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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 24, 2020

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.) moved that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

Today I have the privilege of speaking to Bill C-6, which is an act to amend the Citizenship Act. When passed into law, this legislation will amend the oath of citizenship to ensure indigenous peoples have their right place within the solemn declaration made by newcomers as they are welcomed to the Canadian family.

The purpose of this bill is to continue to fulfill our government's commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, specifically call to action number 94. As members will know, identical legislation was tabled in the last Parliament; however, we were not able to advance it before dissolution.

[*Translation*]

I want to explain why I think it is important to highlight this. The government proposed this amendment some time ago, almost a year ago, in fact, as part of our overall efforts to significantly advance reconciliation.

[*English*]

This is hard work. The renewal of the relationship with indigenous peoples must be based on a recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. We have wed ourselves to these principles to foster collaboration in the creation of new laws and policies that will, among other things, protect indigenous languages, traditions and institutions.

Do these advancements mean our work is done? Of course not. Recent events illustrate that the issues that remain to be resolved are both complex and urgent. Equally, we cannot allow ourselves to go backward.

[*Translation*]

I hope we will use this moment as an opportunity to have a constructive debate on this bill, starting with an all-party agreement that the amendments it proposes to the Citizenship Act are one more vital step towards reconciliation.

[*English*]

Before discussing the substance of the legislation, I believe it is important to provide the historical context that gave rise to call to action number 94.

As was said at the time of the initial publication of the TRC report, too many Canadians know too little or nothing at all about the tragedy of the residential schools. This deficit of public awareness regarding the systemic way in which indigenous children were forcibly torn from their families has had serious consequences. Previously shamed into silence, thousands of survivors painfully shared their residential school experiences with the commission. This helped to start an important dialogue about what is necessary to heal.

We, as Canadians, have much to learn from listening to their voices. It is in this spirit of sharing, knowledge and learning that we put forward this bill to ensure that new Canadians begin to understand the history of indigenous peoples as a part of our country's fabric at their inception as citizens. The stories of first nations, Inuit and Métis are the story of Canada itself.

[*Translation*]

That is why the approach we are taking with this new oath is so important. The action we are proposing today is one more step towards rebuilding a once harmonious relationship.

[*English*]

As Senator Murray Sinclair said:

Actions speak louder than words. The reality is that we're...looking for action that shows leadership, that causes people to sit up and take notice and recognize that there is an important process under way here that they have to be part of.

With this bill, we are taking a step to respond to Senator Sinclair's exhortation by modifying the oath of citizenship to be more inclusive and to help fundamentally transform the nature of our relationship with indigenous peoples.

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For hundreds of years, even before the residential schools, indigenous peoples faced discrimination in every aspect of their lives. Our government firmly believes that we must acknowledge the injustices of the past and envision a new relationship based on the inherent rights of indigenous peoples. The bill we have put forward today helps to lay the foundation for that journey.

Once adopted, the new oath of citizenship will read as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

In arriving at this language, I would note that the government engaged indigenous leaders, including the national indigenous organizations. My department began consultations in 2016 with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council. In addition, we also engaged with members of the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, an organization that represents indigenous modern treaty organizations and governments in Canada.

[*Translation*]

While all three organizations generally support the intent behind the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action, it was clear that further efforts were needed to make the oath as precise and inclusive as possible.

• (1110)

[*English*]

In summarizing our consultation, there were diverse views with regard to language. However, it is our sincere belief that the wording put forth in this bill reflects our best efforts to be inclusive of first nations, Inuit and Métis experiences, responding not only to call to action number 94 but to the substance of what my department heard throughout our consultations. In so doing, we put forward to the House today a proposed oath of citizenship that introduces and instills the principle of reconciliation among our new citizens.

Canada has been shaped by the contributions of immigrants over many generations. Travelling this country far and wide, one would be hard pressed to find a family whose journey did not start abroad. For many, becoming a citizen is a significant milestone on this journey. Indeed, nearly 85% of newcomers become citizens. Over the last decade, Canada has welcomed nearly 1.7 million new citizens. In my short time as minister, I have already had a number of opportunities to participate in citizenship ceremonies right across Canada, and I can tell members that is among the most emotional, moving and special functions I get to engage in.

[*Translation*]

I get to see the pride on the faces of new citizens and how this oath represents a major commitment as part of their journey to settle in a new country.

[*English*]

The oath is a very public declaration and an integral part of the citizenship process. It consecrates a commitment to equality, diver-

sity and respect within an open and free society. In addition, by taking the oath, new citizens inherit the legacy of those who have come before them and the values that have defined the character of Canada. When a newcomer becomes Canadian, our history becomes their history and their history becomes part of ours. Now, that shared history will also ensure that newcomers recognize and affirm the rights and treaties of indigenous peoples. The histories of indigenous peoples in Canada are diverse and an integral part of Canada's past, present and future.

[*Translation*]

It has been a long road, and we still have a lot of work to do. The purpose of this bill is twofold. First, our goal is to ensure that new Canadians recognize indigenous peoples' significant contributions to Canada. The government is also reaffirming its commitment to reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

We must keep moving forward together.

[*Translation*]

We have listened and learned. We are working together to take concrete measures to build a better future and a new relationship, and that includes recognizing indigenous peoples in the citizenship oath.

[*English*]

Our goal is to achieve a fundamental and profound shift in the relationship with indigenous peoples. However, this transformation will take mutual respect, determination and patience.

It will mean listening to and learning from indigenous partners, communities and youth, and acting decisively on what we have heard, which is to build trust and healing. It will also mean doing everything we can to support the inherent right to self-determination of indigenous peoples that will lead us all to a better future.

We can and will build a better Canada together, but we can only do this in full, honest partnership with indigenous peoples who truly know best when it comes to their own communities.

I want to end by acknowledging that this has been a challenging time. However, this legislation represents a significant opportunity to find a better way forward.

I look forward to working with all members of the House. It is my sincere hope that we will find a common cause to support this legislation, which represents an important and modest step forward on the path to reconciliation.

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Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am struggling a bit today. In the last Parliament I was part of the indigenous and northern affairs committee. We did a lot of work on a previous bill around making sure that indigenous children in care were taken care of properly. We know that the Human Rights Tribunal has stated repeatedly that indigenous children are not being treated the same as every other child in this country.

We are here today to talk about call to action number 94. In reality, in 2017 it was in the mandate letter for the minister at the time to deal with it. It is now 2020 and we finally have it here. I am going to support this legislation.

I am wondering how long it is going to take to look at reconciliation not just through these important parts, but the actual fundamental rights of first nations children in this country.

• (1115)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her work and for her advocacy. When it comes to reconciliation, it is well known.

I also want to express my gratitude to her for her support of the bill. It is my sincere hope that she will be able to encourage all members of the House to support this legislation. Her voice matters.

With regard to the member's comments around the provision of health care to indigenous children in particular, my colleagues the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations are making progress on that front. Clearly, there is more work to be done.

With respect to the timing of the bill, as I reflected during my remarks, this legislation was introduced some months ago. The foundation for today's debate has been laid. Obviously, the passage of the bill is long overdue and it is my hope that we will take a step forward to achieve that goal throughout the course of today and in the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will echo the member for North Island—Powell River. We will be supporting this legislation.

With all due respect to the minister, changing the citizenship oath and affirmation is really the low-hanging fruit in the long, hard path towards reconciliation that we as a nation must walk.

Walking backward and looking at the timeline, we had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with its calls to action in 2015. We had the minister's mandate letter in 2017. This bill is relatively simple, numbering maybe two pages.

I will ask the minister again. How is it that the Liberal government has taken this long? We are in 2020 and are just now seeing a bill of this order coming before us and not yet passed into law.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the sense of urgency in the tone of the member's question. He is quite right. There is no time for us to move backward. We must continue to move forward.

That is why, among the very first initiatives that I have taken in the short time since being sworn in as minister, I have put the bill

forward. It is not to be seen as a panacea or as a cure-all but as a step forward. I am encouraged by the member's comments around support for the bill. I would continue to encourage him to exhort others to come around to expressing their support for this legislation, because the sooner we can hear those voices come to this floor, the sooner we can pass it into law. That is definitely my intention.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for recognizing the importance of the call to action. There were 94 recommendations that came forward. When I reflect on the last four or five years, we have seen the Government of Canada take action on a number of them.

The previous question made reference to your ministry. We have seen the language—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the parliamentary secretary, who has been here for quite some time, that he is to address his questions to the Chair, not to the individual member.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, was it a beginner's mistake?

At the end of the day, the government has taken substantial action on the calls for action for truth and reconciliation. We have the language heritage bill. We have had legislation dealing with the thousands of children who are in child custody. Now we have yet another piece of the puzzle, if I can put it that way.

Could the minister reflect on how important it is for us to take a look at the bigger picture and how the government has, virtually from day one, treated this issue very seriously? Does he think this is just one piece of the puzzle toward reconciliation?

• (1120)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, there are few among us who think that my hon. colleague is a beginner.

I appreciate his comment because it allows me to expand for a moment on the broader context here, which I think is important for us to remember.

The bill would ensure that new Canadians are able to begin to fully appreciate the right place of indigenous peoples as part of the fabric of this country. This is a direct response to call to action No. 94, which our government committed to implementing along with all of the others that were released in 2015.

As my colleague pointed out, progress has been made in some other areas, particularly with regard to the protection and revitalization of indigenous languages and with legislation that will ensure that the best interests of indigenous children are reflected in the family court system. That has been incredibly important, along with other progress made around ensuring that indigenous communities have access to safe and clean water.

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This is one step. It is part of many steps that have to be made, which we will achieve together toward reconciliation.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, recommendation No. 94 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission suggested that four words be inserted into the citizenship oath. I am going to cut and splice here for the sake of time. It says, “I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including”, and here is what is inserted: “Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.”

Why is the government freelancing on this recommendation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, adding in things that were not included in the recommendation?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague makes a good point in that there is a distinction between the language used and the exact language that was put forward in call to action No. 94, but it is far from freelancing.

As I indicated, my department engaged in consultations with national indigenous organizations and indigenous leaders across this country. Through the exchange of those perspectives, we felt the revised language that I read into the record today, which is reflected in the text of the bill, would ensure more inclusivity when it comes to the experiences of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Obviously, those efforts were made with the best of intentions, and I look forward to debating it.

Certainly my hope is that the member and his party will come around to supporting the bill.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the bill amends the citizenship oath to let new Canadians know that they should recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. However, we have a situation today in which the government is clearly not recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples and not respecting section 35 of the Constitution.

How can we go forward with this when the government is not actually following its own words?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, as I acknowledged, we are indeed in a difficult situation right now. It goes without saying that we all want a peaceful de-escalation when it comes to the blockades. At the same time, however, this government has continued to make efforts to engage in constructive dialogue with indigenous peoples. The Prime Minister and ministers have engaged with our partners right across the country.

We also have to bear in mind that there are serious concerns, as long as these blockades continue, with regard to the safety of indigenous peoples and Canadians right across the country, with regard to ensuring we resume shipments of essential resources and, finally, with regard to jobs.

I certainly hope that I can count on my colleague to come around to support the bill, as it is one step in creating a space to advance meaningful reconciliation.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is very difficult to approach the business of the House today after weekend events that demonstrated so disastrously, yet again, the Liberal government's inability to provide peace, order and good government.

Teck Resources Limited withdrew from a \$20-billion project that had passed a succession of environmental reviews; had the enthusiastic support of indigenous communities that would have shared significant economic benefits and 7,000 jobs in construction and 2,500 jobs in operation; and had the support of provincial governments, business and industry, given the \$70 billion in economic stimulus it would have provided to the national economy. This took place because the Liberal government could not resolve its contradictory environmental and resource-development policies and provide certainty that the project would not be threatened by further lawlessness. This is a devastating blow to the Alberta economy, the national economy and to the concept of peace, order and good government.

With that, I will proceed to the legislation at hand.

It is an honour to rise today to speak to the importance, indeed the sanctity, of the oath sworn by all new citizens of our great country, Canada. The current oath of citizenship is a relatively short, compact and simple, but profound, promise of new citizens to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, all of the laws of Canada. It is an affirmation of patriotism and loyalty.

As we consider Bill C-6 today, I believe a few moments of historical reflection are in order.

Canada may be 152 years old, but Canada only became largely independent of the United Kingdom in 1931, under the Conservative government of Prime Minister R. B. Bennett. Even after 1931, citizens of this country remained British subjects. Anyone coming to Canada from anywhere else in the Commonwealth was not required to take the oath of allegiance. However, by 1946, the Canadian Parliament, the MPs sitting in Centre Block, now under renovation next door, moved to enact the Canadian Citizenship Act.

I arrived in Canada at Pier 21 in Halifax with my mother, a Canadian army nurse, aboard a Red Cross hospital ship in convoy, the *Lady Nelson*, toward the end of the Second World War, a couple of years before the Canadian Citizenship Act came into effect in 1947. My parents were both Canadian: My father was a captain in the Canadian army and my mother was a nursing sister lieutenant assigned to the army medical corps plastic surgery team. I was born in a Canadian army hospital in Bramshott, Sussex.

With all of this combined, I grew through childhood and into my twenties believing that I was a Canadian citizen. I was sworn into the Royal Canadian Navy, only briefly, to my lifelong regret, and then into the Royal Canadian Army Reserve, taking the oath of loyalty to Queen and Canada each time, and I voted in two Canadian elections. I only discovered in 1966, when I applied for my first passport to travel to Vietnam as a freelance journalist, that I did not qualify to carry a Canadian passport: Because I arrived in Canada before 1947, I was not a Canadian citizen.

Fortunately in the 1960s, naturalization of this sort could be accomplished in very short order, and very quickly I was able to finally officially swear the oath of allegiance, officially becoming a Canadian citizen. I received a passport and was able to begin getting on with my life.

The actual Canadian citizenship oath only became law with amendments to the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1977. For the first time, Queen Elizabeth was cited as the Queen of Canada, consistent with Canada's status as a constitutional monarchy.

I assure you, Madam Speaker, I am moving steadily toward the proposed amendment to the oath before us today, changes that have been proposed a number of times since 1977 by Liberal governments. These proposed changes, in their time, were controversial and were either abandoned or died on the Order Paper.

• (1125)

In the mid-1990s, the Liberal citizenship and immigration minister, Sergio Marchi, commissioned a group of Canadian writers to compose a new oath that would have, outrageously, dropped all reference to Queen Elizabeth, our constitutional monarch. Fortunately, the Liberal prime minister, Chrétien, in a moment of exceptional clarity, told Minister Marchi to park that proposed change and it was abandoned.

However, as members know, Liberals love tinkering with legislation, and a few years later another Liberal minister, Lucienne Robillard, tried to get rid of not the Queen this time but allegiance to her heirs and successors, which suggested to many that Canada's constitutional monarchy could end with her death. That bill, Bill C-63, died on the Senate Order Paper when an election was called. Two similar follow-on bills, Bill C-16 and Bill C-18, failed as well. As a matter of fact, Bill C-18 never made it past second reading in the House.

That brings us to Bill C-6, the proposal before us today to amend the Citizenship Act again.

The minister's mandate letter has directed him to achieve 12 specific tasks. Among these tasks are a number that stumped his two predecessors through the past Parliament.

The minister has been directed to effectively address the continuing flow of illegal migrants across Canada's southern border, more than 16,000 last year, and to engage the United States in closing loopholes in the safe third country agreement. As the backlog of asylum claimants, most of whom are likely to be rejected, approaches 90,000 and is still rising, the minister has been directed to reduce processing times. As well, the minister has been directed by the Prime Minister to advance reforms in the capacity of the asylum system and introduce a dedicated refugee stream to provide safe haven for human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers at risk. As provinces, communities, chambers of commerce, and business and industry across Canada appeal for more timely, more efficient processing of permanent immigrants, the minister has been directed to assist there as well.

There are other directions in the minister's mandate letter, but the first legislation brought to the House by the minister is far down the mandate-letter list. Bill C-6 is, for all intents and purposes, the

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same proposed legislation as Bill C-69, thrown into the legislative process in the final days of the last Parliament, in June. There was no time to debate it then or for a committee study. It had absolutely no chance of passing in that Parliament. It was simply a pre-election promise.

Now we have Bill C-6. The oath as it is today, and as I have heard it many times over the years attending citizenship ceremonies as a journalist and as a member of Parliament, is this:

I swear...that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

It is, as I suggested in my opening remarks, a relatively short, compact, simple but profound promise of all new citizens to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, all of the laws of Canada.

The oath, with amendments proposed by the minister, would be:

I swear...that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

The government tells us that these additional 19 words are a fulfilment of a recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In fact, the commission only recommended that four words be added to the oath, which were "including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples". Whether four or 19 words are added to the oath, let us look at who would be speaking these words, the future new Canadians who would be swearing or affirming this proposed longer oath.

Let me suggest to colleagues in the House to close their eyes for a moment, if I have not already led them to a somnolent state. I am sure they can visualize a familiar scene. In a council chamber, a courtroom or an event room in a historic building, or at a site or national park, there is a group of 40 or 60 men, women and children, along with as many or more friends and family.

• (1130)

A citizenship judge enters, often accompanied by a Mountie or two, a handful of politicians and, in recent years, very often an indigenous representative of the region or province. Canada's national anthem is sung with perhaps a bit more enthusiasm than in other circumstances. A few tears of anticipatory joy may be shed.

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A smudging ceremony may be conducted, in which sage, cedar, tobacco or other plants are burned to cleanse and purify the event. Inspirational words will be offered by the presiding citizenship judge and other notables present. They will speak to the importance of the event, our country's history, perhaps their own personal experiences, and the words they are about to speak together.

Visualize again for a moment the expectant faces among the audience, faces from races, religions, cultures, communities and countries near and far who have come to Canada under a variety of circumstances. They may have come as economic migrants or refugees to join family members who came before, or as temporary foreign workers, or as international students who fell in love with this country and decided to stay and build their future lives here as citizens.

This ceremony is not a one-hour or a one-day event. One does not become a citizen overnight. This ceremony is the culmination of years of preparation, including accumulating the required residency years, learning one or both of Canada's official languages, and studying the many documents and data contained in the Discover Canada handbook or on the audio files connected to it and on the website.

This handbook is an abundant repository of Canadian history, citizen responsibilities and obligations, rights entrenched in the Constitution and the importance of the rule of law. This handbook is essential reading for new citizens, not only for the historic content, but also for the study questions provided to help them prepare for the citizenship test.

