers' right to save and plant seeds from their crops to mere farmers' privilege, which is now in danger of being restricted or eliminated by regulation. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in legislation the inalienable right of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, condition, store and sell seeds. They are asking the Government of Canada to refrain from making any regulations under the Plant Breeders' Rights Act that would further erode the rights of farmers.

## OLD AGE SECURITY

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is related to old age security. Recently, the federal government announced the launch of the automatic enrolment process for seniors to the guaranteed income supplement. However, it states in the announcement that it will not be applied to every eligible person at 64 years of age. Therefore, the petition asks that the government extend the automatic enrolment of the guaranteed income supplement to all seniors.

## WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition today that was given to me at the Welcome Centre Shelter for Women that serves Windsor-Essex. I visited with the women at the shelter, and they presented me with this petition. They are asking for better funding for feminist women's organizations.

They spoke about the fact that they have been struggling for decades to keep the lights on and the doors open due to a lack of federal core operations funding. They also talked about the fact that they are the most underfunded in Canada's non-profit sector, but they are the single most effective means for building better lives for women.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners say that the current Government of Canada's program funding is insecure and competitive and takes workers' time away from helping more women. They also say that direct federal funding of women's organizations represents less than .01% of total federal program spending. That is only about \$1 for every woman in Canada.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately provide secure, multi-year core operational funding to feminist women's organizations and set national standards to ensure quality of access to services and protection of all women.

•(1220)

## PENSIONS

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today. The first is from residents of the tri-cities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody in British Columbia, as well as the cities of Burnaby and Langley. These petitioners join their voices to those of thousands of Canadians who have already signed petitions that have been tabled in the House.

They are concerned about the promise that was made in the 2015 election that defined benefit pension plans would not be changed. Bill C-27, tabled by the Minister of Finance attacks directly the issue of defined benefit plans.

All of these petitioners—and I would say a big thanks to the BC Retired Teachers' Association and the National Association of Federal Retirees—are calling on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act. They are concerned about gutting defined benefit pensions.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by residents of Calgary, Alberta. They join their voices to thousands of Canadians across the country who are absolutely opposed to the government's action to impose an excise tax on medical marijuana.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to support my Motion No. 198, reverse the decision to apply an excise duty to cannabis sold for medical purposes and recognize that medical cannabis should be exempt from the federal goods and services tax.

The petitioners join their voices to thousands of other Canadians who have said the same thing.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 2291, originally tabled on April 29, 2019, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2323 to 2338 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2291—**Mr. Harold Albrecht:**

With regard to the government operating booths or displays at trade shows or similar type events, since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown Corporation or other government entity: what are the details of each event including (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) title of event, (iv) amount paid by the government for space at the event, (v) amount spent by the government in relation to the displays and a breakdown of such expenses, if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2323—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to the annual review of eligibility for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) implemented by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) since 2016: (a) what is the average cost of the reviews, broken down by (i) year, (ii) category of client; (b) how many planned full-time equivalents (FTEs) are assigned to review GIS eligibility; (c) what is the branch responsible for these reviews; (d) for the branch in (c), (i) what is its annual budget, (ii) what is the number of FTEs in the branch; (e) how many of the FTEs in (d)(ii) are working as a (i) Program and Services Delivery Clerk (ii) Service Canada Benefit Officer; (f) other than the ones listed in (e), what are the other job titles where the employee is responsible for reviewing eligibility for the GIS; (g) of the clients who undergo reviews and have their benefits suspended, (i) how many have their full benefits (the same amount, adjusted for any increases) reinstated after the review, (ii) how many have their benefits reduced after the review, (iii) how many have their benefits increased after the review, (iv) how many are deemed ineligible for the GIS after the review; and (h) has the government ever studied the cost-benefit analysis in reviewing GIS eligibility, and, if so, what are the details of this study?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2324—**Mr. Michael Cooper:**

With regard to the government's decision to provide former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Gerald Butts' lawyer with access to his email records prior to his appearance at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights: why was Gerald Butts' attorney able to get access to his emails without going to court, but Mark Norman's attorney was forced to go to court to get access to his emails?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2325—**Mr. Michael Cooper:**

With regard to the testimony from the former Attorney General at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that Katie Telford, the Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, said "If Jody is nervous, we would of course line up all kinds of people to write OpEds saying that what she is doing is proper": what is the complete list of individuals the Office of the Prime Minister was planning on lining up to write these "OpEds"?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2326—**Ms. Rachael Harder:**

With regard to the government's claim that 9,000 jobs are at stake if SNC-Lavalin did not receive a Deferred Prosecution Agreement: was the 9,000 number fictitious, or was it based on specific information, and, if so, on what specific information was it based?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings*

**Question No. 2327—Mr. Jim Eglinski:**

With regard to Parks Canada cancelling a \$66 million proposal for a biking and walking trail through Jasper National Park: (a) why did the government cancel the proposal; (b) will the funds be redistributed to infrastructure projects within the park; (c) are there plans to reallocate this money to other provinces, and, if so, how much of the funding will be redistributed outside of Alberta; (d) why were these funds diverted to another park as opposed to spending them on infrastructure repairs and upgrades that have already been identified for Jasper; (e) what is the distribution or projected distribution of the reallocated funds, including (i) recipient, (ii) location, (iii) amount, (iv) purpose of funding or project description; and (f) what consultations will Parks Canada conduct with entities in or near Jasper National Park regarding the decision to cancel the proposal and reallocate the funding?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2328—Mr. Jim Eglinski:**

With regard to the request by the Jasper Chamber of Commerce to change the designation of the Icefields Parkway so that it could stay open year-round and benefit from full highway status: (a) how many requests to change de designation were received and were they reviewed by the Minister of Transport; (b) what steps will be taken to review the current designation; (c) does Parks Canada have any specific plans to reduce the time lost to clean up the Icefields Parkway, and, if so, what are the plans; (d) will the funds from the cancelled Jasper Park's bike trail be redistributed to the Icefields Parkway and other infrastructure projects within Jasper National Park, or will the funds be sent to other parks; and (e) if the funds are being redistributed to other parks, what compensation is being offered to the Town of Jasper and other communities that will lose out due to this cancelled funding?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2329—Mr. Pat Kelly:**

With regard to the telephone call that the Clerk of the Privy Council accepted from Kevin Lynch, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SNC-Lavalin, in October 2018: has the current Clerk of the Privy Council met with or accepted phone calls from any other corporate board members representing companies facing criminal prosecution, and, if so, what are the details, including (i) date, (ii) individuals, (iii) companies represented, (iv) format (in-person meeting, telephone), (v) topics raised?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2330—Mr. Jamie Schmale:**

With regard to the telephone call that the Clerk of the Privy Council accepted from Kevin Lynch, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SNC-Lavalin, in October 2018: (a) what are the details of all communication between the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of SNC-Lavalin since January 22, 2016, where any issue concerning SNC-Lavalin was raised, including (i) date, (ii) format (in-person meeting, telephone, email), (iii) issues raised; and (b) what are the details of all communication between anyone in the Privy Council Office or the Office of the Prime Minister, including the Prime Minister himself, and the Chairman of the Board of SNC-Lavalin, where any issue concerning SNC-Lavalin was raised, since January 1, 2016, and noting that such communication is not reported on the Commissioner of Lobbying's website, including (i) date, (ii) format, (iii) issues raised, (iv) individuals involved in the communication?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2331—Mr. Glen Motz:**

With regard to ministerial holds being issued on deportation orders since November 4, 2015: (a) how many times has a minister issued a ministerial hold; (b) broken down by Ministerial hold, on what dates were holds issued and how many individuals' deportation order were affected by each hold; and (c) have any individuals been issued multiple ministerial holds, and, if so, (i) how many received multiple holds, (ii) how many did each individual receive?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2332—Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:**

With regard to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members required to take mefloquine, since 1990: (a) how many were required to take mefloquine, broken down by deployment; (b) broken down by country of deployment, what were the

dates of the deployment; and (c) what is the breakdown of CAF members required to take mefloquine by rank?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2333—Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to contracts signed by the government in order to assist with the fallout over the SNC-Lavalin controversy: what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) duration of contract?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2334—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:**

With regard to the statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement on CBC News on March 4, 2019, that SNC-Lavalin is "entitled to a deferred prosecution arrangement": (a) is this the position of the government, and, if so, when did it become the position of the government; and (b) are any other Canadian companies "entitled" to a deferred prosecution agreement, and, if so, which ones?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2335—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to detention benefits and the New Veterans Charter, broken down by year: (a) how many applications have been made for detention benefits since it was added to the New Veterans Charter; (b) how many applications were (i) approved, (ii) rejected; (c) in general terms, without violating the privacy of individuals involved, which detention incidents qualified for the benefit and which ones did not qualify; (d) for each detention incident which does not qualify for the benefit, what is the rationale or benefit requirement which the incident does not meet; (e) what is the (i) average, (ii) median, (iii) maximum benefit determination; (f) how is the amount of benefit determined; (g) what appeal mechanisms are available to veterans who have been denied detention benefits; (h) how many appeals mentioned in (g) has the government received, and of those, how many have been successful; and (i) how was the lump sum per-day award rate determined for each incident which qualified for the benefit?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2336—Mr. Dean Allison:**