The handbook offers solid detail of Canada's first nations. As the section on aboriginal peoples explains, first nations' ancestors are "believed to have migrated from Asia many thousands of years ago." It explains that aboriginal people were well established in Canada "long before explorers from Europe first came to North America. Diverse, vibrant First Nations cultures were rooted in religious beliefs about their relationship to the Creator, the natural environment and each other."

The handbook also lays out in easily consumed detail the following:

Aboriginal and treaty rights are in the Canadian Constitution. Territorial rights were first guaranteed through the Royal Proclamation of 1763 by King George III, and established the basis for negotiating treaties with the newcomers—treaties that were not always fully respected.

The handbook addresses the impact of European diseases on the native culture and how traders, missionaries, soldiers and colonists changed native lives forever.

In preparation, future citizens learn of Joseph Brant, the Mohawk Loyalist military and political leader during the American Revolution; of Tecumseh and the Shawnees he led in support of British forces in the War of 1812; and of Louis Riel's fight for Métis rights as well as his trial and execution in 1885.

The handbook describes almost two centuries of injustice and abuse of aboriginal children in residential schools, physical abuse and cultural oppression. The handbook reminds readers that in 2008 in Ottawa the federal government under Conservative Prime Minister Harper formally apologized to former students. As well, the

handbook defines the three distinct groups that compose Canada's aboriginal peoples.

The Conservative Party fully supports treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people. Conservatives support real action to address reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis people. Conservatives support action on clean water, safe housing, education, health and economic opportunity, and the Indian Act, which blocks many first nations from charting their own future.

The Conservative Party fully respects treaties, which are already among Canada's body of laws. The Conservative Party supports the resolution of unfulfilled treaty obligations in the process of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people.

● (1135)

In the week since these proposed changes were reintroduced by the government, I have received messages from constituents, and from far beyond, which contend that this amendment amounts to typical Liberal tokenism and virtue signalling, pandering and should be opposed.

I cannot speak to the Liberal government's motivation here, because when it comes to public policy, inconsistency and contradiction are the hallmarks of legislative process and decision-making. However, I can say that I have spoken often in this House against proposals, very often from the Liberal government, to burden various sections of clearly written sections of law, of the Criminal Code, with unneeded specificities.

In this debate, I must be clear that I believe the existing oath of citizenship does not need to be burdened with 19 new words that I believe are redundant. If we are to add first nations specificity, why not official bilingualism, why not privacy, why not national security, why not anti-Semitism?

Therefore, I propose the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), since the existing Oath of Citizenship already includes the profound promise of citizens to faithfully observe the laws of Canada and the bill does nothing to support real action to address reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples."

● (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must say I am a little surprised at the position the Conservative Party seems to be taking on this.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report has 94 calls to action. The very last call was to make this change. The member is right. This is, in essence, what this legislation is proposing to do.

It has taken a great deal of resources and efforts from every region of the country. We have a report. The Liberal Party made a commitment in the last two elections to deal with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and support those 94 calls to action.

Just so that we can be very clear, is it the Conservative Party's position that it does not support call to action 94?

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, the member is quite correct that the Liberal Party is forever making commitments that are never fulfilled. It is true that there were 94 recommendations in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, most of which the government has ignored.

As I have said in my remarks this morning, I passionately believe that the existing oath is a very simply worded oath, but it is a profound oath to observe all the laws of Canada, which include the treaties and the aboriginal rights contained within the Constitution. All new citizens who swear this oath know that, or should know that.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I must say that I think the amendment defeats the very purpose of what we are trying to do here in the House of Commons, and that is to enshrine, in every aspect of what we do, in our actions, in our words and in our laws, that indigenous peoples have rights. It is particularly important for newcomers to understand that indigenous peoples have rights that are enshrined under section 35 of the Constitution and that have been earned and fought for through the Delgamuukw case to the highest court of Canada.

To dilute these words in the manner the member is suggesting defeats that purpose. What part of colonial history does the member not understand?

• (1145)

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, my colleague's remarks reflect her personal beliefs, but as I said, there are many things guaranteed by the laws of guarantee, including indigenous rights and treaty rights. The Constitution contains them.

As I said, the Discover Canada handbook, which all new citizens must immerse themselves in and study to be able to pass the citizenship exam, prepares them for exactly that reality. The oath as it is today is that they swear allegiance to the laws of Canada, all the laws of Canada. I believe, as some of my constituents believe, that these 19 additional words, 15 words longer than the commission recommended, are redundant.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, two years ago in this House we heard a speech from the Prime Minister, in which he promised to move for-

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ward with a rights and recognition framework. He promised to do that within 10 months. Had he done that, perhaps we would not be dealing with the very serious issue we have in Canada today.

We have very limited time in the House to debate legislation, and people throughout the country are still waiting for that rights and recognition framework. Meanwhile, the Liberals have introduced a stand-alone, small piece of legislation.

When I was the shadow minister for indigenous services, I travelled across the country talking to first nations people. No one ever said to me that they wanted this in the oath of citizenship, but I sure heard a lot about clean drinking water, understanding what title means and where we are going to go with land claims.

I would certainly appreciate some insight from my colleague on whether the Prime Minister and the government are doing the important things.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has managed through the last Parliament, very capably, and with eloquent speeches and meaningful commitment, the affairs as critic on the indigenous rights file.

To her point, it is very true that Conservatives fully support meaningful reconciliation, not simple gestures thrown in at a time when, as we have seen in these last three weeks, the government's inability to resolve contradictions between resource development, indigenous rights and the rule of law has left this country in a crisis.

Canada and Canadians have fast lost confidence in the government, and I think that this House is approaching very closely to losing confidence in the incapable government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the legitimacy of measures to provide more recognition for indigenous nations.

I have a question for my colleague, given that he is opposed to the motion.

If the wording of the government's bill were the same as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action, would that change your position? Would you be in favour?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member for Berthier—Maskinongé to address his questions to the Chair rather than directly to members.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

I was in the line of the fire between the member's question and the Chair.

Yes, there is a very serious difference. I think it is a typical characteristic of the Liberal government that the four words recommended in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report were burdened by unnecessary, additional, and in some cases, confusing references. A first-time reading of the proposed Liberal amendment would seem to contain its own contradictions.

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I believe in the amendment that we have put forward. Our belief is that the oath as it is today covers all of the laws in Canada. There are many laws in Canada beyond those related to indigenous rights treaties, both fulfilled and unfulfilled. We simply believe that the addition of these 19 new words are redundant, given that every new citizen will have studied the abundant information on Canada's history on the centuries of impact on indigenous and native lives.

• (1150)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives say that they want to put reconciliation into action, yet members may recall that when over 1,000 indigenous women and girls went missing or murdered, former prime minister Harper said that it was an Indian issue.

How is that reconciliation in action?

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her reference to previous governments, but our commitment to meaningful reconciliation has been a matter of Conservative policy over the centuries and certainly in recent decades. To dip back into the history of remarks that were made, perhaps out of context, some years ago is not relevant to this debate today.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, for generations, Canada has welcomed newcomers from around the globe looking to arrive here and contribute to this great place we call home. Canada has openly welcomed people fleeing political, economic and social hardships as well as those looking for opportunities to better themselves and their families.

The multicultural mosaic of Canadian society has been shaped by people from all walks of life, who have chosen to live freely together to ensure peace and respect for all. In welcoming them to our beloved country, we look to continue and strengthen that tradition of diversity and inclusion for all who wish to call Canada home.

As we begin debate on Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act with reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, we need to acknowledge Canada's colonial history. Embedded in that history are many chapters of how Canada legislated against and discriminated against the ethnic minority community.

The Chinese people who came before me helped Canada build the railway to connect this country from coast to coast. They went through hell to earn me the right to stand here today. They sacrificed everything, and some paid with their blood. They took on the most dangerous work to help build the railway and they fought for Canada, even though they were deemed "aliens". They were discriminated against and mistreated in ways that make us hang our heads in shame.

I have learned from elders and heard stories of how it was indigenous peoples, who themselves were experiencing discrimination, who came forward to support the Chinese people. They helped them, housed them, fed them, clothed them, gave them medicine, offered a sense of belonging and treated them with humanity. In practice, they have shown the world again and again that the most important life lesson is humanity. This came from the very people

who were experiencing colonization, people who suffered extreme hardships and discrimination themselves.

All of this is to say how very grateful I am to the indigenous peoples for their teachings, their kindness and their humanity. What a privilege it is for me to learn from them, to stand with them, to thank them, to appreciate them for the teachings that they have given to all of us. These are the teachings of lifting each other up, of being land defenders, the teachings that water is life and that mother earth is sacred. These are teachings of being united with one heart.

As a non-indigenous person, I stand as an ally. That is why the bill before us is so important. We, as settlers, must learn and understand Canada's colonial history.

The bill would change the text of the citizenship oath taken by new citizens of Canada to align with call to action 94 of the TRC and includes a reference to treaties with indigenous peoples.

The revised citizenship oath would read as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

I am proud to stand in this House in support of Bill C-6.

Taking the citizenship oath is a significant moment in a newcomer's journey to Canada. With that privilege comes responsibility. It is absolutely essential that new Canadians understand and respect the constitutional rights of all indigenous peoples, and in fact I would say it is every Canadian's responsibility to be educated about the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples.

For far too long, successive governments have made aspirational statement after aspirational statement about how they would build a new nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples, about how they would take reconciliation seriously, but as we know, broken promises and shameful disappointments always followed.

We have all heard that the current Liberal government would be different. We all wanted to believe that would be true. However, even the bill before us, which is a simple but important change, has been five years in the making, despite being cited as a top priority by the government. In the last Parliament, on May 3, 2016, I tabled an amendment at committee to make this change in another immigration bill that was also called Bill C-6. Unfortunately, the committee deemed my amendment out of scope, so it did not pass.

• (1155)

In the last Parliament, former MP Romeo Saganash wrote to the former minister of immigration in April 2017 to offer support and assistance from the NDP to realize this measure. This offer of collaboration was ignored. Even though this change was outlined in a mandate letter to the former immigration minister, no action was taken until the dying days of Parliament before the election. Bill C-99 did not even make it to second reading.

Government Orders

In that not-so-subtle way, it was clear the Liberals were merely trying to set the stage to say they did try to make this change for the upcoming election. If it takes the Liberals this long to add a line in the citizenship oath, is it any wonder they are failing so miserably on their new nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples?

To date, there are only nine completed calls to action out of 94, and 10 with this bill. For someone who claims this is his most important relationship, it sure as heck is moving at a snail's pace. That is 2.25 calls to action per year. At this rate, it will take approximately 38 years before all of the calls to action are implemented. That would mean reconciliation in 2057.

Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, academics at the Yellowhead Institute, called the Liberals' track record on the TRC calls to action "dreadful progress".

Canadians are coming to terms with our colonial history and want a Canada where the rights of indigenous peoples are recognized and respected. The Liberal government is continuing to deliberately disadvantage indigenous peoples, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast are noticing. In our country, a shocking 25% of indigenous people are living in poverty, despite making up only 5% of Canada's population. This figure is even worse for indigenous children, with 47% living in poverty, and this figure rises to 53% for children on reserves.

We continue to see indigenous peoples getting poisoned because they do not have access to clean drinking water. What is a necessity for every other Canadian is not afforded to some indigenous communities. What is a basic human right is being trampled on for indigenous peoples.

It is disgusting that indigenous children are being brought to court by the Liberal government. There have been nine non-compliance orders, yet 13 years later the Liberal government continues to appeal a Human Rights Tribunal ruling that it has "wilfully and recklessly" discriminated against indigenous kids. First nations children have been harmed by the severe underfunding of the on-reserve child welfare system and are now being punished by continued government neglect. Instead of providing funding to support indigenous peoples, the government has spent almost \$10 million on legal fees in the war to deny rights to indigenous kids. If the nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples is the Liberals' most important relationship, then why will the Prime Minister not honour the ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and stop taking indigenous kids to court?

At the forefront of our nation, we continue to see this colonial approach by the government in addressing the Wet'suwet'en protests. The Prime Minister's comments on Friday were reckless and irresponsible. He said, "Every attempt at dialogue has been made." What a joke. Right from the beginning, he was trying to avoid any accountability.

He refused to meet with the hereditary chiefs when they made the request to him weeks ago. Up until February 18, he did not even recognize the dispute as a nation-to-nation one. Now he has the nerve to say that patience has run out. Never mind the fact that indigenous peoples have waited 150 years for justice.

This is a failure of leadership. It is a failure of reconciliation. It is time for the Prime Minister to realize that every attempt at dialogue has not even been close to being made. A comprehensive, credible plan for de-escalation and dialogue is required in order for meaningful dialogue toward a resolution to take place.

The hereditary chiefs have said they will not negotiate with a gun to their head. They want the RCMP to stand down and the project to halt.

● (1200)

Given that Coastal GasLinks' final technical data report has been rejected by the B.C. environmental assessment office, this is an opportunity for all levels of government to de-escalate. The government should seize this opportunity. The Prime Minister said that the onus is on the hereditary chiefs. I say the onus is on him.

His irresponsible words on Friday only served to inhibit progress for a peaceful resolution. He should check himself. He should heed the words that are being added to the citizenship oath for newcomers and take to heart Canada's obligation to the rights of indigenous people under section 35 of the Constitution, which clearly states that "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."

The Prime Minister should also know that section 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples clearly upholds the principle of free, prior and informed consent. Based on Canada's highest court, the Supreme Court of Canada, the landmark Delgamuukw decision has reaffirmed the rights of indigenous peoples.

When people throw the words "rule of law" around, they need to consider all laws. Canada needs to stop using the rule of law as a weapon against indigenous peoples. Canada needs the Prime Minister to warrior up, and show some real leadership.

I will also remind everyone that Canada refused to acknowledge indigenous titles some 40 years ago under Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government.

Former justice Thomas Berger was appointed by then Indian affairs minister Jean Chrétien to lead a public inquiry into the proposed Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline. Thomas Berger said, "In my judgment, we must settle native claims before we build a...pipeline."

Canada is at a critical time in our history.

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Remember the Liberal election campaign? “Choose forward”, they said. Is this going forward? At a time when it is most critical for the government to firmly reinforce its commitment to indigenous reconciliation, the Liberals are going to delay the introduction of UNDRIP. Delaying the introduction of UNDRIP in the House at this time sends a clear message of what the Prime Minister is all about. Time and again, when it comes right down to it, indigenous rights are always put on the back burner. Justice for indigenous peoples can wait. That is the message from the Prime Minister.

To further add fuel to the fire, we are hearing language from the Conservatives that has not been helpful. The more they denounce indigenous protesters as lawbreakers and radicals, the more they serve to inflame the situation.

Recent comments by Peter MacKay, a leadership hopeful for the Conservative Party, promoting vigilante action by congratulating far-right groups that have associations with yellow vest protesters, were highly irresponsible. Congratulating these far-right groups that have outright called for acts of violence against protesters will only contribute to worsen the situation. It is so disappointing to hear a leading Conservative leadership candidate take this approach.

In addition to that, the current Conservative leader, who advocates that enforced violence is the best solution, has the audacity to tell indigenous protesters to “check their privilege”.

A reply from Molly Wickham, a spokesperson for the Gidim'ten camp of Wet'suwet'en members, may have put it best, when she said, "All of Canada is subsidized by Indigenous people. All Canadian industries and transportation infrastructure rely on the theft of Indigenous land for their existence...Calling Indigenous land defenders 'privileged' when so many of our communities are denied basic human rights and services is racist and absurd."

We see time and again everyone citing the rule of law, but whose version of the rule of law are we following? The government cannot pick and choose which laws to follow and which laws to ignore. Will the rule of law continue to be only used as the government's self-serving cause or will it finally acknowledge Canada's colonial history, the precedent-setting landmark decisions that defended indigenous rights such as Delgamuukw?

This is about the perpetuated discrimination and mistreatment to which indigenous peoples have been subjected for over 150 years.

Look around at what is happening. This past weekend in Toronto, thousands of people stood in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en people. In my riding of Vancouver East, we had countless rallies as well. We had a rally at Vancouver City Hall organized by Dakota Bear and his family, where scores of people gathered to stand in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en peoples.

● (1205)

The message is loud and clear. The time has come for Canada to be on the right side of history. UNDRIP has to be entrenched in the path forward for Canada in action. To quote statements made by Grand Chief Stewart Phillip to the media:

The challenge here is to move beyond public platitudes and eloquent rhetoric about the intention of implementing the United Nations Declaration, both federally and provincially. It has to be followed through with the work of legislative reform,

policy development and rules and regulations that stipulate very clearly how the entire population — both hereditary and elected band council — are able to participate in an exercise to register their support or disapproval of large-scale resource development projects.

We're not there yet. And again, corporations and governments attempt to take the shortcut and we find ourselves in the courtrooms, we find ourselves on the land, upholding and defending Indigenous law.

He further stated that:

...reconciliation cannot be achieved at gunpoint. And we cannot achieve reconciliation by throwing matriarchs and elders and children in jail. We cannot achieve reconciliation by chopping in paramilitary RCMP forces in full battle gear, surrounding encampments....

I can tell you, if choppers start landing in your backyard and teams of heavily armed police start running through your front yard and dragging you out of your home, you'd be a little upset.

This is Canada's history. This is colonialism. This is a history that newcomers must learn. This is a history that all Canadians must take to heart. This is a pivotal time for the Canadian government to prove its commitment to indigenous people, to prove that it takes reconciliation seriously, and to prove once and for all that it will honour the rights of indigenous peoples and work with them in equal footing in the new nation-to-nation relationship.

Again, quoting Grand Chief Stewart Phillip:

The law clearly states that not only must there be substantial and thorough consultation, but there must also be consent. It must involve both parties, both elected and traditional.

This is a test of the government's will to make good on its promises. I call on the Prime Minister to seize this opportunity of not just committing to Bill C-6, but committing to a truly reimagined nation-to-nation relationship where indigenous children are not taken to court, where UNDRIP is finally implemented and carried out in action as promised, and where he takes personal action in accountability to engage with the Wet'suwet'en people. We are all waiting for the government to do the right thing by honouring indigenous rights, respecting sovereignty and treating all peoples, including indigenous peoples, with basic human rights. The time to act is now, and the world is watching. Let us not just say to new Canadians what it means to honour the rights of indigenous people; it is time for the government to take those words to heart and act accordingly.

The NDP supports Bill C-6 and we consistently call for the full implementation of all of the TRC's calls to action. The NDP honours the work of Justice Murray Sinclair, Dr. Cindy Blackstock and my former colleague, MP Romeo Saganash. In the words of Justice Murray Sinclair, “The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are forced to go the distance.”

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It is time for all levels of government to go the distance.

● (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad New Democrats are going to be supporting Bill C-6. It is a pretty straightforward piece of legislation. It does respond to the Truth and Reconciliation call to action number 94. That is encouraging. What is discouraging is that a good portion of the member's speech is completely inaccurate. When we look at what this government has been able to accomplish, I would challenge the member to demonstrate clearly what any other federal government has done in the previous 20 years.

While she is reflecting on that statement, we could talk about the hundreds of millions of additional dollars that have been invested. We could talk about legislation that has been brought forward. We could talk about several calls to action that have been acted upon to date.

Maybe she can reflect in terms of NDP governments, the Government of British Columbia, for example, and its role in the Wet'suwet'en situation. We could talk about the horrific regime where we saw 15 years of NDP government in the province of Manitoba and what the indigenous children had to endure.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the government members often say that they are on the side of indigenous people, and to look at all the great actions that they have done. All that they have to do is look and really see what is going on. If they truly believe that what they are doing is the right path for them, why are they still taking indigenous children to court? Why did they not honour the Human Rights Tribunal's nine orders?

Look outside the House of Commons in Ottawa today. There are scores of people protesting, standing in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en people. They are not just with the Wet'suwet'en people, but with all indigenous people, and saying that they are going to hold the government to account.

Young people are finding their voices everywhere. Just this weekend in Vancouver East, we had Youth Matters, voices from young people, saying that they want the government to act honestly. I ask the member to look at himself in the mirror and truly answer the question of whether the Liberals are doing what they need to do, or whether it is just empty rhetoric.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it might come as no surprise that there were many elements of the speech my colleague from Vancouver East gave that I did disagree with. I think, most importantly, she alluded to what was happening. I had the opportunity to visit communities from coast to coast to coast, and I found that especially our rural and remote communities relied on economic opportunities.

Why is she taking a side that is anti-resource development and anti-opportunity for the many indigenous communities across this country that want to share in the wealth of this great nation?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, indigenous elders have taught me that they are defenders of the land, that water is life, that mother earth is sacred and that they have taken care of mother earth

for thousands and thousands of years. We have a climate crisis before us.

If we do not take action now, it will be too late. There is no planet B, so when we talk about investing in energy, how about investing in clean energy? How about investing in alternative energy? How about doing this while taking care of our environment as well? How about engaging with indigenous people and honouring the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples article 10, which recognizes that free, prior and informed consent is, and must be, the path forward?

● (1215)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, citizenship is a very special thing. In my own family, we have a couple of citizenships. I am married to an Australian citizen and our children are dual citizens, so we have gotten a flavour of two very different countries, but which also share a lot of similarities. I look at my childhood and what my kids are now experiencing. My own kids have now come home telling me that they have been learning parts of the Halkomelem language, which is the language of the Coast Salish peoples on Vancouver Island. A monumental shift has happened in the conversation on indigenous rights and title over the last couple of decades.

I am disappointed to see that the Conservatives are trying to kill this bill before we have even sent it to committee, where we can hear from witnesses on the oath of citizenship. The Conservatives' main concerns have been about the specificity of the words. I would like to hear from the member for Vancouver East why, given Canada's colonial history, that specificity is so important in this oath of citizenship, where newcomers to Canada are actually going to have direct words linking to our history and also the importance of aboriginal rights and title.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member and his family for having their children learn different languages. I think that is so very beautiful, and that really is what this is all about, what this bill really speaks to. That is for Canada's newcomers to actually know Canada's history.

Why are these specific words recognizing indigenous rights in reference to section 35 of the Constitution so important to emphasize in the citizenship oath?

It is because for over 150 years successive governments have ignored those rights. Even today, I would argue that governments are ignoring those rights. It may be there written in words, but people do not take it to heart. Conservative governments and Liberal governments have not taken it to heart, so we are setting a new chapter, a new face forward, and we will have those words entrenched in the citizenship oath so every newcomer will understand that we are not just saying this, but we must take this to heart and honour it.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was an important one to hear. One of the things that was most concerning was what the Yellowhead Institute stated:

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If the current pace holds (2.25 Calls a year) it will take approximately 38 more years before all of the Calls to Action are implemented. Reconciliation in 2057?

If we look at what is happening across our country, it definitely is clear that there is a lack of a pathway, a lack of leadership around reconciliation. There is an essential distrust. When we look at the bill and when we talk about treaties, we have to also acknowledge how long this path will take. Is moving so slowly the right way to go?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the point. We just heard the government's side saying that it had done more than any other government and that it was so committed. The government keeps saying how great it has been on its new nation-to-nation relationship.

I wonder if any of the government members realize that since the TRC calls to action have been tabled and made public, to date only nine of the calls to action has been realized. With this bill, it will be 10. At this pace, it will take at least 38 years to get there.

By the way, this change is adding a line, some words, to the citizenship oath. Imagine the work that needs to be done to implement real action, real policies and changes within the government ranks to get there.

It is taking far too long. Indigenous peoples have to suffer injustices. They had their children taken away. Genocide has been tried on indigenous peoples and they have survived.

If we want to talk about a new nation-to-nation relationship, we need to acknowledge an act within the law, section 35 of our Constitution, to recognize UNDRIP and the Supreme Court decision, going forward.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to let you know that, with the consent of the House, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Laurentides—Labelle.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to share her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, the bill we are debating today, Bill C-6, is essentially a reiteration of the 42nd Parliament's Bill C-99, which was never passed.

Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act with regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, proposes a change to the oath of citizenship set out in the schedule to the Citizenship Act under section 24. Clause 1 proposes amending the text of the schedule, or, in other words, it proposes new wording for the citizenship oath, including the solemn affirmation.

To quickly give a bit of context, I want to start by saying that Bill C-6 is based on consultations with immigrants and indigenous partners.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the TRC, presented its six-volume final report, which contains 94 calls to action. For six years, the TRC heard from nearly 6,500 witnesses from across Quebec and Canada in order to shed light on the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation between indigenous peoples and other Canadians.

In response to the publication of that report, the federal government committed to implementing all calls to action within its jurisdiction. As I have already indicated, the amendment proposed in Bill C-6 addresses call to action number 94 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The wording in the commission's report is as follows:

We call upon the Government of Canada to replace the Oath of Citizenship with the following: I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

In 2017, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada led discussion groups with well-established new immigrants about the wording of the oath of citizenship being proposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in its calls to action. The response of the discussion groups seemed positive overall, but some participants indicated that the amended version of the oath should be accompanied by adequate training for newcomers on indigenous peoples and treaties. Others expressed concern about the change because it might set a precedent for other groups that may want to be mentioned in the oath.

In collaboration with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, IRCC also held consultations with the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. It should be noted that the proposed oath in the calls to action also raised some concerns in the media. Some wonder whether citizens are able to faithfully observe the treaties concluded with the indigenous peoples. Others object to the fact that the oath makes no mention of the thousands of indigenous citizens who belong to non-treaty nations.

On May 28, 2019, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship introduced in the House of Commons Bill C-99, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, to amend the oath of citizenship and solemn affirmation, which requires that the Citizenship Act be amended. No changes have been made to the oath of citizenship in more than 40 years. It is important to know that the oath of citizenship is a solemn declaration whereby the candidate swears or pledges allegiance to the Queen of Canada. It is the last legal requirement to be fulfilled to obtain Canadian citizenship.

The wording of the oath of citizenship currently found in the schedule to the Citizenship Act is as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

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When the bill we are debating today is passed, the new wording of the oath of citizenship will be as follows:

- (1225)

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

It is important to note that the proposed wording in Bill C-6 and in the old Bill C-99 differs from the recommended wording suggested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in that it refers not to treaties with indigenous peoples, but rather to the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Aboriginal rights are intrinsic collective rights held by indigenous peoples because they were historically the first to occupy this land. They can include aboriginal title to land, the right to self-government, the right to occupy a territory, the right to resources or socio-cultural rights. In contrast, treaty rights refer to rights set out in historical or modern treaties negotiated between the Crown and specific indigenous groups.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the legitimacy and importance of incorporating a reference to indigenous rights into the citizenship oath. We also recognize indigenous nations for what they are: nations. The Bloc advocates a comprehensive approach to government relations, focusing on negotiating nation-to-nation agreements. Recognition should be the starting point for any commitment to reconciliation.

However, although section 35 of the Canadian Constitution recognizes existing aboriginal and treaty rights, it does not define the federation as a free association of equal nations. Unlike Canada's plan, Quebec's plan for independence, promoted by the Bloc Québécois, proposes that indigenous nations be counted among the founding peoples of a sovereign Quebec, which would be founded on a true association based on mutual respect and equality.

If Canada positioned itself as an association of free and equal peoples, it would be easier to ask newcomers taking their oath of citizenship to commit to respecting the fundamental rights of all founding peoples. Since Canada instead chose, without Quebec's consent, to position itself as a multicultural majority nation in which national cultures are reduced to regional folklore, the federal government's efforts to respect indigenous peoples are still somewhat awkward.

The Bloc Québécois does not oppose including the recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights in the oath of citizenship. We even commend the principle and sincere desire behind this act, but we want to point out that this addition constitutes a detour that would not be necessary if Canada was a state that recognized the nations that make it up in its fundamental legislation right from the start.

It is therefore only natural to wonder, with all due respect for the recognition of first nations, Inuit and Métis, what consideration the Liberal government is showing for Quebecers when it proposes asking newcomers to commit to respecting the rights of the nations that together form their host society.

In closing, since the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-6, we will be supporting it.

- (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that changing the citizen oath was in the 2017 mandate letter of the Minister of Immigration. The government tabled legislation in May 2019, knowing full well it would not get it passed before the House rose for the last federal election.

We have lost time in ensuring all new citizens begin their journey as a Canadian citizen with the full understanding of our collective obligation to honour the rights of indigenous people. We have heard that the government will have 10 of the 94 calls to action in place in 2020, five years later after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission tabled its recommendations. It will take until 2057 for the Liberals to meet the 94 calls to action.

How important is it for the government, especially right now with what is happening, to demonstrate that the calls to action are a priority? It is urgent that the government address all the calls to action as a top priority and show that it is doing so.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, as I said, if Canada positioned itself as an association of free and equal peoples, it would be easier to ask newcomers taking their oath of citizenship to commit to respecting the fundamental rights of all founding peoples.

With respect to indigenous communities, of which there are many in my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, I agree with my colleague because several years have passed, but nothing is being done and nothing is taking shape. I hope the Liberal government will actually take action with Bill C-6.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it bears reminding members that there are 94 calls to action. This is the 94th. There are a number of calls to action which the government has acted on over the last few years. However, the total number of 94 are not just for the federal government. Many of those calls to action involve the federal government's working with other jurisdictions. Some of those calls to action have nothing to do directly with the federal government. Some of the calls to action have to take into consideration non-government agencies.

I wonder if my colleague would emphasize for all those stakeholders and partners working to improve reconciliation that we all have an important role to play and this bill we are debating today is just one important aspect.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my Liberal colleague for his question.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action are an important road map for all Canadians. From coast to coast to coast, all levels of government, civil society, educational and health institutions and the private sector have played crucial roles in building Quebec and Canada.

We want Bill C-6 to take indigenous communities into account.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it has been reported that the Liberals are going to further delay tabling legislation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. My colleague comes from the riding whose previous MP tabled that legislation. It was important legislation here in the House.

Right now is a critical time that the government move forward with this and firmly reinforce its commitment to putting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into action. Does the member agree that the Prime Minister realizes that any further delays in enshrining this legislation clearly is going in the wrong direction?

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I agree with what my NDP colleague said.

The former member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou did a tremendous amount of work on this file. I believe the time has come to move forward and support indigenous communities.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we come together today to discuss Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

This bill implements the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action number 94, proposing a change to the citizenship oath as it is drafted in the schedule to section 24 the Citizenship Act. First, clause 1 of the bill amends the text in the schedule. In other

words, it changes the wording of the oath or affirmation of citizenship.

As we have heard, the new oath proposed by the Liberal government would read as follows:

I swear...that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

The solemn affirmation is also similarly amended.

As my colleague indicated, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-6. We recognize the legitimacy and the importance of incorporating a reference to indigenous rights in the citizenship oath.

However, I want to be clear that there is some contradiction here in the Liberal government's rhetoric.

Why the piecemeal approach to recognizing Canada's different nations instead of recognizing the entirety of these nations and affirming their political equality?

If Canada positioned itself as an association of free and equal peoples, it would be easier to ask newcomers taking their oath of citizenship to commit to respecting the fundamental rights of all founding peoples. As the spokesperson on communal harmony, I believe we should use inclusive language.

I would also like to point out that the government did not use the wording suggested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It seemed very clear and well-worded to me. I think that wording is of critical importance when drafting an oath of citizenship, especially considering its solemn and symbolic nature and how meaningful this final step to citizenship is to a new citizen.

Why did the government not use the wording proposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

If the wording needed to be changed to include aboriginal rights, would there not be a wording that does not suggest, as the current wording does, that the Constitution is a law among so many others?

I would like to have some answers to those questions.

I would also like to quote the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship:

The oath is a solemn declaration that all newcomers recite during the citizenship ceremony. With this amendment, we will take an important step towards reconciliation by encouraging new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect the significant role of indigenous peoples in forming Canada's fabric and identity.

Far be it from me to pit Canada's different nations against one another, on the contrary. I support their true recognition and the equality of peoples. I am just saying that it would be easier for newcomers to understand the history of Canada if we invited them to appreciate the contributions of all founding nations.

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• (1240)

The French fact, the British fact and the history of the first nations, Inuit and Métis people are all deserving of recognition.

The hon. Senator Murray Sinclair, who was co-chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, contradicted the minister. He said, "Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed." The senator is clearly open and receptive to recognizing all of the nations within Canada. I commend him for that.

Since Canada has chosen to position itself as a multicultural majority nation in which national cultures are reduced to regional folklore, the federal government's efforts to respect indigenous peoples are still somewhat awkward. I am not saying that these efforts are wrongheaded. I am saying that they would come more naturally if Canadian federalism were an asymmetrical federalism based on the equality of peoples.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes indigenous nations for what they are: nations. The Bloc advocates a comprehensive approach to government relations, focusing on negotiating nation-to-nation agreements. Recognition should be the starting point for any commitment to reconciliation.

However, although section 35 of the Canadian Constitution recognizes aboriginal and treaty rights, it does not define the federation as a free association of equal nations.

Unlike Canada's plan, Quebec's plan for independence, promoted by the Bloc Québécois, proposes that indigenous nations be counted among the founding peoples of a sovereign Quebec, which would be founded on a true association based on mutual respect and equality.

Because I agree with the government, I urge my colleagues to vote in favour of the bill. The Bloc Québécois supports efforts to recognize indigenous treaty rights. Canada has a long way to go to reconcile with indigenous nations, and the Bloc Québécois wants to be an ally and support that cause.

However, we know that Quebec will take a different approach, because we are not afraid to propose fundamental changes and challenge the very foundations of our public institutions. In any case, once Quebec is sovereign, we will have to draft our own citizenship oath. Obviously, our oath will be free from any references to the monarchy and the Crown. It will affirm that all public powers rest with the people. It will do justice to the first nations, the Inuit and the Métis, as well as the British and French cultures.

I commend the government for its willingness to implement the recommendations set out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. I truly hope that Canada will succeed in moving this process forward.

I believe that Quebec's independence should be an opportunity for Quebecers to engage in its own reconciliation efforts with indigenous nations and I think it will be crucial that those nations sit down with us at the table when we write our constitution. I intend to be at that table and to participate in opening a new chapter in our history. I will do everything in my power to ensure that this new, future chapter be free of the injustices of the past.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing we keep hearing from government members is that their most important relationship is that with Canada's indigenous people. They say they are prioritizing a nation-to-nation dialogue. However, when we look at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, we constantly see the ruling against the Liberal government that it is willfully and recklessly discriminating against indigenous children. The government is spending millions of dollars fighting Canada's most vulnerable children, indigenous children, here in Canada.

Does my colleague agree that the government is contradicting itself? What kind of message does that send to newcomers to Canada if that is the government's treatment of Canada's indigenous children at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal when it is trying to move forward with legislation?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I did speak about contradictions. I think it is very important to remain vigilant when naming specific aspects rather than talking in more general terms. We must not use extreme wording. Instead, we need to think about true, respectful recognition.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for her clear and precise speech.

Bill C-6 seeks to enshrine aboriginal and treaty rights in law. I get the impression that everyone agrees with that.

As a Bloc member, why did my colleague not focus on the Quebec nation in her speech?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We do support Bill C-6. We cannot oppose the idea of respecting aboriginal rights, but, as I said earlier, we have to avoid listing individual elements. We need a comprehensive approach to these rights.

We do support Bill C-6, but that does not mean we cannot improve it in the near future.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the position of the Bloc on this legislation, and I want to echo some thoughts regarding the importance of the true value of incorporating call to action number 94 into that oath.

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Has the member ever participated, as an observer or anything of that nature, in the witnessing of Canadians being sworn in?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understood the question.

I would like to tell my colleague what people tell us when we talk about Bill C-6. Regardless of where they are from, be it British Columbia or Quebec, people tell us that recognizing aboriginal rights is essential, but we also have the British fact and the French fact to think about. Unfortunately, people tell us they feel left out. That is what I meant when I talked about remaining vigilant. If we start naming individual groups, we absolutely have to name all of them.

Today's Bill C-6 is about recognition, but what we need is comprehensive recognition.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

I would just like to take the time to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

I stand here today to discuss the amendments to Canada's citizenship oath that our government is proposing. The citizenship oath is sworn by each and every immigrant as they become Canadian citizens. The oath defines the responsibilities, duties and loyalties that each of them acknowledges as a proud new Canadian.

How many new Canadians are aware that our country was built upon the mutual friendship, respect and obligations created by treaties? My ancestors, and others' ancestors, signed these treaties as a basis for shared understanding of how we could coexist. In Canada, that means that we are all treaty people, and we are all in this together.

In the famous words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."