With regard to government involvement in the potential sale or lease of aircraft by Bombardier to Iranian entities, including Iran Air, and including any involvement by Global Affairs Canada, the Trade Commissioner Service, Export Development Canada, or Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, as well as any other agencies or departments which have dealt with Bombardier: (a) what are the details of all emails, memorandums, notes, or other documents related to the topic since January 1, 2017, including (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) title, (v) form (email, memorandum, etc.); (b) what are the details of any proposed sale or lease of aircraft to Iranian entities of which the government is aware, including (i) the date when the government became aware, (ii) the number of aircraft involved, (iii) the estimated value of transaction, (iv) did a minister approve the transaction, and, if so, what are the details of any approval; and (c) has the government provided any funding or loan guarantees in relation to this potential transaction, and, if so, what are the details?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2337—Mr. Blaine Calkins:**

With regard to the funding announced in the 2018 Budget in response to the opioid crisis, and specifically the funding commitments mentioned on pages 170 and 171 of the Budget Plan, broken down by funding commitment: what are the details of all funding which has actually been delivered to date, including (i) recipient, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) location, (v) project description or purpose of funding?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*

Question No. 2338—**Mr. David Yurdiga:**

With regards to legal advice for either the Prime Minister, current staff or former members in the Office of the Prime Minister: what are all the amounts budgeted in 2017, 2018, and 2019 for outside legal advice, broken down by (i) how much each firm is charging per hour, (ii) the total expected cost, (iii) any details released in the contracts signed, (e.g. the nature of the work and other such details)?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions to allowed to stand.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** When we last left the bill, the hon. member for Bow River had four minutes coming to him for questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the consultation and the outreach that we did prior to tabling this legislation. At least 65 meetings were held with leaders in indigenous communities and at the grassroots level. Over 2,000 people were involved in that. Going forward, more of the same is going to happen.

I am wondering if the hon. member could speak about the importance of consultations when something of this importance to our country is being tabled.

• (1225)

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having had experience in the administration and education systems as a mayor, I know that consultation is of critical importance. While sitting on the heritage committee, though, what I heard on a couple of pieces of significant legislation that preceded Bill C-92 was that while we were told there had been extensive consultation, when it came right down to it, there had been very little. I have not been on the committee dealing with Bill C-92, but I suggest that this continues to happen. It does not work unless it is done.

Again, what I would suggest to those really interested in reconciliation with indigenous youth, for example, is that they find a way to bring the play *New Blood*, acted by Siksika reserve indigenous youth, to their communities and Ottawa. They would see how consultation has worked, and those indigenous youth would

provide an opportunity for members to see how they have changed and how it works for them.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the concern with the bill is that the funding is simply not following. We have a budget implementation act that does not walk the talk of what we see in the bill. The bill may have some broad principles, but it is a question of funding and resources. Funding and resources can make a big difference. I would ask the member for his thoughts on the matter.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Mr. Speaker, in past legislation that I was involved in, that was a huge concern. There were large gaps in appointing the amounts of money and how it could be rolled out. If the Liberals really want to make it work, they should know that some of those details were missing because this legislation was so rushed. When parliamentarians are at committee, it is important that they discuss the funding mechanism in order to see how it works and whether it will work. Missing those details in rushed legislation is problematic.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to a historic piece of legislation, Bill C-92, an act respecting first nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

It is also an honour to welcome over 30 students from Mr. Dingwall's grade 12 politics class at Humberstone Collegiate Institute in my riding. They are here to study xenophobia and refugees, but the concerns and the aims of that study have a link to this legislation. The link is that their study and this legislation both identify key areas of inclusion, of the promotion of diversity, and of the remediation of historical injustices.

Let us talk about Bill C-92.

Bill C-92 seeks to do two very important things. First, it would affirm the jurisdiction of indigenous peoples in relation to child and family services. Second, it sets out several principles, including the best interests of the child, cultural continuity and substantive equality, that would be applicable on a national level to the provision of child and family services to indigenous children.

Let us start with my past role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage in 2017. At that point, I had the privilege of engaging with first nations, Inuit and Métis leaders and elders, and subsequently assisting in the co-development of a different bill, Bill C-91, which aims to promote and preserve indigenous languages in Canada. I am very pleased to see that this bill, a companion bill, seeks to enshrine the importance of culture and language when it comes to determining what is in the best interests of the child.

When indigenous children are navigating our child and family services system, their culture and language must be taken into account and must be protected.

*Government Orders*

Indigenous leaders across this country have called on successive governments to make changes to address the overrepresentation of first nations, Inuit and Métis children in the child and family services system. They have been doing that important advocacy work on this file for over a decade and have highlighted the important voices of indigenous children from across the country to shed light on the shortcomings of our current child and family services systems.

It is undeniable that the levels of indigenous children in care have reached the point of what has been described as a humanitarian crisis. Indigenous children under 15 make up 7.7% of the Canadian population, but they account for 52.2% of children in foster care in private homes. That is a staggering statistic—7.7% of the population, yet 52.2% of the children in foster care. Incredibly, we know that there are more indigenous children who have been removed from their homes and placed in the child welfare system, right now in 2019, than there were at the height of the residential school system, which is such a shameful legacy in Canadian history.

We also know that often indigenous children are separated from their families and communities, which deprives them of their language, their culture, and their connection to their people. That is absolutely and categorically unacceptable. It is vital that we address the root causes that have led to this humanitarian crisis, including such things as poverty, intergenerational trauma, and culturally biased child welfare policies and practices. That is what Bill C-92 will address.

Our current child and family welfare system is failing indigenous peoples and has been failing them for some time. It is for this reason that our government is taking steps today with Bill C-92 to redress the situation.

Our goal as a government has always been to support legislation that respects the principle of self-determination of indigenous people and legislation that advances what we would call meaningful reconciliation. These two objectives were the basis for our actions taken while crafting this legislation.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing these issues, the Minister of Indigenous Services at the time hosted an emergency meeting on indigenous child and family services in January 2018. During that meeting, our government had the opportunity to hear from experts, advocates, indigenous partners, and provincial and territorial people, but most importantly from youth, such as the youth who are here today from my riding, but especially youth from right around the country who had a lived experience of navigating the child and family services system. It is of the utmost importance to continue to elevate the voices of those with first-hand experience so that we can learn from their experiences and make the legislative changes that address the problems individuals face when accessing our child and family services system.

Following that emergency meeting back in January of 2018, 65 sessions were held during the summer and fall of 2018 to engage with people around the country, whether in Toronto or Winnipeg, from coast to coast to coast.

• (1230)

That engagement, which was mentioned by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, engaged 2,000

individuals in different sessions, including representatives of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, as well as treaty nations, self-governing first nations, provinces and territories.

In January of 2019, further in-person engagement sessions with indigenous partners and provincial and territorial representatives were conducted to consult on the proposed content of Bill C-92.

What is critical is what we learned in those consultations. We learned that Canadians care about reforming child and family services in a way that better meets the needs of indigenous peoples. It is clear that Canadians are shocked by the statistics with which I started my discussion and my contribution to this debate. This is an issue that has been raised by many of my colleagues in the House. It is certainly an issue that my constituents in Parkdale—High Park feel strongly about.

Whether they are students at Humber College or at any of the other secondary institutions in the riding, whether they are younger people or older people, constituents of all backgrounds have told me, “I am not an indigenous person, but I know we need to remedy a historical injustice. To do right by the colonial and racist legacy of the residential school system and the policies and practices put in place by successive governments for 152 years, we have to implement legislation to remedy those wrongs.” Bill C-91, coupled with Bill C-92, does exactly that.

People have spoken to me about ensuring that we have culturally appropriate child and family services to protect the vibrancy of cultures. I have often told them it is important for people such as me or random constituents to engage with and learn more about and understand indigenous history, knowledge and culture. It is even more important to restore that knowledge and understanding to indigenous communities without doing it in a paternalistic way, as in past practices, but by co-developing solutions with indigenous people and empowering them to implement the solutions they feel are appropriate for their communities. That is what the bill will do.

Let me explain that indigenous children are being removed from their homes and communities in greater numbers than they were at the height of the residential school system. We have had conversations regarding the next steps our government must take to protect indigenous children, and as a result we are affirming the jurisdiction of indigenous peoples over child and family services.

Bill C-92 does not provide a one-size-fits-all model. Rather, it would allow indigenous people to exercise partial or full jurisdiction over child and family services at a pace that promotes the well-being of their communities. The bill would allow indigenous groups to exercise their inherent and rightful jurisdiction over child and family services, which will result in their laws prevailing over federal laws and laws of the provinces and territories, in the case of a dispute between the two. This is a very important point, because it gives meaning to this notion of self-determination and self-governance.

*Government Orders*

The legislation also sets out a robust mechanism whereby indigenous groups would enter into tripartite coordination agreements with the federal government and the provincial government of each province in which the indigenous group is located to work together for up to 12 months to reach a tripartite agreement. Along with affirming jurisdiction, the bill also sets out principles such as the best interests of the child, cultural continuity and substantive equality around the provision of child and family services to indigenous children, applicable at the national level.

Let me pause here to say that this is something we are working hard to implement across government. The analogy I would draw to this “best interests” provision is to a different bill that I have been privileged to work on as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, Bill C-78. It is a family law reform bill that again entrenches the best interests of the child, but importantly, it echoes the language we find in Bill C-92, language that talks about the spiritual, cultural and linguistic continuity for indigenous children remaining with indigenous family settings. That is critical to Bill C-78, and also critical to Bill C-92.

With regard to decisions as to what is in the best interests of the children, Bill C-92 elaborates several factors that need to be taken into account. They are the child's physical, emotional and psychological safety; the child's security and well-being; the child's cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual upbringing; and the maintenance of an ongoing, positive relationship with the family, community and indigenous group to which they belong.

Let me restate that, because it is so critical and gets to the heart of what the bill is about: When there is a child welfare situation that involves removing a child from their original home to a foster care type of setting, we need to think about what is in that child's best interests.

• (1235)

How we evaluate that is by thinking about continuity in the child's ongoing positive relationship with his or her family and with his or her indigenous group. That is the key in what we are talking about here. That creates stability for the children through the connection for the children to their language and, importantly, to their territory. By emphasizing these factors, the legislation would ensure that child and family services take into account cultural context when making decisions as to what is in the best interest of first nations, Inuit and Métis kids. The goal is to decrease the number of indigenous children who are separated from their families and their communities.

Additionally, when decisions are being made about what is in the best interests of children, this bill would prioritize a shift from apprehension to prevention, thereby promoting preventive care that supports the entire family.

What does this mean?

We know, unfortunately, that too often child welfare advocates will arrive at a situation and say that a child needs to be removed from a family setting because of the conditions in which the family lives. The solution is not then to remove more children; the solution is to repair and correct the conditions in which indigenous people

live. That has to be the solution. It bears common-sense scrutiny. It bears logical scrutiny.

It also is completely consistent with an approach toward reconciliation whereby we accept and acknowledge historical racism and the legacy of colonialism and move forward together with indigenous peoples to correct that legacy. That is what this bill is doing by targeting this specific issue.

How does it do it?

The bill says that a child should not be apprehended solely on the basis of his or her socio-economic conditions. Instead, it calls upon governments to work with families to find solutions that uplift all family members and keep the child in that home. Moreover, if apprehension and placement are deemed necessary to ensure the best interests of the child, then Bill C-92 delineates an order of priority to be respected when placing that child, and this order is important.

If apprehension needs to occur, this is the classification, and it is a prioritized list: first, keeping the child with one of the child's parents; second, keeping the child with another member of the child's family who is an adult; third, keeping the child with an adult who belongs to the same indigenous group, community or people; fourth, keeping the child with an adult who belongs to an indigenous group, community or people other than the one to which the child belongs.

That is an important prioritization, because it emphasizes exactly what we are trying to do: We are not trying to create further rupture between indigenous people and their culture and communities, but trying to restore and enhance that connection. This order of priority emphasizes family members first, and subsequently adults belonging to the same indigenous group, community or people.

By formalizing in law the need to keep indigenous children with indigenous communities, Bill C-92 takes a huge step forward in protecting cultural continuity by taking into account the things that I have been mentioning when determining what is in the best interests of the child: language, culture, connection with family.

To give a mundane example, if a child who speaks Cree lives on a reserve in rural Manitoba and if a removal is required, the services do not remove that child all the way to Winnipeg. First, they make every effort not to remove the child. If a removal needs to occur, they keep the child on the same territory with the same community, with people who will continue to speak Cree to the child so that the child can maintain that connection to their people. It is that straightforward.

The importance of cultural continuity is further enshrined in this legislation by establishing an ongoing obligation to reassess the possibility for an indigenous foster child to reside with one of the child's parents or an adult member of his or her family.

That is the kind of legislation that people in Canada want, including those in my riding and including the very patient people who have been sitting here from Humberside Collegiate Institute.

*Government Orders*

What they have said to me over and over again, and what I have heard in my riding and right around the country when I was working in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, is that indigenous reconciliation is the responsibility for all of us. It is not simply the responsibility of indigenous communities or the government vis-à-vis indigenous communities; it is the collective responsibility of the 36 million people who inhabit this country to move on that path together.

Bill C-92 is a milestone piece of legislation that would have significant impacts on the lives of indigenous youth, their families and their communities. It is an important step in advancing meaningful reconciliation and in implementing the vital recommendations made by the TRC. I want to thank the indigenous leaders across Canada who have advocated on this issue for years, as well as the current minister and the previous minister, the member for Markham—Stouffville, for their invaluable contributions, without which this legislation would not have been possible.

● (1240)

We are committed to working collaboratively with all levels of government and all relevant stakeholders to continue to advance the well-being of indigenous peoples, but as I said during the course of my remarks, we will not do this in a paternalistic or colonial way, but in a manner that empowers indigenous peoples and allows them to make decisions for their communities and for themselves.

Bill C-92 is an important first step in that direction, and I strongly urge every member in the House to support it.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a lot of great points are being brought up today. I believe there is a strong sincerity among members in the House to improve the lives of our first nations people.

I am looking at the departmental plan for indigenous services, which was tabled in the House very recently. It was signed off by the Minister of Indigenous Services and lays out departmental plans and priorities.

The percentage of first nations children on reserve in care is listed in it, but the Liberals' goal in this area is not going to be decided for two more years. I am not talking about what they will achieve; they will not even set a target for two more years.

The report also notes the percentage of first nations children with access to proper secondary education. Again, there are no targets here.

The bill before us needs to be passed, but why is the Department of Indigenous Services presenting a departmental plan, which is supposed to lay out its priorities, without setting any targets? How are we going to hold bureaucrats, the department and the government accountable, when the department presents a plan, signed off by the minister, with targets that will not even be decided until years down the road?

**Mr. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have specific details about the departmental targets. However, one of our simple targets is to reduce the numbers I mentioned at the outset of my speech. As I said, indigenous children represent 7% of the population but 52% of those in care, and we are trying to bring down that 52% number.

I will also reiterate that we have made extensive investments. First, we created a separate Department of Indigenous Services, which was a recommendation made by RCAP 20 years ago. Second, we have funded the Department of Indigenous Services to the tune of multiple billions of dollars so that it can deliver the services that indigenous people need, including those related to the lifting of boil water advisories.

With respect to secondary education, I will emphasize that we are working collaboratively with provinces, which have the jurisdiction to deliver secondary school education. For example, in the province of Ontario, there is the Anishinabek Nation Education Agreement, which allows 17 communities in Ontario to deliver education directly to indigenous youth. The results of that kind of education model have vastly exceeded the “settler” results with respect to graduation rates.

Those are the priorities the government is working on.

● (1245)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government has opened its wallet anytime a corporate CEO shows up. Loblaws was given \$12 million. Kinder Morgan was given \$4.5 billion, which is \$1 billion more than the government should have paid for the old pipeline. There was \$14 billion in corporate tax cuts for CEOs from Bay Street just last November.

Here before us is a bill with great words, but it does not have the action and the funding that is required. As members know, some noted indigenous scholars have given the Bill an F in a report by the Yellowhead Institute. It notes, “While Canada is presenting Indigenous jurisdiction as the main selling feature of this Bill, without adequate funding, this will simply be jurisdiction to legislate over our own poverty.” The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has said, “It does not meet the...need in addressing the humanitarian child welfare crisis in Manitoba.”

This is because the government does not walk the talk.

With respect to the most recent budget, even though the minimum amount of money required to address the crisis taking place in child welfare across the country is \$3 billion, the government gave less than half of what needed to be allocated.

That is really the issue here. Yes, it is a good bill, but the funding has not come with it. The government has not walked the talk, and that is why so many indigenous communities are criticizing the government's hypocrisy. The government is the height of cynicism in presenting good legislation but not backing it up with the required funding. It provided less than half of the minimum needed. The government was not even willing to give the minimum.

Are the Liberals not ashamed that they were not willing to walk the talk that is required to make the bill's aims a reality?

**Mr. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I am quite disappointed that the member for New Westminster—Burnaby is seeking to make partisan gain out of something that should be supported unanimously in the House. However, I will address his comments, because funding is an important part.



*Government Orders*

With legislation, we create a framework for transferring jurisdiction. As I indicated in my opening speech, the legislation would empower first nations communities around the country, including Inuit and Métis communities, to structure agreements with provincial and territorial partners that have key responsibility over the child welfare system. This is a matter of the constitutional division of powers, which the member, as an experienced member, should know.

I reject out of hand the notion that we are not walking the walk. I recollect the first budget we tabled. Perry Bellegarde was in the gallery. He gave a standing ovation to that budget which tabled \$8.6 billion for indigenous communities across the country.

I also readily defend our most recent budget, which the member highlighted. It allocated money on a distinctions basis for education for Inuit, Métis and first nations kids. It has also allocated money for indigenous languages and \$700 million to expedite the path we are on to lift all boil water advisories across the country by March of 2021. That funding commitment meets our policy commitments. The characterization by the member opposite is simply false.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this legislation would put into law what indigenous nations have been asking for generations, which is the ability to do what is right by their communities, children and families. The crux of it is the affirmation of inherent jurisdiction of their territories and nations.

Could the hon. member speak about the importance of affirmation of inherent jurisdiction?

**Mr. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his work as parliamentary secretary and for his leadership with the Métis community. The notion of inherent jurisdiction is fundamental. It is fundamental toward a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples, which informs everything we are attempting to do as a government. It is also fundamental to something that an NDP member raised in the House and we rightfully supported it, which is UNDRIP. I believe it was Bill C-262 on inherent jurisdiction, governance and control over the services delivered to indigenous people.

To round out the position that was raised in the previous part of this debate, an additional reason funding allocations have not been prematurely allocated in the legislation is simply because we need to ensure we are listening to indigenous communities on a community-by-community basis as to what their needs are. To presuppose at this stage that we now have some sort of crystal ball we can look into to verify exactly which community needs what level of funding would put the cart before the horse and not empower indigenous communities to make that determination for themselves.

• (1250)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are pre-studying this legislation at committee. Numerous witnesses have made it very clear that they do not feel they were part of a co-development process. They may have been included in some discussions, but a lot of those were done very last minute and quickly.