On Cape Breton Island, where I am from and whose communities I represent, immigration to Canada is not an abstract national statistic. It is fundamental for our future. My constituents rely on immigration for a strong local economy, which is facing the mounting twin pressures of an aging workforce and an exodus of young Cape Bretoners. Put simply, my riding needs immigration to thrive, to keep local businesses selling goods, to fill local businesses' workforces and to generate a tax base to fund local services. In fact, for every 1,000 new immigrant families choosing to settle in Cape Breton, our communities will directly generate 73 million dollars' worth of new expenditures. This is important money being spent in Cape Breton.

In 2019, Cape Breton University had the third-highest number of international students among all universities in Atlantic Canada. When these students were polled, 88% of respondents were planning on applying for post-graduate work visas, and 35% of these respondents would like to open their own business in Cape Breton.

These are new Canadians, drawn to Cape Breton, who want to continue to live, work and put down roots on our island. I welcome them.

I welcome new Canadians just as 400 years ago, on the south shores of Nova Scotia, our Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Henri Membertou welcomed French newcomers to Port Royal. Our grand chief took the French settlers under his wing and showed them how to survive and thrive in their new surroundings. Many other indigenous leaders across Canada created alliances with newcomers all across this great land we call Canada today.

It is important to create awareness of our shared history and how indigenous peoples helped shape our great country. Within the Canadian Constitution, we recognize three distinct groups: first nations, Inuit and Métis. Reconciliation with indigenous peoples remains a central priority for the government, and we will continue to move forward as a committed partner.

It is time to acknowledge the contributions that indigenous people have made in building a strong, inclusive Canada. It is time that we create awareness of our shared history in Canada, and the fact that our country was based on principles of harmony and co-existence, and that we are stronger when we work together.

The Truth and Reconciliation calls to action are important to guiding Canadians along the journey of reconciliation. With 94 calls to action in mind, we strive to create more awareness and a stronger, more united Canada.

This brings us to the changes that the government has proposed to the current wording of the oath of citizenship. With this bill, our government is addressing one of the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action that pertains to immigration, refugees and citizenship candidates' mandate.

Call to action number 94 calls on the Government of Canada to amend the oath of citizenship, to add reference to including treaties with indigenous peoples. Our consultations with national indigenous organizations clearly indicate that the phrase "treaties with indigenous peoples", as recommended by the commission, can be expanded to be respectful and inclusive of all indigenous peoples.

• (1255)

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has consulted with other government departments and national indigenous organizations on the wording of the oath of citizenship. Therefore, to address the commission's call to action, as well as commitments made in the 2019 Speech from the Throne, and the hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's mandate letter, the bill would modify the wording of the oath of citizenship as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

The revised text of the oath uses wording that recognizes a broad range of rights held by indigenous people. Any changes to the oath of citizenship require amendments to the Citizenship Act, and are subject to the parliamentary process.

As mentioned in the minister's mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the government is committed to completing legislative work on changes that reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. A great deal of work has been done by the commission, from coast to coast to coast, with thousands of indigenous Canadians. The TRC calls to action are an important blueprint for reconciliation in Canada. This is the fundamental reason why we propose these changes today.

Let me close with these thoughts for my hon. colleagues to consider.

The histories of indigenous people in Canada are rich and diverse. Since time immemorial, meaning since before oral or written history, indigenous people have welcomed new Canadians. The story of Canada is the story of first nations, the story of Inuit and the story of Métis.

Indigenous people helped create the Canada we know and love today and will have an important part in the role of Canada in the future.

I would impress upon my hon. colleagues that we need to take this opportunity to both acknowledge our country's past and move toward a future of renewed relationships with indigenous people based on the TRC calls to action. The changes to the citizenship oath would be an important step in this pursuit.

Through this and other actions, all Canadians can continue to move forward together on this journey of reconciliation so we can leave a proper legacy for future generations.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wanted to be sensitive and not interrupt the member during his speech, but it would appear the member is rising in the House to speak without wearing a tie, which I believe is in violation of the Standing Orders. I would like to leave it to you to determine that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for raising this matter.

As stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, Bosc and Gagnon:

While the *Standing Orders* do not prescribe a dress code for Members participating in debate, Speakers have ruled that all Members desiring to be recognized to speak at any point during the proceedings of the House must be wearing contemporary business attire. Current practice requires that male Members wear jackets, shirts and ties.

Therefore, it does not prescribe that; however, it has been the practice and past precedent.

That being said, I notice that the member for Sydney—Victoria is wearing a jacket and a shirt, as well as what I believe is a traditional beaded medallion. Based on past precedents of members wearing such traditional garments, I am inclined to allow the member to continue his speech or continue to answer questions and comments at this point.

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Questions and comments, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank our tieless colleague for his speech.

All joking aside, as pointed out in the speeches by my Bloc Québécois colleagues, our party agrees with the substance of the bill, that is, the need for greater recognition for indigenous nations. However, we have also pointed out that there are other nations that are not mentioned in the oath. We could be on a slippery slope if we start listing things, since someone is inevitably forgotten.

Do our Liberal colleagues not feel any unease, especially considering the reference to the 1982 Constitution? Everyone in the House knows that Quebec never signed it. I think it is very nice and co-operative of us to want to agree to the requests. We will always put our principles ahead of quarrels.

I would like to hear our Liberal colleagues' thoughts on this. Do they not feel a little uncomfortable about this?

• (1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize the Constitution. There were many first nations who were a part of the dialogue moving forward in determining the Constitution. My father was a legal adviser for the Mi'kmaq grand council and he advocated for section 35. Within section 35 they recognized three nations: first nations, Inuit and Métis. That is important for us moving forward. It was also important that section 35 recognized that these laws were the supreme law of Canada as part of section 52.

When we are looking at treaties and inherent rights, we must make sure we are understanding that what we are recognizing is that this country agreed to peace, friendship and coexistence as a founding principle of the Constitution. Moving forward, that is important for all of us to remember and recognize.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, is the member opposite aware of exactly how many recommendations have been followed from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? If he is not aware, it is nine. It is nine in five years. That is about 2.25 per year. If we extrapolate that, it will take another 38 years for these recommendations to be implemented. This is one of the simplest things that could have been put forward and it did not even accord with the recommendation, which was four words.

On justice matters, I want to point out that only one of 18 justice recommendations has been put forward by the government. Would it not make more sense for the House to be debating, for example, recommendation 37? It states, "We call upon the federal government to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services."

Why does the government pick the quick and simple calls to action and not the tough ones that will make a real difference?

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Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, I believe that all across Canada the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a blueprint for reconciliation. However, within that blueprint, it is not just the federal government doing its part.

I was a treaty education lead for five years before I became an MP and I can guarantee we looked at the calls to action. In Nova Scotia, in every grade, every class and every school they are beginning to learn the history of indigenous people as put in section 10 of the TRC calls to action.

I was also part of the Aboriginal Sports Circle. It is looking at implementation of calls to action 87 to 91, which speak to sport.

It is happening all across Canada. Not just the federal and provincial governments, but also sports bodies, schools and other jurisdictions across Canada are looking at these calls to action and recognizing these are important blueprints to move forward on reconciliation.

Our government is doing its part. We are taking those steps toward reconciliation. It is important we continue to do so step by step or action by action.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

The story of indigenous peoples in Canada has a history that stretches far into the past, well before the arrival of European newcomers to Canada.

Indigenous people have a fundamental role in Canada's past and are a strong pillar of our society. These are words people will hear at many citizenship ceremonies across Canada. Taking the oath of citizenship is a vital step in the process of becoming a Canadian citizen. It is recited as the final step to becoming a Canadian citizen. During the ceremony, participants accept the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by taking the oath of citizenship, after which they become a Canadian citizen and receive a certificate of citizenship.

I have had the privilege of attending many citizenship ceremonies in Surrey and welcoming new groups of Canadians to this great land. This bill is particularly important in Surrey where the largest urban indigenous population in British Columbia lives and welcomes new Canadian neighbours who have made their home in the city. It is important for both new Canadians and those who are born here to learn about indigenous peoples and their history.

Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, proposes to change Canada's oath of citizenship to include clear reference to the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

The proposed amendment to the oath reflects the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. The proposed amendment is part of the government's ongoing response to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The changes are an important and necessary step in advancing Canada's broader agenda for reconcili-

ation and strengthening the country's valued relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada.

The government's proposed amendment of the citizenship oath would allow new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect how indigenous peoples are an important part of Canada's history and identity. The new citizenship oath would also reflect our expectations that new Canadians demonstrate an understanding of indigenous peoples and their constitutional rights.

There is no relationship that is more important to the Government of Canada than the one with indigenous peoples. Together, Canada and indigenous peoples are continuing to forge a renewed relationship based on the recognition of rights, trust, respect and a true spirit of co-operation. That is why across the country Canada and indigenous peoples are working together to close the quality-of-life gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

Important progress has been made. The last three budgets have provided \$16.8 billion in new funding for indigenous peoples, an increase in planned spending in 2020-21 of 34% over 2015, but there is still much work to do. Budget 2019 represents the next step in the ongoing path towards reconciliation and a better future for indigenous peoples and everyone.

This bill is especially important to me as I sat on CIMM, the citizenship and immigration committee, for four years, and in this Parliament, I currently sit on the international trade committee. For the first time in any of Canada's free trade agreements, a general exception was incorporated to ensure the government is able to fulfill its legal obligations to indigenous peoples in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and other self-government agreements.

Consultation with indigenous communities during the CUSMA negotiations was one of Canada's top priorities. To make sure that indigenous people's trade interests would be protected, the CUSMA includes language that recognizes the importance of more engagement with indigenous peoples.

The CUSMA preserves Canada's traditional reservations, exceptions and exclusions in multiple areas, including cross-border trade in services and investments, natural resources, the environment, and state-owned enterprises. By promoting indigenous entrepreneurship and business, the government will help first nations, Inuit and Métis people fully contribute to and share in Canada's economic success. This is a critical part of advancing reconciliation and self-determination.

• (1305)

All children in Canada deserve a real, fair chance to reach their full potential no matter where they live. By continuing to work collaboratively with first nations and Inuit partners, the government is working to eliminate barriers to accessing quality health care and culturally relevant social supports that children need to succeed. Distinctions-based funding for post-secondary education will also help first nation, Inuit and Métis students better access post-secondary education and succeed during their studies.

The government is also taking action to help communities reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen indigenous languages and sustain important cultural traditions and histories. This includes the passing of Bill C-91, the Indigenous Languages Act, last year, which protects 90 living indigenous languages spoken in Canada.

While the path to reconciliation is long, the government will continue to walk with first nations, Inuit and Métis people in its actions and interactions. As I mentioned, the proposed changes to the oath we are talking about today are an important and necessary step in advancing Canada's broader agenda for reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada. It demonstrates to new Canadians, and in fact to all Canadians, deep respect for indigenous peoples and recognizes that the histories of first nations, Inuit and Métis people are a vital part of Canada's fabric and identity.

• (1310)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would note that recommendation 94 uses different words than the words used in the government's legislation.

I wonder if the member could speak to why the government chose to propose different wording rather than just introducing the wording that was actually in the recommendation of that report.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I believe it was done in consultation with many first nations, indigenous, Inuit and Métis peoples. After considerable consultation, the wording was accepted and adopted. Again, this was part of our call to consultation with our first nations people. I believe they are very satisfied with the current wording we are using.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to let the member know that we are supporting this proposed legislation. It would be the 10th call to action that the government would be achieving out of the 94 since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was put out in 2015.

As the member knows, progress has been slow. However, our concern is around the legislation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are concerned about further delay in the government's tabling of that legislation.

I would like to hear from the member if he is concerned about further delay, especially in light of the concerns in our country right now about the lack of progress on that. The legislation was passed in the House of Commons in the last Parliament, but it died in the Senate. Is the member going to help move that legislation along?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, we have moved forward on the 94 recommendations, and yes, 10 have been done. However, many unfortunately are not under the federal purview but are under

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provincial, municipal and other jurisdictions. We call on all bodies that are responsible to fulfill those recommendations to do so.

As for UNDRIP, as my colleague has very eloquently said, the bill did pass here. However, there was one party that did not support it. To my understanding, that party in the other House did not support ratifying it in the last Parliament and unfortunately, it died.

The member can rest assured that this side of the House is committed to making sure that this legislation is adopted, and we will take whatever measure is necessary. I will continue to support, along with my colleague who asked the question, this issue.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member could comment on or explain this. We have such limited time in the House to put forward legislation and pass it. There were 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and nine have been fulfilled. This is an abysmal track record.

On child welfare, there are zero of five; health, zero of seven; education, zero of seven; justice, one of 18. The Liberals have picked what I would classify as the low-hanging fruit. Even then, they did not get it right because they did not follow the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Could the member explain why the government is not moving on the significant 94 recommendations instead of this one, given the limited House time we have?

• (1315)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, at least the House is moving in the right direction. The House has put 34% more funding for indigenous peoples from the budgets the Conservatives left behind in 2015. This is real money, not just legislation. We have done 10 of the 94 calls, and we are continuing to work on all of them.

The federal component is only one section of this. My colleague has to look at the track record of the Conservatives and reflect on that before he critiques others.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do appreciate the member's speech. However, there was another debate happening between members on both sides of the House while he was speaking, which was not very respectful on their part. I would ask members to hold on to their thoughts, questions and comments until it is their turn to be recognized.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join the debate on Bill C-6. It is short and straightforward legislation, but at the same time one that invites our consideration of a vast array of issues of the way in which we welcome newcomers, the process for citizenship and how we move forward with reconciliation with indigenous peoples. There are many different points to raise in the context of that discussion.

Just to set the stage a bit, we have a substantial number of recommendations coming out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, a process that followed an apology that was issued by former prime minister Stephen Harper, working with other parties.

My colleagues across the floor were shouting about what might not have happened in the past, but of course they should remember that process was a shared process. It was something on which all parties worked together, but it was a process that happened and was initiated under the leadership of Stephen Harper.

When we talk about reconciliation with indigenous peoples, we have this list of recommendations coming out of that. Some of these speak to very large, substantive, challenging issues around justice and health or around a clear policy reorientation. Some of them speak to issues of naming and symbolism. I would very much agree that those symbolic steps and discussions are important. We should not dismiss them entirely. The way in which we recognize certain things verbally, like the citizenship oath and elsewhere, these symbolic aspects, is not irrelevant.

However, symbolic recognition should be a step or a part of a process moving toward more substantive change, more substantive connection and reconciliation. It is unfortunate we see with the government this springing exclusively for these symbolic things, the smaller symbolic pieces of it, rather than actually moving forward with substantive action.

In addition to talking about the bill, I want to zero in on what some of that substantive action needs to look like with respect to moving forward in a reconciliation agenda.

For those just joining the conversation, the bill would do one simple thing. It would change the oath that new Canadians would take when they become Canadian citizens. The current oath simply says:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

It is a general oath. It identifies our Queen and a sense of adherence to law and duty. It is clear, beautiful and simplistic, yet it is not overly descriptive in what some of those laws might be. The amendment proposes to include one such element of specificity into the oath. The new oath would read:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

There are many aspects of Canada's history and identity and this brings in one very important aspect; the treaty commitments that all of us are a part of in our relationship with indigenous peoples.

This has a relationship to, but it does not directly follow, recommendation 94 from the TRC process. It says:

We call upon the Government of Canada to replace the Oath of Citizenship with the following:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Recommendation 94 does marshal in the same direction, but it is much simpler and clearer. It is not as long and it does not name all the different indigenous groups: first nations, Inuit and Métis. It says, "indigenous".

● (1320)

Therefore, we effectively have these three options for possible consideration in the context of this conversation: the existing oath, the government's proposed oath and the oath proposed by the TRC process. Beyond that, there is a range of other options.

We might say that we should add the recognition of our linguistic duality, our multicultural identity or of the importance of freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We can imagine all kinds of different things that could be added as well, things that really are very important to who and what we are as country and what we have become.

However, we have a process, which is not the oath itself, through which newcomers to Canada read and learn about aspects of the Canadian identity. We have a citizenship guide. TRC recommendation 93 speaks specifically to revising the information to newcomers, looking at that citizenship guide to strengthen the reflection in it of the history of Canada's "diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools."

That certainly is important. There is no need for a great emphasis on brevity and simplicity in a citizenship guide. One can be longer and more explanatory in that context, and there would be value in action on that specific item. I think there would be consensus on that point at least among all members of the House.

We have the government choosing to focus in on one more symbolic proposal, not implementing it exactly but proposing a change to the citizenship oath.

What are we to make of this?

First, the principle of telling the full story of our history as a people in Canada is very important. The original framing of our national story was as the coming together of two nations, of French and English. That was part of the dynamic in Confederation, but many other peoples were incorporated into Canada and not really through their consent.

There were indigenous peoples, whose status as distinct nations were not recognized at the time of Confederation. There was also this dynamic that some people have spoken about recently, in which much of what is western Canada today did not negotiate its way into Confederation. Rather, it was purchased and then boundaries were drawn within it and retention of certain what were otherwise provincial powers were maintained by the federal government.

As a western Canadian who tries to be attentive to the concerns of indigenous peoples as well, there are a few different aspects in which we can see how this bicultural story, this coming together of two nations, misses the full breadth and diversity of the Canadian experience.

Is it important that this be reflected in the information we share through education, in different formats and certainly with newcomers? Absolutely. All of us in the House have an interest in seeing newcomers to Canada learn all this important information about what Canada's history and identity mean. They are learning from our successes and our historic mistakes and they are incorporating that in their sense of what it means to be a Canadian.

Our founders were right to see us a multicultural nation, but at the same time a common civic nation. We must have a common civic identity that is rooted in certain common values in an understanding of our history. Part of that history is the important relationship between all of us and indigenous peoples who live in Canada. Therefore, that recognition and appreciation are very important.

I know sometimes we hear discussion on the process of citizenship.

• (1325)

In an interview that the Prime Minister gave a few years ago to *The New York Times*, he described Canada as a post-national state, as lacking a mainstream, as lacking a core identity. I disagree with that. Certainly we lack a common ethnic or religious identity, but we do have a common civic identity.

Those who highlight the importance of discussing the role of injustices towards indigenous peoples as part of the process of welcoming newcomers are putting forward the important idea that Canada has a common civic identity, which has to involve an understanding of our past, both the successes and the failures, and how we move forward. One thing to assert as part of this debate is that this proposal does speak to the idea of a common civic identity, and that is important.

My biggest frustration with where we find ourselves here is that we really need action from the government. It needs to move forward substantively to improve economic conditions and the many things that flow from it for indigenous Canadians. We have had a lot of debate about precisely this issue over the last week.