The top three issues we hear from folks in committee are around jurisdiction, accountability and funding. All witnesses, which I happen to agree with, have been very clear that this is not a question

around funding of a dollar amount. It is about ensuring that within the legislation there are actual principles of what that funding will look like. This is key. Witnesses are saying that if this is not part of the legislation, it will be considered hollow legislation.

I hope and believe that we in the House care about indigenous children and we do not want this to be hollow legislation.

Could we see some of that language put into the legislation? We have had recommendations that the principles in the Human Rights Tribunal around funding be in it. Even some of the information about those principles in the preamble could be put in the legislation. We need to see that action taken. Unless there are actual principles, not dollars but principles, about funding in the legislation, it will become a hollow bill. It will be a deep shame to this Parliament if that happens.

**Mr. Arif Virani:** Mr. Speaker, jurisdiction, accountability and funding are extremely important points. We look forward to the work of the committee in bringing forward suggestions and proposing amendments to the bill.

On jurisdiction specifically, when we say that in the event of a conflict between indigenous jurisdiction or authority and provincial or territorial authority that the indigenous authority will trump or be paramount, it establishes exactly the kind of jurisdiction that needs to be asserted here. That is an important aspect of the bill.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the second reading debate today on Bill C-92, indigenous child welfare.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Durham. Recognizing that we have about 22 minutes remaining in this afternoon's debate, I will keep my remarks relatively brief to allow the member for Durham to have some time to debate this important issue.

Today in Canada, it is an unfortunate reality that the number of first nations, Inuit and Métis children in care continues to be far higher than that of the general population. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, more than 14,000, nearly 15,000, indigenous foster children under the age of 15 are in private homes. That represents over half of all foster children in Canada. This is a statistic that should be troubling to each of us in the House and all of us across Canada.

When children are taken away from their families, too often, especially in the indigenous context, the language, the culture and the tradition of that community can also be lost when the children are no longer in their homes or communities.

Bill C-92 focuses on children living both on reserve and off reserve. It seeks to affirm the rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and establish national principles, such as the best interests of the child, cultural continuity and substantive equality, to guide the interpretation and administration of the bill.

*Government Orders*

I am hopeful the bill and its implementation lives up to those objectives. I hope all members of this House and those in future Parliaments hold all governments to account as we strive toward this implementation.

Unfortunately, for too long in Canadian history, we have failed indigenous communities in Canada. It is now incumbent on all of us to work together on the journey toward full and true reconciliation.

The purpose and principles outlined in clauses 8 and 9 of the bill aim to guide indigenous communities on the delivery of child and family services to keep families together and, ultimately, consistent with the call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reduce the number of indigenous children who live in care.

I draw the House's attention to "Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy", the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, volume 5, which was released in 2015. Chapter 1 is entitled "Child welfare: A system in crisis". Unfortunately, it is not an easy read. In fact, at page 11, the report articulates the lasting negative legacy that the residential schools have left on indigenous Canadians and child poverty. The report reads:

Why are so many Aboriginal children taken into care? Poverty, family violence, sexual violence and substance abuse continue—conditions that are part of the sad legacy of residential schools—certainly play a role. The connection between residential schools and the present-day crisis of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system was painfully obvious to many Survivors who shared their statements with the Commission. Kay Adams explained that "all these years of growing up in the dorm I didn't go home to my family. I wasn't taught how to love. I wasn't taught how to be a family. I knew none of that."

That is a very troubling legacy and it is a legacy that all Canadians have to face and address.

While there may be some concerns with the bill, on principle, we must support it. On principle, we must all work together as parliamentarians to ensure we can reduce the number of children who are no longer with their families, no longer in their communities, no longer learning their language, no longer learning their culture and history. So often, the greatest teachers are those within the community. They are family members, neighbours, leadership within the community. When a family loses that, we lose so much.

• (1255)

Unfortunately, this is not ancient history; this is recent history. Indeed, further within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, it states:

Aboriginal children were placed in non-Aboriginal homes across Canada, in the United States, and even overseas, with no attempt to preserve their culture and identity. The mass adoptions continued between 1960 and 1990.

Within our lifetime, within the lifetime of members of the House, aboriginal and indigenous children were being removed from their families, removed from their communities, not given the option to learn of their culture in the place that was best able to pass that on.

I want to wrap up to allow my colleague some time to speak, but I do want to mention a couple of points from a local level.

Reconciliation really does necessitate the participation of all Canadians. I want to highlight a couple of the things that have been undertaken in my riding of Perth—Wellington. A number of blanket

exercises have taken place to help inform people of the experiences that were undertaken within indigenous communities. Local churches have undertaken efforts to reach out in reconciliation with indigenous communities.

I would like to quote from a Stratford Beacon Herald article of November 2018 about the Anglican church:

Though one memorial service can't erase the Anglican Church's role in subjugating Indigenous populations throughout Canada, that's not the point. The point of Friday's service was to continue the conversation around Truth and Reconciliation and foster a broader base of understanding between the church and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This is a worthwhile goal for all of us to undertake, to foster a conversation and to work toward true reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada.

• (1300)

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the nexus of the bill is that we will put into law what indigenous nations have been asking for generations, which is the ability to do what is right and what is proper with their children. The nexus is really the affirmation of indigenous jurisdiction for indigenous nations to make their own laws.

I know the member is a constitutional lawyer. Could he speak to the importance of inherent jurisdiction for indigenous nations?

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the record. I am not a constitutional lawyer. I am a scholar. Political science is my background. However, it is a matter that I do take a great interest in with respect to policies and governing in a self-governance perspective.

We have had this debate for so many decades. The 1992 Charlottetown accord was before my time with respect to awareness of constitutional matters, but it did spark the conversation. In this matter, it is so important that we work with indigenous communities to ensure they have the authority, the ability, the jurisdiction and the opportunity to manage and work with child welfare services so the focus of the child is forefront in the jurisdiction.

Enabling and ensuring that indigenous communities have that jurisdiction is something we as parliamentarians and Canadians absolutely have to work toward to ensure the best interests of the children, that the protection of their language, culture and community is protected in the legislation we pass here to enable indigenous communities to undertake that jurisdiction.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges I have is the fact that a decision was made by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. I believe the current government has now been asked to comply seven times and has been served with non-compliance orders. That concerns me deeply.

As I mentioned earlier, we want to ensure this legislation is not hollow, that it has those key parts in it around accountability. Rather than a number for funding, there needs to be accountability that the resources are there and that they are equitable across all communities. That means indigenous children would finally receive the same amount of resources and, in some cases, more if the case warranted it.

*Government Orders*

Could the member speak to that issue?

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, the member for North Island—Powell River raises the important point of accountability in legislation such as this.

Legislation is a first step, but if there is no accountability to back it up, we really have not achieved what we set out to achieve. The member mentioned the concept of funding. Perhaps equality of funding may only be a starting point, and in some cases additional funding may be needed so that an indigenous community may receive slightly more than a non-indigenous community, given the circumstances, given the needs of that community, given the needs of a particular child.

We need to ensure that indigenous children are not left behind, that we have the resources to fund the important needs, particularly in this case in terms of child welfare services, but also to ensure that the opportunity is there for them to thrive and do well, to expand their culture, to expand their language so they can truly learn the culture of their ancestors.

Absolutely, there need to be accountability mechanisms within the bill and there need to be the resources to back it up, to ensure that we truly achieve the objectives that are set out in black and white print.

• (1305)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Before I go to the next speaker, I want to remind the hon. member for Durham that he will have about 10 minutes. Unfortunately, we will be running out of time and there will be no time for questions and answers, unless he finishes before his 10 minutes and whatever comes up before the end of the time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Durham.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I probably will take the time. I am known for sometimes going on too long in the House. I am sure my Liberal friends think that. However, this is a very important issue to me, to the Conservative Party and, I am sure, to all members of Parliament in the chamber.

Indigenous youth welfare, Métis youth welfare is an area of collective failure of this Parliament since our earliest days, and there are a variety of reasons for that: cultural, historical and societal. Looking back at those failures means that we have to look forward to make sure that we fulfill the true opportunity that is Canada to all Canadians, particularly those in our first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, who have had ties to this country for far longer than all of us. That is why it is important to see that there is progress.

We support Bill C-92 going to committee, because we do think that reforms are needed in this area, and that was called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Child welfare was the first recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In fact, the future of improving the outcomes for members of these communities, reconciliation at its heart is going to be achieved by our young people. It is paramount for us to get this right.

Recommendation 1 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to reduce the number of children in foster care, in government-supported care of some sort. That was the number one recommenda-

tion, and we know why. It was because of our failed history in that regard.

This was said so eloquently by former prime minister Harper in his apology for the generations-long program of residential schools in this country. In fact, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission grew out of the work by our previous government and prime minister Harper to apologize and to make sure that we learn and never repeat the mistakes of our past.

I am going to quote from the former prime minister's apology, from June 2008:

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

Those were probably some of the most impassioned and important words said by Stephen Harper in Parliament.

The former prime minister and Speaker Milliken at the time erected a stained glass window recognizing the apology for residential schools in the Centre Block of Parliament, importantly placed over the members entrance. When I gave tours of the building to young people, friends from the military or whomever, I would point out the window and tell them that it was placed there so that members of Parliament, regardless of party, when they walk in, know that the decisions made in the chamber can impact people, families and children in a positive way or in an extremely negative way. I thought that the powerful statement of the truth and reconciliation stained glass window in Centre Block was a recognition that what we do, including the debate here today, is an important part of reconciliation.

What is key, and what I am going to speak about substantively in my concerns with the approach of the Liberal government to this bill, is that it seems to neglect the central role of the provinces.

In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, a commission that grew out of the apology and the work done by Stephen Harper and our government, the second recommendation in the section on child welfare called for collaboration with the provinces and territories. That has not happened in the bill adequately, and that is a valid concern. I am so upset about this because it did not need to be this way.

The Prime Minister, to his credit, talked a lot about the need for reconciliation when he was running for Parliament and running to be the prime minister. In their platform, the Liberals said they would implement all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations. He said that reconciliation would be central to his term as prime minister.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1310)

Then why are we getting the most substantive piece of legislation on healing that indigenous rift in the final few months of Parliament, along with a bill on indigenous languages? It did not come early on or after two years of consulting with the provinces, but in the final months. It was introduced in February of this year. That is unfortunate, because we need to get this right.

Child welfare services are almost entirely provided by the provinces and territories. The central learnings many of them have experienced mean that some provinces are further ahead. Therefore, while we have a section 91 and section 92 debate in Parliament about the paramountcy of the federal Parliament when it comes to decisions related to indigenous peoples and Métis, we have to recognize the fact that a range of things, such as education, health, child welfare and victim services, are delivered by the provinces. Therefore, this is where reconciliation requires collaboration and consultation, not just with the provinces and territories but with first nations leadership. That can be a challenge.

In the last government, we sometimes got it right. The number of children in care went down by about 12%. However, it is still vastly too high. There are 15,000 indigenous youth in care right now. Fortunately, changes made in the last government and in the current government are bringing that number down, but not fast enough.

One way we focused on it was making sure that child welfare or child care could at least happen through family relationships within the first nations community, so that the connection to language and culture could be tied and it would not be like the sixties scoop or our failures of the past, but recognizing that this has to be centrally done with first nations leadership and with the provinces and territories. That is my disappointment.

I have said positive words here. However, why are we debating this in the final months of Parliament? There has been no significant consultation. If we were debating it now because the provinces, territories and first nations were all on board, I would say that is great, because the people at those levels of government who care, who deliver the services, feel that this bill is going to fulfill the mandate. Right now, I do not think they do.

I want to embody this in one tragedy out of many, one tear in an ocean of tears, in the 151-plus years of our country. That is the tragic case of Tina Fontaine, a young woman from the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba, who was tragically killed in 2014. She was brutally murdered. I would recommend to Canadians the report done by the Manitoba children's advocate, Daphne Penrose. I thank Ms. Penrose. As the children's advocate for Manitoba, she is doing important work, along with Cindy Blackstock and others. They have made recommendations. In fact, we failed Ms. Fontaine many times throughout her life. We have to learn from that. We collectively have to say that we need to do better.

Ms. Penrose's report regarding Ms. Fontaine was entitled "A Place Where It Feels Like Home", because she did not have a home; she was in care. If we look at the report, we see that all of the central recommendations are provincial. The absentee and expulsion policies that led Ms. Fontaine out of the school system, where someone could have helped her, are provincial. Victims services,

health, provincial justice and addiction support are all provincial. In some cases, the federal government is not delivering the services, and kudos to the many outstanding first nations that are looking at delivering these services on and off reserve.

I ask the government this. When this goes to committee, because we are supportive of that, let us get it right. Let us use the goodwill that is here to make sure that the provincial, territorial and first nations organizations delivering child welfare services, addiction services, victim services and education are part of the solution. That is our obligation to reconciliation. It is not just through the federal government.

•(1315)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** It being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 11, 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.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I believe it is carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### RURAL DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The House resumed from February 20 consideration of the motion.

*Private Members' Business*

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, although I am pleasantly surprised that the government has finally decided to do something about rural telecommunications, I am a little disappointed that it comes in the form of a motion proposed so late in its term. I suspect that some of the things the motion calls for will not be feasible in light of the constraints of the parliamentary calendar. The motion mentions two committee studies that will probably not happen due to time constraints.

I want to commend my colleague, the member for Pontiac, for making an effort to raise the issue of rural telecommunications infrastructure, but I must say that I would have liked to see the government take the first step, seeing as I have been asking it to do something about cellphone coverage for over three and a half years now. Right now, some major roads in certain rural areas do not have cell service. That creates a lot of public safety issues.

Furthermore, one of the weaknesses of this motion is that it calls for the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to undertake a study to prove that improving wireless communications will enhance public safety. Well, everybody already knows it will. When someone gets in a car accident in an area without cell service, they cannot call for help and may have to walk five kilometres in the middle of the night, with kids in tow, in -40°C weather, with wild animals around to boot. Anyone can see that this scenario is not very safe and could easily be avoided with modern technology.

Cell phones did not exist in the 1970s, so it was normal to walk if you were in an accident in the middle of nowhere. Now, however, technology is accessible, and when people travel to parts of Africa they are often surprised to see that there is cell service everywhere. I did a humanitarian placement in Senegal and there was cell service everywhere. It was only in a very remote region of western Africa in a village called Tiaré, about a two-hour drive from Kaolack, that cell phones no longer worked.

However, in Canada, a G7 country, there is still no cell coverage along some highly travelled roads. I think we can all agree that this is unacceptable. It is a matter of public safety, and a functioning cell phone can save lives in many situations.

It makes absolutely no sense to ask the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to study this issue to show how important a wireless telecommunications network is to public safety. I think that the Minister of Public Safety has enough data at his disposal to make investments, considering the impact these investments could have on public safety.

Another important thing we need to talk about when it comes to wireless communications is the lack of a national strategy. In fact, that was mentioned in the Auditor General's report on high-speed Internet access in rural regions. The government takes a piecemeal approach to its programs and investments without ever establishing a national strategy or knowing where it is going. That has considerable repercussions.

Often programs are put in place or subsidies are given to certain companies so that they can have a faster Internet connection. As a result, the companies that are granted these subsidies crush their competitors who receive nothing and the cycle starts all over again.

Unfortunately, the money invested in rural infrastructure is not being optimized. In other words, this creates a value-for-money problem. It is not clear if we are creating competition or if this is truly working.

● (1320)

It is also unclear whether investing in the private sector is more effective than investing in co-operative style businesses. It is too bad that a comprehensive vision was not explored.

We are also seriously behind when it comes to implementing wireless communications programs. For example, the latest programs earmarked slower speeds than the ones proposed in the recent CRTC rulings. According to current usage of high-speed Internet and wireless telecommunications, the CRTC believes that people should have access to 50 megabits per second.

Unfortunately, in the latest programs, the speed is often 5 megabits per second. We are perpetually behind. By the time various measures included in a program are implemented, the program is proposed, proposals are received and reviewed, money is disbursed and the program finally rolls out, it is already obsolete and fails to meet current needs.

I would also like to have seen something else in this motion. It makes no mention of the different areas in which wireless communications are especially important, particularly telemedicine. Telemedicine is an important technology that enables people to communicate with specialists, particularly people in rural areas, where access is limited. High-resolution videos make it possible to transmit live images of an X-ray, for example. Different things can be done and people can have access to specialists who will advise their local health care providers.

Education is another important aspect of wireless communications and high-speed Internet. Many people take distance education courses from Laval University, for example. They do the courses from home. Unfortunately, that requires quite a bit of bandwidth. Many people do not have high-speed Internet and are unable to take distance education courses because their Internet is too slow. Sometimes they do manage it, but they then have to pay exorbitant amounts for their data usage.

At the end of a session, it is not uncommon for students to receive monthly bills of \$200 or \$300 for watching the various videos required by their courses. I think there is a problem if people living in rural areas do not have the same access to education as those living in urban areas.

*Private Members' Business*

I appreciate my colleague's efforts, but I believe that this motion could have been better had it been drafted differently. That is why I would like to move, seconded by the member for North Island—Powell River, that Motion No. 208 be amended by: (a) deleting the words “, particularly wireless telecommunications infrastructure,”; (b) replacing the words “caused by extreme weather events” with the words “and for telemedicine purposes”; (c) adding, after the words “fundamental fairness; (d)”, the words “reliable and accessible digital infrastructure is critical to education given the development of distance learning, to access to government services and to full participation in cultural life;”; (d) by replacing the words “(d) the government should (i) continue in its efforts to support Canadians, especially those in rural regions, in accessing the digital infrastructure they need to innovate, create economic opportunity and maintain public safety, (ii) examine the possibility of enabling further investments in rural digital infrastructure, including by reviewing the terms and conditions of the federal infrastructure program Investing in Canada, to incentivize investments in rural connectivity by the private sector and by leveraging funds from other orders of government, (iii) continue to work with telecommunication companies, provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous communities and relevant emergency response organizations to enhance rural connectivity and ensure maximum preparedness in emergency situations;” with the words “(e) the government should (i) continue in its efforts to support Canadians, especially those in rural regions, in accessing the digital infrastructure they need, (ii) ensure value for money from investments of public funds in rural digital infrastructure, including by reviewing the terms and conditions of the Connect to Innovate program to include wireless in the program and reduce the risk that public funds replace private-sector investments, (iii) continue to work with telecommunication companies, provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous communities and relevant emergency response organizations to enhance rural connectivity;”; (e) replacing the words “(e) the Standing Committee on Industry” with the words “(f) the Standing Committee on Industry”; (f) deleting the word “significant”; and (g) deleting the words “and (f) the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security should be instructed to undertake a comprehensive study on the public safety dimensions of wireless infrastructure deployment in rural Canada, and report to the House at its earliest convenience”.