We have natural resource projects in remote areas that have the overwhelming support of indigenous communities. Without getting into a debate about specific blockades or specific policies, there is obviously a lot of frustration in my riding and my province about what has happened with the Teck Frontier project.

The principle behind this is whether we believe we have to be the kind of country where indigenous peoples have the right to devel-

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op, have the right to say yes to projects, have the right to sign on to agreements with companies, and then those projects, when they have the support of local indigenous peoples, should be able to move forward. There has been a lot of discussion, and rightly so, about the rights of indigenous peoples. We need to include in that discussion a recognition of the right to develop, a recognition of the right to say yes to projects.

We should have learned things from our past history, a time of colonial mentalities when people were told they could not speak for themselves, that others would speak for them.

We have a colonial mentality today from those who claim to speak for indigenous peoples but do not actually know what indigenous peoples want or know their interests. Protesters and activists in other parts of the country, for example, claim to be in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en people in their opposition to development projects, when in fact those people are overwhelmingly expressing, through their elected representatives, their support for those development projects.

People claiming to speak for another group that is contradicting what that group wants is not solidarity. That is colonialism. We have to know the difference. Solidarity is when people are magnifying the voice of people who are themselves speaking about their own issues of concern. It is not solidarity when people contradict and oppose the things that those communities want. That is a form of colonialism. We have managed to get into a lot of trouble in the past when our leaders and activists and people in other parts of the country have failed to know the difference between those things. A well-intentioned paternalistic, colonial mentality that dismisses pro-development voices as being just bought off for the money is no less paternalistic just because it might be well intentioned. We should have learned in the area of the relationship between the government and indigenous peoples that good intentions are not enough.

We need to stand up for the right of indigenous Canadians to develop, to move forward with projects that they support and therefore to have jobs and opportunities within their own communities. Without those jobs and opportunities, people are forced to a standard of living that is much lower than it is for Canadians elsewhere, or they are forced to choose between that low standard of living and moving to an urban centre, moving away from their home community.

• (1330)

These are the real, substantive and, may I say, difficult issues involved in reconciliation. How do we have meaningful consultation with the elected representatives of indigenous people that recognizes that while we cannot have unanimity, when there is overwhelming consent, the people need to be able to move forward?

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I notice members of the government and my friends in the NDP have been speaking about the issue of UNDRIP. Conservatives are supportive in principle of the aspirational objectives that are in much of the document, but we have a lot of concern about the legal frameworks that have been proposed around it. Their effect in saying that every community must have free, prior and informed consent in the effective application of the legal frameworks that have been proposed before the House in the past has amounted to providing a veto for every single community.

I would make the case that if a project has overwhelming support and the vast majority of communities and individuals are saying yes to it, they should have the right in a democratic country to pursue the wishes of the majority. Of course, we defend minority rights when someone's personal situation is infringed, but on questions about economic policy and development, there is a sense that develop rights for indigenous communities should include the right for the majority to express their desire and to move forward.

This is a concern with the framework of UNDRIP that has been proposed, and this is why I opposed a private member's bill on this in the last Parliament. We need to work these issues out. If the majority of indigenous communities or a majority of indigenous people are saying no to a particular project in their area, then consultation means listening to them and respecting their wishes. However, if the majority say yes, listening requires us to respect that will and to move forward.

These are some of the substantive issues that are essential to this conversation, but we do not see the government showing leadership on it. We are becoming a country in which it is very difficult to build anything, a country where projects are being pulled back for fear of a small number of protesters shutting down the ability to move forward. Projects that are good for our economy, that are good for the environment and have the support of indigenous peoples just are not moving forward. Therefore, companies will choose to make investments elsewhere, and the real victims will be those vulnerable Canadians. Each of these projects may be the difference between having a job and not having a job, between providing for an education for their children and not providing for an education for their children.

These very serious talks are serious for our economy, serious for the environment and serious for our relationship with indigenous people. I implore the House to zero in and focus on these substantive issues so that we show leadership and set up frameworks that allow indigenous communities the right to develop, to move forward and access the economic prosperity that comes from their resources.

As we develop this, we need to continue working to build an inclusive society in which newcomers understand the history and traditions of indigenous peoples and in which all of us who were born here in Canada take the opportunity to learn more and understand more of the substance of our history.

I do not feel that changing a line in the citizenship oath, especially in a way that is not aligned with what was in the TRC recommendations, is going to move us forward on those substantive issues. As I said at the beginning, as much as the symbolic discussions have a place, the urgency of where we are at now, the lack of

government action, the lack of a plan to move forward, is hurting a lot of indigenous people across this country, people who depend on natural resource development, people who depend on our railways.

We have to be a country that can build things. We have to be a country that can move forward together. It would be tragic if we found that the country that once built a transcontinental railway was now not capable of getting to yes on almost any major project in the national interest, especially when those have the overwhelming support of indigenous Canadians.

These are urgent issues that we must move forward on as quickly as possible.

• (1335)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you very much to my colleague opposite for his eloquent remarks. I am impressed that he does as much as he does without ever reading. I am going to try to do the same.

I have found that many of the Conservatives' comments regarding this topic have expressed their undying willingness to support indigenous peoples, as long as it suits their political narrative and as long as people are okay with these big resource extraction projects going on. However, I was wondering if there was one example that you could find of Conservatives being willing to stand up for indigenous rights when it did not support your narrative.

These changes are not about placating the Conservatives or making them feel okay about the oath. This is about consulting with indigenous peoples in Canada and asking them what they would like to see in this oath and responding in turn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member went from directly to indirectly to directly to indirectly. I just want to advise the member that he needs to address all of the content to the Chair.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have two points in response to what my friend had to say.

He talked about the importance of consulting. I did point out in my speech some of the dissonance between the TRC recommendation around the language and citizenship oath and what is in this legislation. Maybe the government feels its consultation prior to developing the legislation was more robust than the work done by the TRC. I do not know if the government has said that, but there are some questions about the actual engagement and consultation.

Let me be very clear that indigenous peoples' right to develop is a right to say yes and a right to say no, absolutely. Generally speaking, projects that do not have any indigenous support are not even making it off the ground floor. We are not hearing about them. The big projects we are hearing about and talking about, the projects that are being discussed in the news, things like Coastal GasLink and Teck Frontier, are precisely the projects that have gotten as far as they have in a relatively difficult political environment because they overwhelmingly make sense and have overwhelming support from indigenous communities. Maybe that is why the member feels we are only talking about these kinds of projects.

In the case of the Coastal GasLink project, 20 band councils are all in favour. It is a natural gas pipeline that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by displacing coal. It is good for the environment. It is good for indigenous people. It is just obvious.

I support—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to go to other questions and comments.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will acknowledge that there is a very wide spectrum of indigenous viewpoints on resource development. What is needed in the Wet'suwet'en case is the time, space and resources to allow them to come to a decision. Over the last 150 years, we have so destroyed their traditional governance model that we see these divisions coming forth.

I want to centre my comments and my question on the bill before us, Bill C-6. I understand the Conservatives may have problems with call to action number 94. What I wonder is whether there are other calls to action that the Conservatives have a problem with in the TRC.

If the problem is on the specificity of the wording of the oath, why then is the member's party trying to kill this bill here at second reading instead of sending it to committee, where perhaps we could hear from witnesses and maybe hash out some of the linguistic differences in that important committee work?

• (1340)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there were a lot of different points that the member raised. I will try to get to all of them if I can.

He spoke at the beginning about, in the case of Coastal GasLink, giving people the time, space and resources to make a decision. Things cannot just be frozen in time until there is unanimity. We already have overwhelming support, and if we just say, "Let's just give it more time," people are just not going to invest in Canada. If they have to wait until every single person agrees, then we are not going to see investment.

In a democracy, there has to be a mechanism for aggregating the overwhelming majority sentiment right now. That process is the elected representatives, all of whom are supportive.

The member asked about other calls to action. Obviously there are many different things in the TRC recommendations, and all of them require substantive engagement. It is difficult for me to go through and offer my views on every single one of them. I did speak to the importance of call to action number 93, which is connected in some ways to number 94, saying that there are issues around changing the citizenship oath, but certainly we should have a conversation about the citizenship guide and the important information that it conveys, and if it could convey more on things like residential schools and reconciliation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when my colleague started his speech, he talked a bit about the previous government. I do not want to go down that road too far either, because it is like beating a dead horse and even I get bored with it after a while.

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The reality is that it would be overstating the facts to say that Stephen Harper had an interest in indigenous people. Regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he did everything but completely write off the report. He never committed to any of the recommendations in it. Protests happened in the country. People from the Cree Nation literally walked and marched to Ottawa, and Stephen Harper chose to welcome a panda to Canada at the airport instead of meeting with the Cree walkers. If we rated governments on their ability to engage in meaningful resolution and dialogue with indigenous peoples, Stephen Harper's government would definitely get an F.

Perhaps this is a turning point. I really hope so, because that is what this is all about. Maybe now the Conservative Party will look at this a bit differently and will want to make meaningful progress forward.

If it is not possible to do that with this one particular issue, on what recommendations would the member be willing to come to the table and negotiate?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my colleague says he does not want to beat a dead horse and then goes on to offer gratuitous, absurd criticisms of the previous Conservative government.

There were substantial good-faith efforts, not just on symbolic issues but on critical policy fronts, including increasing investment in education and working with Shawn Atleo and others to try to establish a framework for substantively addressing the long-standing challenges in education. Not all of those succeeded to the fullness of what had been hoped for, but good-faith efforts were made to take on very big, challenging long-standing issues. Frankly, changing some words in the citizenship oath pales in comparison with the legacy of those efforts.

Protecting matrimonial property rights on reserves did not, if I remember correctly, have the support of other parties, and it was an important advance in gender equality for indigenous people. Also, let us not forget that it was under Stephen Harper that the apology was made.

I will agree in principle that there is more work to do. In terms of the economic opportunities of indigenous peoples, we have been set back significantly by the failures of the government. Indigenous people want opportunity and prosperity, and they want to be able to develop their own resources. I hope that one day very soon they will have a government that will support them in doing that.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech.

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I would like his opinion on the government's approach to the current crisis. Apparently, in the past few hours, the police have moved in and that has triggered secondary effects; in other words, there have been attempts to construct new blockades. Of course, every member in the House knows that this is a result of the inaction of this government, which waited more than 10 days to have a meeting with the groups involved.

In his speech, my colleague talked a lot about respect for first nations. Would it not make sense in this case to adopt the Bloc's suggestions and temporarily suspend construction of the pipeline, have the RCMP withdraw from the Wet'suwet'en territory and end the blockades? We can talk about resuming the work later.

We are not saying that everything needs to be cancelled, but we are in an untenable crisis situation. I was reading earlier that pork producers are currently in distress. Fortunately, the weather is mild for the moment, but that could change dramatically in a matter of hours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of my Bloc colleagues.

Just as Quebeckers want the power and opportunity to develop their resources, we, in the west, have the same desire to be able to develop our own economic resources. Indigenous peoples want the same things and want to be able to develop their resources without interference from other regions. Therefore I hope we will have the support of other parties and regions for our desire to develop our resources.

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I start my intervention, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley East.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak at second reading of Bill C-6, a bill that proposes amendments to the citizenship oath to include an acknowledgement of the important role of indigenous people in our country.

These amendments have four key components of much significance. First, they appreciate and respect that indigenous people are an important part of Canada's history and identity. Second, they reflect our government's commitment to the path of reconciliation. Third, they remind all Canadians who take the oath of citizenship that the recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights is a responsibility enshrined in our Constitution. Fourth, they ensure that all Canadians move toward reconciliation in unity.

In order to become a citizen of this great nation of ours, all newcomers 14 years and older who have been granted citizenship must take the oath of citizenship. Upon reciting the oath, new citizens agree to obey Canadian laws and fulfill their duties as Canadians. The citizenship oath may only consist of a few words, but its significance is profound. Indeed, the citizenship oath is an important symbol of the values we share as citizens of Canada.

When newcomers take the citizenship oath, they make a solemn promise to their fellow Canadians. It is a public declaration that

they are joining the Canadian family and are committed to Canadian values and traditions.

Immigration has shaped Canada, which currently includes citizens of over 200 ethnic groups. Thirteen of those ethnic groups have Canadian populations of over one million people. Today, more than one-fifth of Canadians were born outside of Canada. These individuals chose to immigrate to Canada. The fact that Canada has one of the highest naturalization rates in the world underscores the value of our citizenship. Over the last 10 years, Canada has welcomed nearly 1.7 million new Canadians.

Canada values the important contributions that indigenous people have made throughout our history. First nation, Inuit and Métis people all played a role in building a stronger Canada. Indigenous people will continue to play a crucial role in our shared future.

The government's proposed amendments to the citizenship oath would allow new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect that indigenous people are an important part of Canada's history and identity. The new citizenship oath would also reflect our expectations that new Canadians demonstrate an understanding of indigenous people and their constitutional rights. In addition to fostering a better appreciation and recognition among new citizens of the important contributions of indigenous people, the proposed new citizenship oath reflects our government's commitment to reconciliation, hence my second point.

The government is committed to a renewed relationship with indigenous people based on respect, rights, co-operation and partnership. The proposed new citizenship oath responds to a call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and is the result of consultations with national indigenous organizations. The revised text also reminds all Canadians that recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights is not a political or administrative gesture, but a responsibility enshrined in our Constitution, hence my third point.

● (1350)

While Canada's Constitution recognizes and affirms the rights of indigenous people, the government believes that all Canadians should have a deeper appreciation of the role of indigenous people in the history and culture of Canada. Whether we were born here or chose to become a citizen, as Canadians we respect fundamental rights and freedoms, share values of equality and celebrate our diverse culture, traditions and languages. These traditions and cultures include those of indigenous people.

The process of reconciliation is one in which all Canadians can and should participate. This includes the participation of our newest citizens, hence my fourth point. It is essential that all Canadians move forward together on the road to reconciliation so we can leave a proper legacy for future generations.

Statements by Members

With these changes to the citizenship oath, let us take this opportunity to acknowledge our country's past and move toward a renewed relationship with indigenous people based on inherent rights, respect and partnership. The government is proudly introducing historic changes to the oath of citizenship so that new Canadians can also promise to faithfully observe the law of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. With strong indigenous institutions, we will contribute to the important work of closing the socio-economic gap and fostering strong indigenous communities for future generations.

I urge hon. members to join me in supporting this crucial piece of legislation at second reading.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this matter, as I represent 42 first nations communities.

Over the weekend I took the opportunity to speak with some chiefs, community leaders and community members in my riding to gauge their thoughts on this proposed change. I heard resoundingly that we in this House should not be spending our time debating this, as we could be talking about issues like clean drinking water, health care and the many things that impact the lives of first nations communities much more prominently.

Does my colleague believe that it is time for the House and the government to take concrete meaningful action to support first nations communities and indigenous Canadians across this country?

• (1355)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I too had the opportunity to have dialogue with some of the indigenous leaders in my community, and they see the bill as one step in the journey of reconciliation. They also acknowledged the work that our government has done over the last four years in many other aspects of the path to reconciliation, such as the elimination of the water advisories and the historic investments we made in education and other areas to support indigenous people. Additionally, not only the Prime Minister but also the government has been very patient in taking a very well-thought-out approach to consultation when it comes time for challenges, such as those in front of us.

Does the hon. member consider the bill a step in the path toward reconciliation?

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy that we are talking about call to action number 94 and the implementation of it. I think it is timely, even though it certainly took a lot longer than I would have wanted.

One of the concerns I have, however, is that with the bill, we are only addressing the 10th call to action out of 94. We are moving rather slowly. As the Yellowhead Institute said, "If the current pace holds (2.25 Calls a year) it will take approximately 38 more years before all of the Calls to Action are implemented. Reconciliation in 2057?"

I am wondering if the member could speak to this issue. How long is this going to take?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the pace has been somewhat slow, but this is the process that we have to go through, and this is the time we have to take when we are dealing with complex issues.

It is not an easy task ahead of us, and I look forward to the member's support in moving this bill to committee so that we can have this conversation as well as the conversation of how we can make sure that the other commitments and recommendations we have made can be taken into account on a timeline that is much faster.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will continue to ask questions of the member and the party opposite. We are dealing with recommendation 94. The Liberals have worked on nine of 94 recommendations, and the member mentioned historic investments in education.

However, concerning child welfare, there is recommendation 7:

We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

In the last Parliament, taking out budget and budget implementation bills, only 75 pieces of legislation passed. Given the limited time the House has to pass legislation, why are the Liberals not introducing legislation on these important issues instead of this?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, let me explain to the House that a lot of the 94 recommendations are a combination of working closely with the provinces and other jurisdictions to make sure that these recommendations are taken into account. For those that are federal responsibility, I would like to assure the House that we are taking the action that needs to be taken within the timeline.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

PARENT SUPPORT CENTRE

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that has been giving more money to families since 2006.

Our government's monthly tax-free payments have lifted 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty. The Canada child benefit eases the financial pressure on families.

In Hochelaga, the organization *Entre mamans et papas* is a place where parents can develop positive plans for life and where they can enrich the quality of the parent-and-child relationship. The organization realized that following a birth, new parents wait impatiently for this important financial assistance.

In October 2019, more than 9,000 payments were made in Hochelaga, and more than 15,000 children benefited from these payments.

Every child deserves an equal chance to succeed.

*Statements by Members**[English]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, this morning Canadian resource workers woke up to the terrible news about the Frontier mine cancellation in Alberta. Hundreds of thousands of families in our energy industry, forest industry, auto and manufacturing industries are all being left behind by the Liberal government. It cancelled pipelines, banned tankers and blocked projects.

Capital investment is fleeing Canada, and even proud Canadian companies like Teck are giving up. The #ShutDownCanada movement paralyzing our country was started by the shut-down Liberal government.

We need pipelines, project approvals and progress, not blockades, bans and Liberal bafflebag. Even green transportation projects are not supported by the government.

I was in Hamilton last week and heard from the LiUNA union for the LRT project that would employ 5,000 people and reduce emissions. This is an example of a build-up-Canada project that we need. The infrastructure minister is from Hamilton. Will she get behind this project, help working families and reduce our emissions?

* * *

*[Translation]***RUFIN GIONET**

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Rufin Gionet was a well-known and very respected constituent of mine. On January 17, 2020, at the age of 99 years and seven months, he passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family.