•(1325)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** It is my duty to inform the hon. member that, pursuant to Standing Order 93 (3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent. I therefore ask the hon. member for Pontiac if he consents to the proposed amendment.

•(1330)

**Mr. William Amos:** No, Mr. Speaker.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** There is no consent; therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Pontiac for his work on Motion No. 208 and for

all the work he has done in the community with respect to Internet services.

[*English*]

I rise in the House today to speak to the government's position on Motion No. 208. As members know, my riding of Nickel Belt is in rural northern Ontario, and I am Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, so I have a direct and personal understanding of the needs of rural communities.

It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak about this issue that is really important to my constituents. They are already very familiar with high-speed Internet access in rural areas. Reliable access to digital infrastructure is essential not only for economic development but for a better quality of life for rural Canadians. That is why our government has already made significant investments to extend reliable, high-speed Internet and wireless services to rural communities across the country.

[*Translation*]

There is, however, still a lot of work to do. We know that local leaders are the ones who best understand their communities' needs.

[*English*]

That is why my hon. colleague, the newly appointed Minister of Rural Economic Development, has embarked upon a cross-country listening tour, after the Conservatives cut the rural secretariat in 2012. It is part of her mandate to develop an economic development strategy made for rural Canada through consultations with Canadians in all provinces and territories on how best to foster economic development in rural and remote communities through a whole-of-government approach. We are committed to sharing the strategy with Canadians by June 2019.

[*Translation*]

We have been meeting with community leaders from across Canada since last week to hear about their needs and priorities.

[*English*]

Engaging with our partners is a key step as our government works to put forward an economic development strategy that will reflect the needs and priorities of rural communities.

[*Translation*]

By working with our partners, the government will be able to help rural communities in Canada thrive for generations to come. This collaboration will also help create jobs and opportunities for all Canadians in rural communities.

Reliable and affordable access to digital services is one of the foundations of our government's strategy.

[English]

As members of the House know, rural Canadians need access to high-speed Internet wireless services to participate fully in the digital global economy. They need digital connectivity to attract talent, businesses and the investments needed to compete on the global stage.

[Translation]

According to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, over five million Canadians, particularly in rural areas, still do not have access to Internet services that meet the the federal regulator's baseline service standards.

In order to address this problem, the CRTC set the following objective: all Canadians must have access to voice and broadband Internet service on both fixed and mobile wireless networks.

[English]

To meet this goal, the CRTC has established a \$750-million fund to support the construction of telecommunications infrastructure in underserved communities. This will ensure that Canadians living in rural and remote areas will have access to these services.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Our government is doing its part. We have undertaken a number of initiatives that underscore our commitment to meeting the CRTC's objective.

For example, as part of the connect to innovate program, we are investing \$500 million to bring broadband Internet to 900 rural and remote communities. Our objective was 300 communities, but we have expanded this initiative to 900 communities, including 190 indigenous communities across Canada.

[English]

An additional 300,000 households in rural and remote communities are benefiting from high-speed broadband Internet access through the connecting Canadians program. An additional \$2 billion is available through a funding stream dedicated to renewing infrastructure in rural and remote northern communities.

[Translation]

High-speed Internet is essential to help Canadians in rural regions grow their businesses, access services, acquire new skills and keep in touch with their family and friends across Canada.

That is why our government invested historic amounts in broadband infrastructure. Budget 2019 make ambitious new commitments to ensure that 95% of Canadians have access to high-speed Internet by 2026 and that 90% have access by 2021. What is more, to achieve the CRTC's objective, the budget seeks to ensure that every home and every business in Canada has high-speed Internet by 2030.

Budget 2019 provides for new support for northern communities, including support for rural tourism and skills training. It also provides for \$1.7 billion in new funding to get every Canadian

### *Private Members' Business*

connected to high-speed Internet by 2030, regardless of where they live.

[English]

The budget lays out the creation of the new universal broadband fund of up to \$1.7 billion over 13 years to build on the success of the connect to innovate program by extending backbone infrastructure in underserved communities and securing the new low-latency low earth orbit satellite capacity to serve our most rural communities.

We will also work with the Canada Infrastructure Bank to identify ways to apply its innovative financing tools to stimulate private sector investments in high-speed Internet infrastructure in underserved communities.

The introduction in the fall economic statement by the Minister of Finance of the accelerated investment incentive fund is allowing telecommunication companies to write off a larger share of the costs of new capital assets in the same year the investment is made, providing the benefit that they are expanding connectivity in rural Canada.

[Translation]

Thanks to these investments, our government is making sure that Canadians in rural areas have access to the health care services and education that all Canadians deserve.

[English]

These investments are giving rural Canadians opportunities to turn ideas into promises, goods and services and to expand their businesses. These investments are also enabling rural Canadians to start new businesses and grow them into globally competitive businesses without having to leave their rural communities.

[Translation]

Our government has made it clear that partnerships are crucial to succeeding in our work. We have to work together. That is why our government is doing this work hand in hand with provinces that want to partner with us and with territories, municipalities, indigenous peoples and the private sector.

[English]

My colleague's Motion No. 208 builds on the outstanding work that has already been done, which is why I am proud that our government supports this motion and has continued to work hard to address issues that matter to rural Canadians. I look forward to continuing to work with all members of this House on this very important issue to all rural Canadians.

• (1340)

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join the debate today on Motion No. 208, which addresses rural digital infrastructure.

As all rural colleagues will know, reliable high-speed Internet is absolutely essential for rural communities, families, farmers and agribusinesses. From general communication to managing supply chains in our businesses to research in our schools to entertainment in our homes, Canadians rely on the Internet no matter where they live.

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Unfortunately, there are still too many rural communities, including those in Perth—Wellington, that simply do not have access to high-speed Internet. It is unfortunate, because in the communities in my riding, rural municipalities are working hard to attract new families to fill jobs and rejuvenate the communities, but that cannot be done without reliable high-speed Internet.

Service in the communities in my riding is particularly bad where the major telecoms are the incumbents. Where there are local independent service providers, they are leading the way in terms of rural broadband. They are putting fibre down the country roads. In some areas, the local incumbent has provided fibre high-speed Internet to every single farm and home within its area. That is impressive.

However, to move beyond that into the areas where the major telecoms are the incumbents is impossible and not financially viable, so local ISPs are relying on the government to fund them. Unfortunately, that is not happening. What we have seen with the connect to innovate program has been a complete ignoring of rural communities in Perth—Wellington.

There are at least three projects in my riding that applied for the connect to innovate program in November 2016. Here we are in May of 2019, and what do we hear from the Liberal government? Crickets. There is no response. They applied in November 2016. These are the independent service providers that are leading the way in terms of connecting our rural communities to high-speed Internet, yet here they are, still waiting for an answer one way or the other from the connect to innovate program. That complete and blatant disrespect for rural communities and for these hard-working independent Internet service providers is completely unacceptable.

In fact, I dare say that the speed with which the government is acting on high-speed Internet has been slower than dial-up. That is my staff's one joke for the day.

The government talks a big game when it comes to rural broadband and makes long-term commitments, yet does not actually succeed in acting on this matter. We have to question how much of a priority this is for the government when in the dying days of the government, it decides to introduce a private member's motion directing a committee to undertake a study to look at rural digital infrastructure. The rhetoric does not match the reality of what we hear on the ground.

I want to highlight some of the independent work being done by different communities within my riding, including the SWIFT program, an amazing program that is working with municipalities, independent Internet service providers and the communities to bring rural high speed. It is waiting as well for an answer one way or the other as to whether its projects can go ahead through the SWIFT program.

When it comes to last-mile connectivity, so often the government is not funding it. That last mile is so critical to rural communities like mine in Perth—Wellington.

This is not the first time I have raised these issues in this House. This is at least the third time I have raised the need for reliable high-speed Internet in rural communities like mine in Perth—Wellington.

In fact, just last November, I asked a question of the government during question period related to the Auditor General's report. The response I received at the time from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development was nothing more than empty promises, so I followed it up with an adjournment debate. At the next opportunity, I once again asked for a response on why the government was failing rural communities when it came to high-speed Internet. Again I received the same empty rhetoric, this time from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development.

At the time, I quoted the Auditor General's report, which clearly stated that the AG's office examined the issue and found that Innovation, Science and Economic Development "did not have a strategy in place to improve access for almost 3.7 million Canadians."

● (1345)

That is still the case. There is no coherent plan in place to get Canadians connected. The government quoted a target, that every Canadian will have access by 2030. However, without a plan to get them there, it is not going to happen. If the government cannot process simple applications over a three-year program, how can anyone believe that it will get Internet service to 3.7 million Canadians within the next 11 years?

It goes back to the motivation of the private member's motion. Again, it is instructing two standing committees to undertake comprehensive studies on this issue. We have 30 sitting days remaining in this Parliament. At most, there are 12 committee meetings left for each of the two committees mentioned in this motion, yet here we are debating this and asking these committees to undertake these comprehensive studies in 30 days and to report back to the House.

I would remind the Liberal member for Pontiac that his party has a majority on every committee in this House. If the Liberals wanted to undertake a study on rural broadband, on rural digital infrastructure, they could have done so at any time over the past three and a half years of this mandate, yet the Liberals have come here, in the dying days of this Parliament, to instruct two committees to undertake meaningful studies and report back by the end of this Parliament. Again, we have 30 sitting days remaining, at most.

I would further point out that the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology tabled a report last April entitled "Broadband Connectivity in Rural Canada: Overcoming the Digital Divide". I am curious. What is it in that report the member for Pontiac found was not up to snuff so he needed to have another report on the same matter?