Mr. Gionet was one of the last surviving veterans of World War II. After his military service, Mr. Gionet made a name for himself throughout New Brunswick with his passion for the shipbuilding industry. He was a co-founder of the Bas-Caraquet shipyard, Fundy Shipbuilding and Caraquet Marine Ltée.

He also owned a small business and sat on many boards of directors, such as the boards of Caraquet Hospital and of Caisses populaires acadiennes.

Mr. Gionet was also a Bas-Caraquet municipal councillor and founding member of our only French-language newspaper, the Acadie Nouvelle.

We will be forever grateful for his service to Canada and our community. In our riding, he will be remembered as a modern and courageous man.

I would like to extend my condolences to his children, René and Huguette, and to his family and friends.

Rest in peace, Mr. Gionet.

TECK RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate Teck Resources on behalf of the Bloc Québécois for abandoning its Frontier oil sands mine project.

The world is evolving. We can no longer ignore climate change. Even natural resource companies understand this. Even Teck, an oil sands proponent, recognizes that Canada's laws make it difficult to balance climate action with fossil-fuel development.

Today, a private company withdrew from a project on its own to allow for a comprehensive discussion on environmental protections. Today, a private company showed more leadership than the Government of Canada. If even mining companies can get it right, it is time that all political parties got with the program.

Climate change is real. It is the biggest challenge facing every country in the world. It is time for Canada to do its part.

* * *

*[English]***CHARLES HUBBARD**

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today with a heavy heart to pay my respects to the late Charles Hubbard, who passed away on February 12. He was a friend and colleague to many of us here in this House.

Charlie was the member of Parliament for Miramichi from 1993 to 2008 and served the people of the riding with great pride. He was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport during the government of Paul Martin.

Before entering politics, Charlie served in the Canadian Armed Forces, and in 1963 began his illustrious teaching career. He later went on to become the first principal of Miramichi Valley High School and was also deeply involved with many community organizations over the years.

Charlie had a love for the outdoors that included farming and fishing.

I would like to extend my condolences to his wife Pat, their children and their grandchildren. Charlie was a good friend and mentor to me, and a true champion of the Miramichi region. He will be missed.

• (1405)

[Translation]

QUEBEC INTERNATIONAL PEE-WEE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sports are very important in my riding. Athletes of all ages excel in basketball, volleyball, baseball, judo and figure skating, just to name a few.

Over the weekend, two hockey teams with young players from my riding were winners at the 61st annual Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament.

Players from the Alliés de Montmagny and from the Océanic de l'Est-du-Québec, a member of the Albatros du Collège Notre-Dame de Rivière-du-Loup integrated structure, won the championship in the INT-B and Pee-Wee AA-Elite groups, respectively.

I want to congratulate both organizations, the coaches and the parents. Most of all, I want to congratulate the players, whose passion led them to victory in this tournament. They will remember this for the rest of their lives.

Congratulations, players. Bravo.

* * *

[English]

ROBERT H. LEE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to pay tribute to Robert H. Lee, a remarkable British Columbian who passed away last week. Bob was born in Vancouver, the son of immigrants, and a stellar example of the qualities that many immigrants bring to Canada: hard work and a philosophy of giving back. He graduated from business school at the University of B.C. and became a successful realtor, community builder and very generous philanthropist.

As chancellor of UBC, he created the UBC Properties Trust, making use of university lands to gain over \$1.7 billion to fund UBC in perpetuity. The Robert H. Lee Graduate School, the UBC alumni centre, the Robert and Lily Lee Community Health Centre and the Burrard YMCA are named after him and his family.

Bob was a son of Vancouver who looked beyond himself and recognized the value of helping others. He was an exemplary human, and his legacy will continue to enrich us all.

* * *

KIRKLAND OLDTIMERS HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Kirkland Oldtimers Hockey League is a pillar of sporting life in Montreal's west island. The league allows those of all ages who are passionate about playing our national sport the opportunity to put blade and stick to ice in friendly but vigorous competition.

[Translation]

I want to congratulate the Kirkland Oldtimers on organizing yet another very successful annual tournament that brought together teams of seniors from all across our region and from further afield.

Statements by Members

[English]

Over the last 35 years, the tournament's players, volunteers and supporters, including local sponsors, have helped raise \$1.2 million for local organizations.

I thank league president Donald Clarke and tournament co-chairs Peter Gibson and Alex Robertson for their hard work in making the 36th Kirkland Oldtimers annual hockey tournament a resounding success.

* * *

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am standing today, proud to be representing the great people of Kootenay—Columbia, and honoured they have put their trust in me to represent them.

This weekend I was bombarded with comments from individuals who were upset about the illegal blockades. They were having a difficult time understanding why an illegal blockade was not dismantled immediately. A Supreme Court order is not a guideline. The crisis we are in is a result of a weak government demonstrating a real lack of leadership.

The rule of law is clear: If an illegal blockade is set up, then law enforcement agencies must respond. The RCMP in British Columbia are under contract with the province. The officer in charge of the RCMP there reports directly to the commissioner, who reports directly to the public safety minister.

Obviously, there is no clear direction for our law enforcement agencies. I know I speak for the silent majority across Canada when I say there is no excuse for the government not to have responded immediately to shut down the illegal blockades. The present crisis facing all Canadians is 100% due to our weak government demonstrating a lack of leadership.

* * *

SCOTTIES TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past week, the Canadian women's curling championship, the Scotties Tournament of Hearts, was held in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Fifteen teams, representing all provinces and territories, put on an unforgettable display of curling. Emerging victorious were Team Manitoba's Kerri Einarson, Valerie Sweeting, Shannon Birchard and Briane Meilleur, winning the Scotties with a draw to the button in an extra end.

Statements by Members

What an exciting finish to an amazing week of curling, our other major national winter sport. Curling in Canada is one of the few sports that has reached gender parity in both television viewing audience and prize money.

I congratulate all the women's teams that competed this week and took the roaring game to new heights. I wish good luck to our national champions at the women's world championships in Prince George, B.C., in March. To Team Canada we say, "Hurry hard."

* * *

● (1410)

SCOTTIES TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to celebrate team Manitoba's big win at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Moose Jaw to become our Canadian women's curling champions. Team Manitoba, skipped by Kerri Einarson, along with teammates Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard and Briane Meilleur, curl out of the Gimli Curling Club in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Manitobans, and indeed all Canadians, were on the edge of their seats watching yesterday's Scotties championship final, especially as they headed into an extra end. As the newly crowned winners, Team Einarson will be back next year as Team Canada and has a berth at the 2021 Olympic trials. Team Einarson's win also marks the 11th time Manitoba has won the Scotties, tying the record for the most all time.

On behalf of all my colleagues, I congratulate Team Einarson on its hard-fought win and wish it best of luck as it represents Canada at the 2020 World Women's Curling Championship next month in Prince George.

Go, Canada, go.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week will go down in the history books of our country as the week that the Liberals killed any hope of recovery for the Alberta economy. When I got off the plane last night and heard that due to the incompetence of the government, Teck Resources had shuttered its plans to build a \$20-billion oil sands plant, I could not help but think of the old The Band song, *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down*.

These eco-lefties, out of touch with reality, members of the separatist Quebec party, the socialist NDP and those social elites who sit in the back benches of the Liberal government are responsible for this decision that happened yesterday. The Teck mine would have created tens of thousands of jobs and helped the Canadian economy. The Prime Minister was wiped out in western Canada in the last election and he said he heard the message, but he has not learned anything. I ask the Prime Minister to resign before he ruins my country.

NISGA'A NEW YEAR

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had the pleasure of attending the Nisga'a celebration of Hoobiye, held this year in the village of Gitlaxt'aamiks. Two days of drumming, singing and dancing mark the Nisga'a New Year and the return of oolichan to the Nass Valley.

It is hard to describe the honour of walking into the hall alongside the Simgigat and Sigidimhanak, as drummers pound out the heartbeat of the Nisga'a Nation and hundreds of voices join together in songs that echo across the generations.

This year marked 50 years since the Gitlaxt'aamiks Ceremonial Dancers first came together to revive cultural traditions suppressed by colonialism. It was also a chance to cheer the triumph of the Gidmidiiik basketball team, who returned from the All Native with their first master's title in 21 years.

I look forward to joining the Nisga'a again this May in Lax'galts'ap for the 20th anniversary of B.C.'s first modern treaty. I thank the Nisga'a people for their warm welcome and ongoing friendship. Hoobiye.

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[*Translation*]

CRÉ-ACTIONS STUDIO AND BOUTIQUE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 30, a raging fire destroyed the building that was home to Cré-Actions, a studio and boutique in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. Cré-Actions is an important community organization that leverages sewing and crafts to help young women going through hard times, many of them marginalized, reintegrate into the community.

The devastating fire that destroyed the building left some 60 participants feeling like they had lost their second home, a place where they felt understood, supported and loved. A jeans drive has been organized to help rebuild Cré-Actions's inventory, and the young women will transform the clothing they collect into reusable bags, aprons and other crafts that they can sell to fund their activities.

I am calling on all parliamentarians to help. I personally invite everyone to bring a pair of jeans to the Bloc Québécois lobby by next Friday.

I want all the women of Cré-Actions to know that their resilience inspires me and that they can count on my support.

• (1415)

[English]

NHL GOALIE DEBUT

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at 8:42 p.m. on Saturday night, the NHL podcast *Spittin' Chiclets* posted in capital letters on Twitter, “WE GOT A ZAMBONI DRIVER IN NET”. In the second period of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Carolina Hurricanes game, the unbelievable happened. Carolina had already lost goalie James Reimer to injury in the first period when in the second, backup goalie Petr Mrazek also got hurt.

With no goalies, Carolina had to use an EBUG. EBUG is not a computer virus. It stands for “emergency backup goalie”. Sure he plays net, but never when it has meant so much, in front of so many, as both teams battled for playoff spots.

It was a rough start for Ayres, but he settled in, stopping every shot he faced in the third period, securing a Carolina win and being named first star of the game. His wife Sarah's reaction on Twitter said it best and likely reflected what all Canadians who were watching, including me, were thinking, but it would be unparliamentary of me to say what she posted.

David Ayres will not win the Vezina Trophy, but he captured the country's imagination at a time when we needed something and someone to cheer for.

* * *

NHL GOALIE DEBUT

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate one of Whitby's finest, David Ayres. This past Saturday night, Dave, a coach with the Whitby Wildcats and a Zamboni driver, donned a Toronto Marlies mask after being called up as the emergency backup goalie for the Carolina Hurricanes.

That night, Dave went on to make eight saves, helped lead the Hurricanes to a 6-3 victory over the Maple Leafs and became an overnight sensation. He became the oldest goalie in NHL history to win his regular season debut at age 42. Being a lifelong Leafs fan, I cannot remember a time when I was so proud of the outcome when the Leafs lost. I look forward to seeing Dave in a Leafs uniform next time.

Dave makes Whitby proud. On behalf of the people of Whitby and all members of this House, I congratulate Dave on his NHL debut and his performance Saturday night.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rail blockades have exposed the extent of the Prime Minister's weakness. He could have used the tools available to him to show that we, as a country, are governed by the rule of law.

Oral Questions

Rather, he chose to side with the radical protesters who appropriated the first nations' claims. All those who dare suggest that the law be enforced are condemned.

Will the Prime Minister do things differently to stop these illegal blockades in the future?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was important to continue to pursue the work of reconciliation even in difficult situations and that is exactly what we did when we said that it was enough and the blockades needed to come down.

That is precisely the path we chose to a peaceful resolution by ensuring at the same time that essential commodities are shipped across the country and there are no shortages of what matters most to Canadians.

We will continue to work on reconciliation in a committed and positive manner.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Except, Mr. Speaker, these illegal blockades had nothing to do with reconciliation. If people in Ontario want to support reconciliation efforts, then they would listen to the members of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation who support the Coastal GasLink project. The problem is that there is now a clear playbook for radical activists to follow, and they know that the Prime Minister will do literally nothing as the economy is brought to its knees.

Knowing that there are future projects that may be proposed, what will the Prime Minister do differently in the future to prevent the types of layoffs and economic damage that these radical activists have caused?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with his very first sentence in that question he demonstrated that the Leader of the Opposition does not understand anything about reconciliation.

People in this House, Conservative Party leaders, do not get to pick who speaks for indigenous peoples. That needs to be done in a thoughtful, engaged way, and we demonstrated through this process that we can both protect reconciliation and protect Canada's economy as we move forward.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

• (1420)

The Speaker: Before I go on to the next question, I want to remind hon. members that certain individuals have strong voices, and I do not want to have to call them out. It is very obvious who they are, and I would point that out.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was willing to break the law, bend the rules and even fire his Attorney General when he was trying to do a favour for his corporate friends at SNC-Lavalin, but when thousands of energy sector jobs are at stake and when dozens of first nations communities will benefit from these energy projects, the Prime Minister does literally nothing.

Why is it that when it comes to his corporate, crony, insider friends, the Prime Minister is willing to break the law, but when it comes to providing hope and opportunity to thousands of Canadians, the Prime Minister refuses to uphold the law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to stand up for jobs, and that is exactly what we have done every step of the way.

What the member opposite simply does not understand is that we cannot have a plan for jobs if we do not have a plan to fight climate change. It is about time he paid attention to that.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister lets radical activists shut down the rail network and anti-energy activists write his government policies, the market certainly gets the message. Oil and gas projects are being built all over the world right now, just not in Canada under his watch. The reason is the current Liberal government.

Expenditures in the energy sector are \$42 billion lower than in the previous government, and the Prime Minister has overseen over \$100 billion in cancelled projects. Does the Prime Minister understand that when it comes to ensuring that the environment and the economy go hand in hand, he is doing it wrong?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to refuse to understand that the world is changing, that we can no longer build a strong economy if we are not fighting climate change at the same time. That is something that members opposite have refused—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members of the loyal opposition that they did ask a question and they are waiting for an answer. Shouting is not going to make the answer any different.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, global investors have indicated that they need to see strong action on climate change. Canadians from coast to coast want to see good jobs, but want to see stronger action on climate change.

It is only the Conservative Party of Canada and its provincial counterparts that are standing against climate action and hurting our economy and jobs because of it.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not understand that these decisions are a repudiation of his policies.

Teck Frontier was told that it had to lower its emissions, so it came up with industry-leading standards and had the lowest intensity of emissions in the sector. It was told that it had to consult with indigenous communities. It did so and had partnership agreements with the 14 first nations communities that were affected by it. It was told that the Government of Alberta's industrial emitters policy would have to reach equivalency. That government granted that equivalency just last week.

What else was Teck Frontier supposed to do to get a project built in this country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to say that this project did not move forward because of this government's leadership on climate. Let me point out what Teck itself actually said. Teck—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to remind the members that intimidating someone who is speaking is not a good way to have a friendly back and forth. I remind everyone not to shout during question period.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: It is okay, Mr. Speaker. The members are not intimidating me.

Teck said clearly, “We support strong actions to enable the transition to a low carbon future.” Teck is also “strong supporters of Canada's action” on climate pricing “and other climate policies such as legislated caps for oil sands emissions.”

It is the Conservative Party polarizing the debate on climate change that is putting our economy at risk.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today cannot be business as usual. In this bizarre process of public negotiations, since there was really no other option, first nations representatives said that if the RCMP would withdraw from the territory, which does not really appear to be the case, and if the work were halted, there is a good chance all the blockades would be lifted. The Prime Minister knew this on Friday. Nothing was for certain, but it was worth a try.

Why is the Prime Minister so intent on using police intervention to put an end to the blockades?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we worked extremely hard to achieve a peaceful resolution to this issue, but we cannot allow these blockades to continue. The RCMP made the decision to withdraw from a command post at kilometre 29, at the request of the Wet'suwet'en. Unfortunately, despite that gesture, the blockades were not lifted. That is why we had to proceed as we did.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is important to do the right thing, and to do it the right way. The Prime Minister should have resolved this. He probably could have resolved it.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that, with what we have seen today, he might have actually made matters worse and prolonged the crisis, rather than resolving it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we demonstrated a positive commitment to reconciliation and dialogue for 10 days. When it became clear that the indigenous communities were not ready to negotiate in good faith with us, we changed our position. I must point out, however, that of course all police decisions are made independently.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are in a national crisis and the Prime Minister has failed to provide leadership. First, he said that it was not his responsibility. Then, he accepted responsibility and called for patience. However, after three days, his patience ran out.

When will the Prime Minister accept that it is his responsibility to reduce tensions and take action to that end?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we recognized that national leadership was required and that is exactly what we demonstrated by bringing together people for the negotiations and seeking to resolve this crisis peacefully. Unfortunately, when we saw that the negotiations were not being conducted in good faith, we had to take another position. However, I would like to highlight that we remain deeply committed to walking a path of reconciliation. We will continue down that path, but we will do so in a way that helps Canadians across the country.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the buck stops with the Prime Minister. It is the Prime Minister's responsibility to de-escalate tensions.

He has continued to fail to show leadership. First, he does not accept that it is his responsibility. Then he finally says, "Okay, there is a federal responsibility" and urges patience, only to see that patience expire after three days, when he takes a page from the Conservative playbook and gives up on de-escalation, without ever having met with the hereditary chiefs.

When will the Prime Minister acknowledge that it is his responsibility to de-escalate, appoint a special mediator and meet with the hereditary chiefs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated, every step of the way, that we continue

Oral Questions

to work on the important efforts of reconciliation. We continue to journey with Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous, along that journey. However, it must be done in a responsible way.

When it became clear that there was no reciprocal openness to dialogue from the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, we made a shift in our posture.

We need to make sure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast continue to support reconciliation and continue to be secure in their jobs and the goods that they need.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under these Liberals, \$200 billion in oil and gas are gone. That is 16 times the GDP of Canada's aerospace sector and 10 times the automotive sector; 200,000 energy jobs gone, more than all the jobs in those sectors combined.

This would be the national emergency for any leader. However, the Prime Minister actively delays and blocks oil and gas, and fails to apply the law equally to all Canadians.

Here is the real question. Does the Prime Minister want Alberta in Canada or not?

● (1430)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the important work of growing our economy and protecting our environment goes beyond any single project. The government is committed to working with Alberta and the resource sector to make sure good projects move forward.

Our government approved the Line 3 replacement project, and that is done. That is why we always supported Keystone XL, with construction soon beginning in the U.S.

As we speak, there are thousands of good, well-paying jobs that have been created in Alberta and B.C., because we did the hard work to get TMX right.