Rural Canadians do not need another study. They need action. They need the government to actually process applications and make approvals in programs that are already in place.

I will again reference the report from Auditor General from last fall, which stated:



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In its April 2018 report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology recommended that Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada develop a comprehensive rural broadband strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders, including but not limited to governments at all levels, civil society groups, Internet service providers, First Nations, and non-profit organizations.

It goes on to say, about the federal government's response to the committee:

The government responded to the Standing Committee's recommendation of a comprehensive rural broadband strategy. However, the response did not mention a strategy.

The Auditor General criticized the government for not having a strategy. A standing committee recommended that there should be a strategy. Now we have a motion in this House instructing a committee to undertake a study to recommend a strategy for rural Internet.

We wonder why Canadians get frustrated with government, when we see this type of circular thinking from the Liberal government. Canadians are tired of more and more reports telling them what they already know. They know that we lack high-speed rural Internet. They know that action is not happening, and it is not coming from our major telecoms. It is our independent local Internet service providers that are leading the way. Those are the ones we should be supporting. Those are the ones we should be working with. Those are the ones who should be provided with the resources necessary to connect to that last mile of high-speed Internet in rural communities, in my riding of Perth—Wellington and across Canada.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I definitely share the former speaker's passion on this issue. I am the proud representative of North Island—Powell River. My job is always to come to this place and reflect the realities of rural and remote communities. Motion No. 208 focuses on a concern that many of my constituents share around rural digital infrastructure.

There are many communities across my riding where there is limited internet access and many areas with no cell service at all. There are communities and regions in our area that only have dial-up access. Several petitions have come from my region informing the government about how important cell reception is to the people who live there. The availability is so low. I continue to table them in the House as they arrive.

I want to thank the member for Pontiac for bringing this important motion to the House so I have an opportunity to speak to it. I work with him on the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

However, I will also reiterate that this is a bit frustrating to be in the place of reiterating again and again the need. I think we all know how strong the need is for rural and remote communities to have high-speed Internet, to have access to cell reception. We know those communities are having certain challenge because they do not have that access.

The member's motion also looks at a gap. From the outset, we knew what those problems were. I think the House knows in detail what those problems and limitations are for maintaining and developing a digital network in remote areas.

I am concerned as well that we are standing here at the end of the 42nd Parliament having this discussion when the House standing

committees are very busy doing the work they need to do. I do not think they need to reiterate again the needs of these communities. That need has been established. It is very clear. There is a record of it in this place. It is time that we see some action.

I understand the concern of identifying major issues of safety, that lack of rural digital infrastructure and what that does to those regions in Canada. In November of last year, my riding had a horrific example of what the lack of cell service meant in the communities. People who have not come to my riding and done the beautiful drive to the real north of the north Vancouver Island region should do so. It is a beautiful area, but it is also a very isolated area with no cell reception.

Duncan Moffat is a 23-year-old man. He was driving and he went off of Highway 19 just south of Sayward. His truck dropped down about 12 metres on a slope. He was pinned inside and not visible from the road. In fact, no one saw him. He survived off the apples and Gatorade that he had in the vehicle with him and he was kept warm with cardboard boxes.

I want to just note that November of last year it was quite cold. I know I live on Vancouver Island and it does not get to -20°C very often like it does in this area, but it was very cold. The phone was sitting right next to him, but because there was no phone reception, he could not make that call. He was found nearly a week later, simply by chance. A hunter was out in the area, saw the wreck.

What was most ironic, startling and sad was that when his mother was called to be told that her son, who she had been looking for desperately, had been found, she was just out of cell service area, putting up posters to help hunters know to look for him. It was not until she came back to where she was in range that she got the information.

I want to thank Duncan and his family for sharing this experience. I am really proud to come to this place and share that stark reality. This is what it means for too many rural and remote communities across the country, where people are put in situations that are simply not safe. It is not right that some parts of Canada have a lot of access and other parts do not.

I am really interested in seeing action. The understanding and knowledge of the issues around the lack of a cellular network is a public safety issue and we know this. I outlined it just now. The government has the information. Let us just move toward actually implementing an effective rural digital strategy immediately. The communities in my riding have waited long enough and it is time.

● (1350)

I am pleased that some of the Connect to Innovate funding has been tagged for the region that I represent. This funding will support communities and their needs, and I am very happy to see that.

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The local ISPs are ready to go to work, but I will also note here that although this funding was announced and made public, they are still waiting for the next step so that the project can actually move forward. This is backbone infrastructure that is much needed in our region, and it will provide great opportunities for our communities, which have been desperately calling for it. However, it is not cellphone infrastructure, and that is important. I am glad that this step is being taken and I am glad that it is going to improve cell reception in the future, but it is still not the cellphone infrastructure that we need.

Innovation lives in all communities across Canada, and small and remote communities are actively working on solutions to diversify and broaden their local economies. I have recently spent time with both the Port McNeill and District Chamber of Commerce and the Port Hardy Chamber of Commerce. Connectivity continues to be a significant concern in the work that they are doing in their regions with local businesses.

I would like to outline here that recently the largest community that I represent, Campbell River, with a population of just over 34,000, in the last couple of years put up its own infrastructure within the city centre so that we could attract more businesses that have a need for very high-speed Internet. It came to the point that the city itself had to build that infrastructure so that we could attract businesses to our region. When that is happening, I hope that this place understands how serious the need is. Even though there is some connectivity, if it is not the very high-speed Internet that so many businesses need, that lack provides yet another barrier to those small communities. A lot of my communities are seeing extensive interest from people and businesses outside of our region, but the limited access to Internet and the limited cell reception are huge barriers.

I spend a lot of time in my riding speaking with indigenous leaders, mayors and regional district representatives from communities like Gold River, Sayward, Mowachah Muchalaht, Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda, Dzawada'enuxw in Kingcome Inlet, Holberg, Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Alert Bay and Port Alice. If I listed them all, we would be here a lot longer. I have not had a chance to mention them all, but the need is very clear, as we can tell just from that short list of people and communities in my riding.

While the connect to innovate government program was put in place to improve broadband Internet connectivity for rural Canadians, these programs focused exclusively on Internet and did not cover cellular network development. The issue of cellular access must be addressed. It is for the safety and the potential financial well-being of the people for whom I am here and honoured to represent.

Rural and remote communities are strong, and as a result of the many ups and downs we have faced, we are adaptable. Ups and downs breed tenacity and innovation. As rural and remote communities across Canada look at how to build strength in their communities, this infrastructure is imperative. It is also imperative that the Canadian government step up to the plate. We want to see rural and remote communities do well. That work needs to be supported.

The NDP is calling, first and foremost, for cellphone infrastructure to be included immediately in the communications development strategies. Beyond this vital improvement, I support the development of the best communications systems in the world for Canada, a country that relies entirely on innovation to maintain its enviable position among wealthy countries. Connectivity is essential to efficient internal and international trade, and communities like mine want to be included.

They are ready and willing to do the work; we just need that bit of support. The government must be part of the solution. Already in Canada, Internet and cell costs are some of the highest in the world. These barriers are only felt that much harder in small and rural communities like the ones that I represent.

I will support Motion No. 208. I hope to see that if this motion actually gets to committee, action is taken very promptly. My constituents deserve nothing less.

• (1355)

**Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak today about the importance of rural digital infrastructure and to underscore the importance of the work my hon. colleague from Pontiac has done in championing access for rural communities to digital infrastructure.

All Canadians need access to high-speed Internet so that we may fully participate in our economy, our democracy and daily life. In many rural and remote communities, challenging geography and smaller populations often present a barrier to private sector investment in building and maintaining high-speed Internet infrastructure.

Our government has done groundbreaking work through the connect to innovate program, and the Province of British Columbia has been an important partner as well, especially with the connected coast initiative. Motion No. 208 builds on our strong beginning and envisions a nationwide strategy for rural connectivity.

The importance of digital infrastructure in rural and remote communities cannot be overstated. Canadians living in these communities go about their lives with slower Internet speeds and iffy cellphone coverage. As a result, many Canadians face significant digital barriers to full participation in the marketplace, the workplace, education and community engagement and even in very routine matters.

Rural and remote parts of Canada already experience slower emergency response times, which is exacerbated by less extensive wireless telecommunications networks. During extreme weather events and for everyday travel along rural and remote roads, staying connected to a wireless network is a matter of basic personal and public safety.

In addition to public safety benefits, the economic impacts of digital infrastructure are widespread. Innovation occurs everywhere, obviously, in rural and remote regions just as much as in urban centres, but not without equal opportunity and access to the digital economy.

From an international trade perspective, Internet connectivity gives micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in rural communities across the country access to existing and emerging global markets and the support services that are critical to economic growth and good middle-class jobs.

Motion No. 208 points out that there is still much work to be done so that all Canadians have access to reliable digital infrastructure. Our government's effort is a very strong beginning.

Through the connect to innovate program, the disparity in ridings such as my own is declining by ensuring that communities have equal access. Connect to innovate invested over \$45 million in 2018, in partnership with the Government of British Columbia, to bring improved high-speed Internet to rural and remote communities. The program supports new backbone infrastructure to connect institutions, such as schools and hospitals, as well as households and businesses.