We believe in the workers in the sector, we believe in their families and we have their backs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a complete crock. The Prime Minister said that he wanted to phase out the oil sands, and his actions show it. The market got the message. He clearly does not care about Alberta.

The Prime Minister was willing to break ethics laws and bully his former attorney general to save 9,000 jobs at SNC-Lavalin that were never actually at risk.

Oral Questions

Albertans want all Canadians and all sectors to succeed. However, when 200,000 Albertans lose their oil and gas jobs, suicides spike by 30% and people are losing hope and dignity, he blames everyone and everything else, and does nothing.

Does the Prime Minister want Alberta in Canada or not? What will he do to stop the bleeding he has caused?

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. members what constitutes parliamentary language. When something is inflammatory, it is inflammatory. I just want to point that out, and it is unparliamentary.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did the hard work necessary on TMX, and construction is under way, creating thousands of jobs.

There have been over \$8 billion in petrochemical projects and thousands of jobs linked to those projects in Alberta alone. These are real investments in our energy sector and real results for Canadians and Alberta workers. These are jobs. We will continue supporting the workers and those jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is not a great day for Canada, given the demise of the Teck Frontier project. We have lost 10,000 jobs and \$20 billion in investments. The company had spent 10 years clearing all the hurdles and securing all the necessary permissions. The only one it was missing was final approval from the Liberal government.

The file had been sitting on the Prime Minister's desk since July. Throughout July, August, September and October, the Prime Minister did nothing. Worse still, he let his members speak out publicly against the project. The result today is that the project is not going ahead.

Is the Prime Minister aware that he is once again attacking Canada's energy sector?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Teck Resources made the decision on its own. I understand that it was probably a very tough decision to make.

This decision shows how vital it is for all levels of government to work together on climate action. We need to take steps to fight climate change, in order to reduce pollution and provide certainty to businesses.

We are working with all levels of government in Canada and with the resource sector to keep creating good jobs and to ensure clean, sustainable growth for all.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10,000 good jobs could be created, but the government did its best to make the project fail.

Last year, Quebecers used 10.6 billion litres of gas, 60% of which came from the United States. The Liberals and the members of the Bloc seem happy to help Donald Trump, but the Conservatives would rather help Canada's energy sector. This is what it means to be Canadian and to put our workers first.

Why does the government continue to stand in the way of energy projects in Canada?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, we support the sector. We approved Enbridge's Line 3 project, which created thousands of jobs. This project is under construction.

We approved Keystone XL and continue to support it. Construction is finally starting in the United States.

As for TMX, the pipes are in the ground. We support this project because we worked hard to make it happen.

Thousands of jobs are being created in Alberta and B.C. We will continue to support the sector and the creation of good jobs.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Teck project would have contributed billions in revenue and created thousands of desperately needed jobs in Alberta and across Canada. However, Teck has withdrawn its application for the project, citing political unrest and public safety fears as shown by recent blockades.

Teck knows that the Prime Minister lacks the courage to defend Canada's economic interests. Worse, energy and resource companies know they are not wanted in Canada.

How will Canada attract investment and the jobs that come with it when we have a Prime Minister who will not get the job done?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was Teck's decision. We respect its decision. I am sure it was a difficult one.

The decision made by Teck Resources and the letter that was sent to me by the Teck CEO demonstrates clearly the need for all levels of government to work together to deliver climate action and clean growth.

We need to take action to reduce pollution and in doing so, provide business certainty. In his letter, Mr. Lindsay said that we needed to move past jurisdictional and partisan fighting.

We have been and will continue to work with all orders of government to make progress on addressing climate change and moving forward with a clean economy.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the withdrawal of Teck Resources sends a devastating message that Canada is closed for business.

Despite meeting all environmental requirements and being a model for engaging with indigenous communities, Teck Resources cannot see a path forward. The Prime Minister's weak leadership has allowed the erosion of the rule of law, leaving companies with no choice but to abandon Canada.

Will the Prime Minister reverse course and create a country where critical national projects can be built or has destroying these projects been his plan all along?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this was Teck Resources' decision and we respect that decision. I am sure it was a difficult one to make.

The Teck decision and the CEO's letter show the need for us to have a serious climate plan that cuts pollution, incentivizes innovation and ensures a healthy economy and investor confidence.

Our government has a serious plan that includes a price on pollution. We are moving to exceed the Paris targets. We will be working toward net zero by 2050. We need collaboration with the provinces to do that.

We will be moving forward, in collaboration with our provincial partners, to ensure that we have both climate action and clean growth.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is saying that he did not decide to ask for the RCMP's withdrawal from Wet'suwet'en territory. He did not decide to ask to suspend work on the territory. He did not ask the police in Ontario to directly intervene. We have even learned that he is not the one who had the wisdom to have the Teck Frontier project suspended.

Is the only decision the Prime Minister is capable of making the decision not to make decisions?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. We remain committed to dialogue and reconciliation, but we also have acknowledged the impact these blockades have been having on everyday Canadians, their livelihoods and safety.

We have been crystal clear. The barricades must come down and the law must be obeyed. To be equally clear, the government does not direct the police in their operations. They are guided by the law and their conscience.

We will continue to remain committed to working with indigenous leadership on the reconciliation agenda and get those services restored.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, being guided by one's conscience is a good idea. Maybe they should try it sometime, just for the fun of it.

Oral Questions

Now that we see that the government's approach has failed and that the situation is likely to continue and get worse, will the Prime Minister or, if necessary, his minister pick up the phone and say that the RCMP will withdraw, that work will be suspended and that a discussion table will be set up if all the blockades are immediately removed today?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to upholding the rule of law. Just to be clear for those who might be confused on what that means, it means that we urge all Canadians to obey the rule of law. We do not instruct the police in the conduct of their investigations or in their operations.

As the Supreme Court has said, the commissioner of the RCMP is not subject to political direction and like every other police officer similarly engaged, she is answerable to the law. At one time, the party opposite understood that and former prime minister Stephen Harper said that the RCMP have an investigative process and the government does not interfere in that process. We trust the RCMP.

• (1440)

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that when they shout something out and they look at me out of the corner of their eye, it does not mean I cannot see them just because they think I cannot see them. I just want to make that clear. I can hear them and it is very obvious.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the rail crisis will not be resolved unless we get to the root of the problem. Indeed, while the blockade in Ontario was lifted this morning, the Kahnawake blockade has been extended to Highway 132 near the Mercier Bridge and to Kanasatake. The epicentre of the crisis is in British Columbia. That is where action needs to be taken. All of the conditions have been in place for five days to start a dialogue with the Wet'suwet'en nation to get the blockade lifted.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been working 24/7 to resolve this issue in a peaceful and durable manner. We all recognize the significant impact these blockades are having on Canadians. That is why I was in regular contact with the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en nation all last week. We remain hopeful that we will be able to find a peaceful solution. It is time the blockades came down.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night Canadians received terrible news about Teck Frontier. The Liberals' attacks on Canadian resource projects continue to hurt the country. We are going to lose 7,000 new jobs in Alberta and the rest of Canada is going to miss out on \$70 billion in investments. We know that this makes the Liberal MPs happy because this is exactly what they wanted. It is no surprise that they made it all but impossible for new projects to be built.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to address the national unity crisis we are now facing?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this was Teck Resources' decision. We respect that decision.

The CEO of Teck Resources, in his letter to me, clearly stated something very important. He stated, "Global capital markets are changing and investors and customers are increasingly looking for jurisdictions to have a framework in place that reconciles resource development and climate change, in order to produce the cleanest possible products."

We agree. We need to work, going forward, to ensure we have thoughtful and aggressive plans to address climate change and promote clean growth. In the modern world, the economy and the environment must go together.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, northern gateway, energy east, Trans Mountain and now Teck Frontier. The Liberal government is sending a message and it is loud and clear: Canada is closed for business. The noose has been tied.

The Prime Minister may be relieved that Teck is withdrawing, but on behalf of hard-working Canadians, I would urge him to consider 7,000 jobs and 70 billion dollars' worth of investment. That investment would have built hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and other important infrastructure.

The Prime Minister's hatred toward the energy sector is breeding dissension in this country. What will he do to reproduce unity across this great nation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, this was a decision taken by Teck Resources. We respect that decision. I am sure it was a difficult one.

I would also point out—

An hon. member: That is bullshit.

The Speaker: I heard a term that really is not parliamentary. Does the hon. member want to withdraw it?

An hon. member: No.

The Speaker: No. Okay, I will keep that in mind for when we proceed.

I will let the hon. minister continue.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, in his letter, the Teck CEO said that Canada should be "a global provider of sustainable, climate-smart resources to support the world's transition to a low carbon future". We agree.

We need to be taking strong action on climate change in order to promote clean economic growth. That is something that those on the other side of this House do not understand, but it is something that we need to be working on very actively in partnership with the provinces and territories, with indigenous communities, with municipalities and all Canadians.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Teck was forced to make this decision because the Prime Minister refused to show any real leadership. This is a loss of \$70 billion to Canada's economy, money which would have gone to schools, hospitals and infrastructure, not to mention the 7,000 badly needed jobs it would have created in Alberta.

The Prime Minister has broken faith with Albertans. What is he going to do to fix this national unity crisis that he has created?

• (1445)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the greatest threat for the economy going forward is having an official opposition that has no plan to address climate change.

At the end of the day, we need to ensure that we are moving forward in a manner that addresses the climate issue and is promoting clean growth. Canada needs to ensure that its brand of developing low-carbon products to the world and selling those throughout the world is something that fits within the context of where this is going in the context of fighting climate change.

That is something we are committed to doing. That is something we are working on now and we will continue to do so.

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PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one should have to go without the medicine they need because they cannot afford it, but that is the reality for millions of Canadians. Worse, each year thousands of people die from preventable causes simply because they lack proper drug coverage.

Today, New Democrats will introduce historic legislation to establish universal, comprehensive, public pharmacare, a plan that will save billions of dollars every year. Will the Liberals support our Canada pharmacare act and finally ensure every Canadian gets the medicine they need?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that no Canadian should have to choose between paying for a prescription or putting food on the table. We have already done more than any government in a generation to lower drug prices and now we are working with provinces and territories to implement pharmacare, as guided by the Hoskins report. This will build on the steps that we have already taken, including new rules on patented drugs that will save Canadians over \$13 billion.

I look forward to working with the NDP to ensure that all Canadians get access to the medication that they need.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been promising pharmacare for 23 years. People end up in the ER or hospitalized because they cannot afford their medication and hundreds die prematurely every year.

Instead of helping Canadians, the Liberals have chosen to help deliver bigger and bigger profits to big pharma and insurance companies. In the minority government will the Liberals stop breaking their promise and support the NDP bill to deliver universal, comprehensive, single-payer pharmacare to Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that if this Liberal government had been here 24 years ago, we would have been there already.

I am very excited to be part of a government that is committed to making sure that people do not have to choose between medication and food. As I said, we have taken important steps toward that goal. We will continue to work with all Canadians and provinces and territories to ensure that people have access to the medications they need.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while our economy has seen incredible growth in recent years, we know that this prosperity is not always equally shared. As a government we have created over one million jobs in the past four years, but we must make sure that all Canadians benefit.

Can the Minister of Economic Development update the House on what we are doing to create opportunities for people in my region of southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from London North Centre for his great work. Obviously, Canadians need to have access to good-paying jobs in their region and need to be able to stay in their hometowns. That is why we are creating opportunities all across the country for them.

Recently, we announced 1,000 new jobs in southwestern Ontario, 40 new jobs in Windsor in the auto sector, 170 new jobs in Leamington, the tomato capital of Canada at Highbury Canco, 700 new jobs in clean tech in Sarnia and also in the energy sector.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the governments of Ontario and Quebec have started clearing the blockades in their provinces. They have asked the Prime Minister for coordinated action, but, as usual, his lack of leadership is hampering their efforts.

There is no doubt that the Canadian economy is suffering as a result, but the safety of Canadians is also at stake. The Prime Minister refuses to act, and his hollow pronouncements only make the situation worse.

When will the Prime Minister take control of the situation?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, the Prime Minister has been unequivocal in his acknowledgement and recognition of the impact these barricades are having on Canadians across the country, and last week he urged the people who were on those barricades to take them down and restore service.

To be equally clear, our government does not direct the police. Perhaps we can rely on the words of the previous public safety minister under the Conservative government. He said, “I have full confidence in the judgment of the RCMP. While respecting the operational independence of the RCMP...” That principle still applies.

● (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner was present at the emergency meeting with the Prime Minister last Monday.

Canadians waited patiently for the Prime Minister to take concrete action to end a crisis that could have been easily avoided. For over two weeks, police refused to do anything about the blockades. It was clear that they had been instructed not to intervene.

Why did the Prime Minister order police not to step in before?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, respectfully, the member opposite is wrong.

In fact, no direction and no instruction was given to the RCMP or any other police service. In Canada, the rule of law is underpinned by the independence of the police. On this side of the House, we respect that principle, and we have confidence in our police agencies to exercise their responsibilities to uphold the law and to maintain the peace.

Oral Questions

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are only a week away from widespread heating propane shortages. Hundreds of thousands of people could be without heat. People could freeze. Pipes will burst and homes will be damaged.

Now the blockade at Tyendinaga appears to be coming down, but the unrest continues. Will the Minister of Public Safety commit to working with his provincial counterparts to see new general directives issued to law enforcement, by him at the federal level and by his provincial counterparts at the provincial level, to ensure that any future blockades of critical infrastructure are taken down in a more timely manner?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have acknowledged and recognized the impact that these blockades are having on Canadians across the country. It is why we have been unequivocal in the need for the barricades to come down. We have worked very closely with all of our provincial counterparts on this matter, but let me also be clear: The provincial ministers of community and public safety and I recognize that we do not give instructions to the police. They receive their instructions from the law, from the courts and from their own policies and procedures.

We have confidence in law enforcement to do its job, and we will continue to support its efforts to maintain the peace.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two weeks the Canadian economy has been brought to its knees by a handful of activists. VIA Rail service has been stopped across the country, disrupting tens of thousands of Canadians who are trying to visit family or get to business meetings. Nearly 1,000 VIA employees have been laid off, unable to work while the blockades remain.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians on what date will full, and I repeat full, VIA Rail service resume?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very aware of the inconvenience that this has had for a lot of passengers who depend on VIA Rail. I, myself, am a regular VIA Rail traveller. I know the impact that this has had on a large number of Canadians.

That is why the good news is that VIA Rail has begun to bring back some of its trains, namely between Montreal and Quebec since the Saint-Lambert blockade has been removed, and also between Toronto and Windsor. We are hoping very soon to fully re-establish the service between Montreal and Toronto.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the rail crisis will not be resolved without dialogue with the Wet'suwet'en.

Fortunately, despite the government's inaction, the RCMP understood that it was part of the problem and agreed to withdraw from the territory. So much the better, but the bond of trust with the RCMP is broken, and it will not be repaired overnight.

What does the government plan to do to rebuild trust between the Wet'suwet'en and law enforcement?

Is it open to a solution involving creating an indigenous police force?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

We are still available to meet any time with the hereditary chiefs in British Columbia. Now more than ever, we can agree that dialogue should remain open.

To tackle possible solutions, as the member proposed, we need to have that dialogue. The hereditary chiefs have not yet opened the dialogue.

We are here, and we are willing to talk, but both sides need to work together.

• (1455)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister unloaded the problem of the rail blockades onto Quebec and the provinces on Friday, François Legault asked the bare minimum of him, specifically, to coordinate the removal of the blockades with the provinces. Obviously, once again, Quebec's request fell on deaf ears in Ottawa. The blockade was lifted in Ontario, but the crisis has intensified in Quebec.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his lack of leadership is adding fuel to the fire in Kahnawake? What is he going to do to finally resolve this crisis?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to advise the member opposite and other members of this House how closely we are working with our provincial counterparts in every province and territory, including in the province of Quebec.

There have been ongoing discussions between us about how best to resolve this situation, but we all remain committed to upholding the rule of law. We are not instructing our police services, but we are working closely together to respond to this crisis.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that reconciliation is a priority, yet his inaction has invalidated the work Wet'suwet'en leaders have done to breathe life into reconciliation. The Liberals' failure to champion indigenous-supported projects like Coastal GasLink and Teck Frontier mine has killed over 7,000 jobs.

B.C. MLA Ellis Ross has said that the blockades will set back reconciliation 20 years.

When will the Prime Minister stop emboldening radical activists and start working for indigenous Canadians?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to understand that indigenous nations have to determine these decisions themselves.

This is about understanding that, going forward, the hereditary leadership plus the elected chief and council need to come forward to form their governments, to write their constitution and to write their laws. We, as the government, are working on that every day.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government told Teck that it needed to achieve certain things to get approval.

One, it needed to get the regulator to sign off: check. The Liberals told the company that it would need the local first nations to sign off, and all 14 of them did: check. They told the company that it would have to tackle emissions and the company said that was no problem and that it will go to zero net emissions by 2050: check.

If, after meeting all the government's demands, this project still could not go ahead, what project will ever get approved in this country?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate this was Teck Resources' decision. We respect its decision. I know that it was certainly not an easy one. The decision that was made by Teck Resources in the letter that was sent to me by the chief executive officer underlines the importance of both taking climate action and looking at responsible resource development.

Certainly, Teck Resources did an extremely good job in engaging with local first nations communities. We have representatives of the Mikisew Cree who are here with us today. It is a model for how those kinds of consultations can be done, going forward.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government claims that the company invested 10 years and a billion dollars and then abandoned the project simply because Canada does not do a good enough job on climate policy.

The Liberals have been in power for almost five years. Why are they not doing a better job on climate policy? This caused this project to disappear. Seven thousand jobs, 14 aboriginal communities losing opportunity, \$20 billion of upfront investment and \$70 billion of tax revenue: Does the government realize the enormous cost of its anti-energy obstructionism?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate once again that this was a decision made by Teck Resources. I am sure it was a difficult one for Teck Resources.

One of the things that was highlighted in the letter that the Teck CEO sent was the fact that it is partisan bickering over addressing climate change that is the problem. We have an opposition that has no climate plan, and we have provinces that have not yet put into place a robust climate plan.

Oral Questions

It is so important that we work together to ensure that we are growing a clean economy in the context of addressing climate change in a serious way. That is something the other side of the House has not yet learned.

* * *

• (1500)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Kejimikujik National Park is dear to the hearts of Nova Scotians.

[Translation]

It is a beautiful place where many Canadians go to see ancient petroglyphs.