The program is providing high-speed Internet access to rural and indigenous communities in the Sea to Sky corridor. With almost \$2 million in provincial funding, over \$2 million in federal funding and almost \$2 million from Shaw, a new fibre optic cable is connecting Whistler to Pemberton to Mount Currie. This has not been easy to achieve. To establish high-speed, high-quality Internet service in the beautiful community of Pemberton, 30 minutes north of Whistler and very connected to Whistler in every other way, local governments and the federal government, together with a lot of discussion between two major telecommunications companies that compete rather than see themselves as complementary, were able to piece together a first-class solution. The process taught us a lot about the value of perseverance and has created a climate of trust, which we are building on to ensure that Pemberton has the same level of service as urban areas that are much easier to support.

In Pemberton, high-speed Internet access is serving a growing community and the municipality's plans for residential development. As mayor Mike Richman, of Pemberton, noted:

This network will enable our local businesses to operate to their fullest potential, while attracting future economic opportunities in the Pemberton area. Residents and home-based businesses will be able to reliably and affordably connect globally allowing us to compete in the digital economy.

Moving further north on Highway 99 to Mount Currie, the connect to innovate program is providing fibre optic infrastructure to institutions such as the newly constructed Ts'zil Learning Centre, where members of the Lil'wat Nation achieve grade 12 diplomas and beyond. With the partnership of Shaw and the Lil'wat Nation, the Ts'zil Learning Centre will now be able to provide new learning opportunities for the Lil'wat Nation and neighbouring communities. This is of particular importance, because when Lil'wat Nation members walk through the doors of Ts'zil to continue with their education, they are also often facing the challenges of the residential school system in their past. Learning outcomes from Ts'zil are exceptional, because the healing process, the process of truth and reconciliation, is foundational. The latest access to digital technology is a big part of continuing success for the Lil'wat Nation.

• (1400)

Connect to innovate also helps to fund British Columbia's connected coast project, bringing new or improved high-speed

### *Private Members' Business*

Internet accessibility to 154 rural and remote coastal communities, 15 of which are in West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, in small, very special places like Gibsons, Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek, Secret Cove, Welcome Beach and Wilson Creek, for example.

Egmont, near Skookumchuck Narrows, is a remote community on the Sunshine Coast and presents unique challenges for fibre optic infrastructure due to its topography.

When I met with the community there, it was doubtful that we could achieve rural connectivity. Also, people there are desperate for it. One key reason is because Egmont is a spectacular tourist destination, including the Skookumchuck Narrows. It is an awe-inspiring place and very dangerous. From a public safety perspective, connectivity for Egmont is essential.

Motion No. 208 is important because it draws our attention to the entire issue of equity for areas across the country that are underserved.

Bowen Island is another such place, where Shaw is currently working on upgrades to enhance the existing network. Bowen Island's success is a result of successes elsewhere.

Motion No. 208 shines a spotlight on an issue that we are working on together to ensure all Canadians have the same opportunities.

The CRTC has also taken action to support rural coverage. The CRTC released a decision in December 2016, setting out a universal service objective. The objective is for Canadians in urban, rural and remote areas to have equal access to both voice and broadband Internet services on fixed and wireless networks. To support these objectives, the CRTC has created a \$750 million fund to support telecommunications infrastructure.

Further, this past October, provincial and territorial ministers for innovation and economic development agreed to make broadband a priority and to develop a long-term strategy. This strategy includes improving access to the latest mobile services along major roads and where Canadians live and work.

Through the leadership of the members for Pontiac, Nickel Belt, Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Tobique—Mactaquac, constant champions for rural Canada, we now have a ministry for rural economic development.

The minister, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, will develop a rural economic development strategy and is leading our government's further efforts to bring high-speed Internet access to more people and businesses in rural Canada.

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Motion No. 208 will help to ensure that Canadians living in these parts of Canada have access to reliable and accessible digital infrastructure and to secure the health and safety of all Canadians no matter where they live. In West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, we have lent our voices to this. We are happy to share our experiences on this important improvement to the lives of Canadians.

Our government is committed to continuing to work to deliver real, meaningful progress for Canadians in all parts of the country.

I am very happy to support Motion No. 208 and to support all my colleagues in the House who are dedicated representatives of rural Canada.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Before I give the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît the floor, I should let her know that she will have about five minutes before I have to interrupt her.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to me to talk about digital issues in rural areas because 29 of the 30 municipalities in my riding are rural and, like other rural areas, they have serious connectivity problems.

On March 13, I met with Réjean Sauvé, who has been with the Coop CSUR for 12 years. The coop has developed expertise on rural and remote connectivity in several countries and criticized the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, for giving big corporations preferential treatment and standing in the way of small co-operatives, which exist not to make money but to serve their communities' connectivity needs.

One of the problems is that programs like connect to innovate have been disastrously mismanaged. The Auditor General himself said so in 2018. For instance, one rule says that if a single household within a hexagon covering roughly 25 square kilometres is connected, no other homes in that hexagon can receive other services. In many rural areas like Saint-Télesphore, Sainte-Justine, Sainte-Marthe, Hemmingford and Saint-Anicet, as soon as there is the slightest bit of wind or rain, the Internet connection drops out. However, there are people living in these communities. There are students, business owners and health care workers who need to stay connected to the Internet. Furthermore, the problems affect not just high-speed Internet, but cell service as well.

This problem is so serious that small co-operatives hoping to offer services to rural residents say they are struggling, because they have to contact people in order to compete with a big company like Bell, as is the case in the Soulanges region. They have to contact people to perform periodic speed tests and build their cases. The resources this requires are out of reach for small co-operatives. They do not have engineers to prepare all these files, and it is hard to apply for federal funding to develop these services in rural areas.

The government can boast about its 2019 budget providing billions of dollars over the next 10 years. However, we want people

living in rural areas to have a strong economy or access to quality education right now, not in 10 years.

Why does the government treat people living in rural areas like second class citizens? In a G7 country like Canada, there should not be a double standard for connectivity.

For example, in 2018, Bell received funding under the connect to innovate program to provide service in Saint-Télesphore. However, Bell is only serving 83 households at present compared to 400 households that were formerly serviced by Coop CSUR. The big companies only sprinkle money in rural areas. There is no real positive effect in small local communities. It is also impossible to obtain the timeline for the real results of the projects and funds awarded. It is all very nebulous and there is a lack of transparency.

In addition, the CRTC says access to aerial infrastructure should be shared among small and large companies, but that infrastructure is not available to small co-operatives like Coop CSUR. Small co-operatives run up against all kinds of obstacles when they want to help small rural municipalities, but big corporations are not interested in small municipalities, because there is not enough profit to be made off of too few people.

The bill introduced by the member for Pontiac is interesting, but previous Liberal and Conservative governments should have taken steps a long time ago to implement a national digital strategy that requires companies to serve all households in remote areas. That did not happen because those governments lacked any semblance of vision.

• (1410)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Pontiac has the right of reply.

[*English*]

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House not only on behalf of the constituents of Pontiac, but also on behalf of all rural Canadians who want better cellphone and Internet coverage.

Since the advent of the Internet, rural Canadians have had less solid Internet connection than urban Canadians. The cellphone connection has been less strong for rural Canadians than for urban Canadians. High-speed fibre connections are less common, and wireless phone signals are weaker than in cities. We have to address this issue.

[*Translation*]

Telecommunications companies invest less in digital infrastructure in rural Canada for reasons related to geography, cost and population density. That has to change.

Although Internet service speeds and cellular services have improved in rural Canada, the problem remains that digital services and infrastructure in urban Canada have improved at a faster pace, which again puts rural communities at a relative disadvantage.

The flooding these past few weeks has taught us that good cell coverage and reliable high-speed Internet access are not only an important tool for economic development, but they are also crucial to ensuring public safety.

The response to the crisis caused by flooding in the Pontiac riding and throughout the Outaouais was possible largely thanks to telecommunications technologies. Whether a question of warning neighbours or getting up-to-date information about the flooding, areas looking for volunteers or sandbags and evacuation notices, many people in our communities were relying on social media and their cell phones.

• (1415)

[*English*]

Communities throughout the Pontiac have relied on telecommunications to organize their emergency response. Last night, I met with David Rochon, the mayor of Waltham, a community of 325 souls, give or take a few. It is an hour and a half from the nation's capital, and the cellphone coverage in Waltham is non-existent. People cannot manage an emergency flood without cellphone access. It is so difficult.

It is with the specific interest of offering additional protections to people living in the rural areas of Canada during disasters, during emergency weather situations, that I brought forward Motion No. 208 to the House of Commons in November 2018. The motion promotes the expansion of cellular coverage and reliable Internet access, which would help Canadians better deal with situations like the floods of 2017 and 2019. Last year, we had a tornado as well. In all of these circumstances, more reliable cellphone coverage would have helped us.

I am so grateful for the support for this motion that has been provided by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the rural caucus of the Union of Quebec Municipalities.

[*Translation*]

The purpose of Motion No. 208 is to ensure that, in future, Canadians living in rural regions are never again caught off guard in crisis situations, unable to contact anyone or call for help.

I was very pleased to see that as a result of the recommendations of the Liberal rural caucus and Motion No. 208, our Liberal government committed in budget 2019 to invest \$5 billion over the next 10 years to improve digital infrastructure in the regions and connect all Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2030.

*Private Members' Business*

[*English*]

We have never before had a federal government willing to commit to that goal. We are going to get there: 100% rural Internet coverage.

[*Translation*]

A unanimous vote of the House of Commons would send a clear message to Canadians and telecommunications companies that the safety of our citizens and the vitality of our regions and small communities are important, non-partisan issues.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 8, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:17 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1). Have a good evening and a good weekend, everyone.

(The House adjourned at 2:19 p.m.)



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