[English]

However, it is under threat from a strange invasive species, and no, not the Conservatives. Can the Minister of Environment please tell us what he is doing to protect Kejimikujik's trees against the hemlock woolly adelgid?

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members that when asking questions on either side to try to be respectful, regardless of what one is saying. "Inflammatory" can mean different things to different people.

[Translation]

There is a French saying in northern Ontario that is similar to the expression "cruising for a bruising".

[English]

I do not know how that will be translated.

[Translation]

The expression is about those actions that can have unintended consequences.

[English]

I will leave that with members to reflect on for a while and ask the hon. Minister of the Environment to continue.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to preserving and protecting our national parks so that they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Last December we announced the federal investment of \$1.4 million to enhance existing efforts to protect the threatened eastern hemlock forest in Kejimikujik National Park.

[Translation]

Parks Canada will continue to work with its partners, such as indigenous communities, to protect this important natural habitat.

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

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agricultural economy has reached the point of no return. The raid blockades are having a disastrous impact on the market, so disastrous that farmers are telling me they may run out of food for their animals this week. Meanwhile, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food was all smiles in Washington, where she had her picture taken with officials from Mexico and Argentina.

Can the minister tell us why she was not in the country during a time of major crisis?

What does she have to say to farmers who are extremely concerned about this government's lack of leadership?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a very serious situation for producers, processors and exporters in the agri-food sector across the country. I am monitoring this issue very closely with my colleagues on the ground.

I also believe it is important to spend 24 hours in Washington with our American, Mexican and Argentinian counterparts to talk about the importance of international trade based on rules and science.

[English]

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the illegal rail blockades are still up and are crippling Canada's economy.

Canadian farmers rely on the rail system, and every day these blockades are up it causes five days of backlog to get the rail back to normal. There is a backlog of 20,000 grain cars costing farmers more than \$300 million so far. Propane levels are also critically low.

On Friday, the Minister of Agriculture decided to skip the cabinet meeting dealing with the blockades to dine with diplomats in Washington. Why was the minister not in Ottawa dealing with the crisis facing our farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how hard the situation has been for our farmers this year and 2019 was also very difficult. The rail blockages are making it even more difficult. I work on that on a constant basis with my colleagues, because it is really important.

However, it was also important to spend 24 hours in Washington with my colleagues from the United States, Mexico and Argentina to talk about and to make sure that we have international trade based on science and based on rules.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister talks about rule and trade, but we cannot trade if we cannot move our product. The government is not even standing up for the laws right here in Canada.

This is a crisis, and every day it goes on it hurts our farmers even more. The propane shortage right now is critical. We have more than 100 ships off the B.C. coast waiting to be loaded, and a backlog of 20,000 grain cars. This is costing Canadian farmers more than \$300 million, and they cannot afford this weak Liberal leadership.

Why, during this crisis, did the minister feel it was more important not to be here, at home in Canada, fighting for Canadian farmers?

• (1505)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can do two things at the same time. I can be supporting my farmers here in Canada, and I can also be supporting and defending international trade based on rules and science.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has launched the 2020 tax season. This is a good opportunity to remind Canadians that we have lowered taxes for the middle class, improved the Canada child benefit and introduced the Canada workers benefit, all in an effort to ensure that Canadians have more money in their pockets.

Can the minister provide us an update on the improvements made at the Canada Revenue Agency to make it easier for Canadians to access the money they are entitled to?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Our government is constantly looking for ways to improve CRA's services. This year, there are several new features on tap for Canadians, including Charlie the Chatbot to handle questions and answers online. Canadians can now create a PIN to identify themselves when calling the CRA. Filing a tax return has never been easier, faster or more secure. I cannot encourage Canadians enough to file their tax return because without a tax return, there are no benefits.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Albertans are paying the price for a failure of leadership by both Jason Kenney and Justin Trudeau. Teck's decision—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that when they are referring to members in the chamber, we refer to them by their riding or by their position but not by their name.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, Teck's decision last night is a direct result of their failure on climate change and our energy sector.

In Alberta, families and businesses that create jobs need certainty from the government, not more failure. The path to a strong economic future requires federal leadership and investment in economic diversification.

What is the Prime Minister doing to help Albertans diversify our economy, and to protect and create jobs?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this was a decision taken by Teck Resources. I know that it was probably a difficult decision.

The Government of Canada has thought very carefully about the letter that Don Lindsay, the CEO of Teck Resources, sent to me. In it he talks about the need for us to be aggressively fighting climate change and doing so in a manner that promotes clean economic growth.

That is exactly what we have been doing through the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, which was negotiated with the provinces and territories. It is something that we certainly intend to accelerate as we go forward to 2050 and the target of net zero.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation requires long overdue and urgent work: fundamental legislative and policy changes, new ways of making decisions, meeting the standards of UNDRIP and supporting indigenous nations as they rebuild.

After the immediate crisis is addressed, the need for transformative change will still remain. How will the Prime Minister regain the trust, respect and moral authority to do the true reconciliation work that is so desperately required? Does the Prime Minister have the resolve to do what is right and not what partisan advisers tell him is politically expedient?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to receive, in my mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the task of implementing legislation that will implement UNDRIP into Canadian law. That is a priority for our government. We have promised to do it by the end of the year 2020, and we will go ahead with this, engaging with indigenous Canadians and other Canadians, in order to fulfill that mandate promise.

• (1510)

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During today's question period, the member for Lakeland asked a question. She was reprimanded by you for charged language. It is not clear, on this side at least, why she was. Was it for using the word "crock"? Was it for saying that Alberta is bleeding? Was it for highlighting the dramatic spike in suicides?

The Speaker: We are getting into debate. The word she used was the first term mentioned by the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

I want to remind hon. members that they cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I too rise on a point of order. It is with regard to comments made by the hon. member for Lakeland.

Today is a very big day. It has been a very passionate day in debate. However, threatening Canadian unity is never the way to go. I would ask the member in question to withdraw her remarks and make it clear that she believes in a strong, united Canada.

The Speaker: I do not believe that is a point of order. That borders more on debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the third report later this day.

* * *

CANADA PHARMACARE ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-213, An Act to enact the Canada Pharmacare Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce the Canada pharmacare act, a historic step in the history of our country.

The bill is seconded by the member for Burnaby South and supported by millions of Canadians across the country, like Jim, who has to beg at the entrance of Parliament Hill to find the money each month to pay for his medication, and Cole, a constituent whose family pays \$1,000 a month for medication that keeps one member of their family alive.

Routine Proceedings

The Canada pharmacare act would ensure universal, comprehensive public pharmacare that is accessible and affordable, the very principles of universal medicare. This would save Canadians billions of dollars. It would save the lives of thousands of Canadians who die from preventable causes because they lack medication coverage.

[Translation]

The Canada pharmacare act will benefit millions of Canadians. If members support this bill, we can tell everyone that our country is finally getting pharmacare.

[English]

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

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• (1515)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-214, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (qualifying environmental trust).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill is about equity for the Canadian resource industry. It would provide a level playing field in the oil and gas sector and a financial instrument that is already available for every other extractive industry in Canada, including pipelines. It would allow us to move forward in dealing with environmental liabilities associated with end-of-life wells, inactive wells and suspended wells from the oil and gas sector.

Qualified environmental trusts were brought in by a previous Liberal government, in 1994, in recognition of the fact that liabilities occurred at the end of well life and resource life whereas revenues occurred toward the beginning of resource life. This would match income with expenses. It is a good instrument for our oil and gas industry, particularly in these times when there is so much environmental remediation required in the industry.

Why was it left out of that legislation in 1994? It is only because oil and gas companies at that time had a surfeit of opportunities that were at all stages of their development, and it was not recognized as being necessary. It is completely necessary now, given what is happening in the oil and gas industry and in Alberta.

We need to recognize that this industry provides so much for Canada. There is so much value to be brought by this new legislation, including \$20 billion of economic activity over the next 20 years. This would be a boon to employment in Alberta and GDP across Canada.

The bill would level the playing field for an industry that has not been represented well at this level. I hope we can move it forward very quickly.

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

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, An Act respecting Canada's fulfillment of its greenhouse gas emissions reduction obligations.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce my first bill in the House of Commons. As an environmentalist and as the Bloc Québécois climate change critic, it went without saying that I would present the Canadian government with a practical solution to help the fight against climate change.

The climate change accountability bill seeks to compel the government to not only stop speaking out of both sides of its mouth, but also to show some consistency and take its place as a world environment leader. The commitments made around the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions deserve to be kept, as does the commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050.

In this era of climate emergency, I hope that the government will recognize the importance of this bill and will come up with a real action plan, one that is both ambitious and realistic. I hope that the government will be open to working with the Bloc Québécois to ensure a healthy and responsible future for my generation and those to come.

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

* * *

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act with respect to supply management.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to protect supply management by making it non-negotiable in future international negotiations.

We recall that in recent negotiations—whether for the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Europe, the Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or the Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement—significant breaches were made in the supply management system, which lowered producers' revenues by approximately 8%.

This bill will amend section 10 of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act by adding provisions that will make supply management non-negotiable.

I hope that all members will vote in favour of this bill, which is highly anticipated by producers.

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

• (1520)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine).

She said: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, parliamentarians adopted the motion moved by the member for Beloeil—Chambly, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, calling on the government to increase the special employment insurance sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks.

Today, I have the pleasure of introducing, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and myself, a bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act respecting illness, injury or quarantine. This bill is designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable workers struggling with a serious illness. They are entitled to a fair and compassionate employment insurance program.

Parliamentarians have a great opportunity to amend the existing act, and we remind the government that it is very important to support the bill introduced today.

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

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

PACIFIC HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to table a petition on behalf of constituents from Courtenay, Denman, Hornby, Lasqueti Island and Cumberland. They want to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the fact that Pacific herring in the Salish Sea has dropped one-third between 2016 and 2019. That drop will be more than 50% by 2020. They also are raising concern that this fishery is now deemed a high-risk fishery and the department recommends it should be curtailed from 20% to 10%. The unexpected drop in the herring population has led to overfishing of existing stock. Pacific herring is a primary food source for salmon, killer whales and humpback whales, cod, halibut, seabirds and other independent species on the Pacific coast.

As well, they want to point out to the House that first nations have constitutionally protected rights to herring, which is an important food source and an integral part of first nations culture. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to suspend the 2020 Salish Sea herring fishing until a whole-of-ecosystem plan is developed, to fairly compensate local fishers for economic losses and to

Routine Proceedings

ensure that decisions are made with the full participation of first nations and local communities. They cite this as an urgent matter.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are raising Canada's commitments in the Paris Agreement within the United Nations framework on climate change. They point out that the text of the agreement specifically references the appointment of just transitions, the principle that ensures that, in phasing out our dependency on fossil fuels, workers in those sectors receive assurance and protection of meaningful employment.

The petitioners call for the House of Commons, along with oil and gas workers, to create a plan for a just transition and include within it the recommendations that have been put forward by the Task Force: Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities. They cite that report as a cutting-edge document of key principles for just transition.

• (1525)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present two petitions.

One was gathered by the Body Shop in Woodgrove mall in Nanaimo, with residents up and down the island. It calls on the Government of Canada to bring our standards up to the EU standards in relation to cosmetics and ban the sale and/or manufacture of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second is in regard to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The people who signed this petition were opposed to the purchase of the pipeline and now do not want to see this project expanded. We have seen the cost of this pipeline rise from \$5.6 billion to \$12 billion, and they do not think it is a good use of taxpayers' money and will end up being a stranded asset.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present two petitions.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-204. The text actually refers to Bill S-240. That was the name of the bill in the last Parliament. In this Parliament the same bill has been proposed as Bill S-204. It would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad to receive an organ for which there has not been consent, and it would also create mechanisms to make people impermissible to Canada if they were involved in the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

Government Orders

This requires the urgent attention of members of Parliament. Members have been working on getting a bill like this passed for over a decade, so petitioners hope that the 43rd Parliament will be the one that gets it done.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the plight of Pakistani asylum seekers in Thailand.

Very often, Christian asylum seekers who face persecution as a result of the application of Pakistan's blasphemy law flee to Thailand. They face many challenges there, including being able to receive fair access to the refugee certification process.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to lobby the Government of Thailand in defence of these asylum seekers and to push for them to be able to receive appropriate support from the UNHCR.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): I rise today to request an emergency debate with grave concern on the cancellation of Teck Frontier.

This is an economic crisis for Alberta, costing 10,000 direct jobs and \$20 billion in investment, but billions more for all levels of government and indirect jobs for all of Canada. It is a crisis of national unity from the perspective of western Canadians, who have witnessed the double standards for oil and gas compared to other sectors and other provinces. It is a crisis of investor confidence in the entire Canadian economy, because energy is the biggest private sector investor in Canada and because Teck exceeded every federal requirement and still could not secure timely and predictable political approval even seven months after the recommendation from the independent and expert joint panel.

After investing \$1 billion securing local indigenous agreements, unanimous support with all those directly impacted and the evidence and science recommending Teck Frontier in the best public interest of Canada, within a week of the final project decision, media reports say Teck sources say that public safety and political risk in Canada made it too great for them to proceed with their project. This is a company that considers their multiple projects in unstable South American countries less risky than here in Canada.

In the past five years, the loss or stalling of oil and gas projects and jobs is the equivalent of losing both the auto and aerospace sectors in Canada. I know every single member in this House of Commons from every community in every corner of the country would consider that a grave emergency. Teck is just the latest. The Alberta government even recently accepted new measures just to see this project go ahead.

There is precedent for granting emergency debate when Kinder Morgan was forced to abandon the Trans Mountain expansion and more recently to debate the terrible job losses in auto in Ontario. For all those reasons and for all of Canada, I plead with you, Mr. Speaker, to grant this emergency debate.

● (1530)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I would like to thank the member for Lakeland for having raised her emergency debate request.

While I recognize the importance of the issue, I do not believe that her request meets the exigencies of the standing order at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation.

I am happy to speak on Bill C-6, where the government has introduced changes to the oath of citizenship. These changes are necessary. New Canadians need to recognize and affirm the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people and understand the major contribution to our collective successes as a country.

One of the strongest pillars for successful integration into Canadian life is achieving Canadian citizenship, and we have one of the highest naturalization rates in the world. Some 85% of newcomers become citizens. Over the last decade, Canada has welcomed nearly 1.7 million new Canadians.

Citizenship ceremonies are the end of a long process of immigration, settlement and integration for a newcomer to Canada. Ceremonies are a moving and emotional celebration, as well as a necessary legal step to citizenship. The oath of citizenship is a solemn declaration that the citizen applicant promises to obey Canadian laws while fulfilling his or her duties as Canadian citizens. Taking the oath of citizenship is an integral part of the citizenship process, and the act reflects the Canadian values of social cohesion, openness and transparency.

The proposed changes include clear reference to the rights of indigenous peoples. They are aimed at advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action within the broader reconciliation framework.

The bill would modify the words of the oath of citizenship as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Indigenous peoples have played a fundamental role in Canada's past and are a strong pillar of our society. Our government believes that it is important for all Canadians, including new Canadians, to understand and appreciate the importance of indigenous peoples to our heritage.

The bill we are proposing is consistent with the values and practices that exist in Canada today. The revised text of the oath uses wording that reflects a broad range of rights held by diverse indigenous peoples.

The government encourages all immigrants to take the path to full membership and permanent belonging in Canadian society. Canada's diversity is among its greatest strengths. We are a strong and united country because of, not in spite of, our differences. Canada's commitment to diversity and inclusion is an essential approach to making this country and this world a better, safer place.

My riding of Don Valley East is one of the most diverse ridings in Canada, comprising immigrants and Canadians whose backgrounds are from all over the world. This change to the wording of the oath of citizenship is important to my constituents and to all Canadians. It reflects the fact that we are all immigrants, regardless of how far back we track our ancestry. It is important to recognize first nations, Inuit and Métis people as the first peoples of this land.

The Government of Canada is focused on building an inclusive society with a sense of belonging and a common set of values shared throughout our country, while valuing the diversity that people of all origins bring to Canada.

● (1535)

Canada welcomes immigrants and helps them to settle, integrate and succeed here in Canada. This is both our history and our

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present. The success of immigrants is our success as a strong and united country. Taking the oath of citizenship at a citizenship ceremony is a requirement to become a Canadian citizen, but the oath is much more than just words. As I mentioned previously, taking the oath demonstrates that a new Canadian embraces the values of social cohesion, openness and transparency in an open, free, democratic and diverse Canada.

As I meet with many people, young and old, it is amazing how few know the history of the indigenous people, what they have contributed and what they have done to ensure that we, the newcomers, have a good life in Canada. If it were not for the hospitality of the indigenous people, none of us would be here. It is sad that their history is not taught in schools. The change in the oath is but a first step, and that is what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report states:

Precisely because "we are all Treaty people," Canada's Oath of Citizenship must include a solemn promise to respect Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

In closing, I would note that the aim of this change to the oath of citizenship is to raise newcomers' awareness, and emphasize the importance, of aboriginal and treaty rights. Beyond the introduction of this bill, we must keep moving forward together on many fronts. Continued progress will require a new level of commitment, determination and partnership. It will also require a great deal of patience and perseverance. Above all, we must continue to build trust through stronger, more collaborative and respectful relationships, and by working on the issues that matter most to Canada's indigenous communities.

Canada's ethos of pluralism is a model for the world, and it is a constant work in progress. Diversity and inclusiveness, through the fabric of all its peoples, make Canada stronger. This is part of our government's ongoing commitment to meet the goals of reconciliation with the first nations, and serves as an important and necessary step toward reconciliation.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-6 is certainly something the NDP will be supporting. In our long path toward true reconciliation, this is very much the low-hanging fruit. It is important, but there is some very important work that has to be done in addition to this bill.

We would be asking new citizens to take this new oath. I wonder if the member can tell the House her thoughts about the oath of allegiance that members of Parliament swear, and whether such language might be incorporated into that one day in the future.

● (1540)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, it is an important suggestion. We should incorporate the hon. member's idea in the consultations with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and with the respective authorities.

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Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member was speaking about reconciliation, I was thinking about a visit I made to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, where the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was used as an example that Canada had helped and subsequently learned from.

Could the hon. member talk about the importance of reconciliation, beyond words but in terms of actions that often take years and, in fact, decades in order to advance our cultures?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for reminding me of what South Africa has done. South Africa has been a beacon.

When I went to visit the place where Mandela was kept in prison, it reminded me that people can be so forgiving. I looked at the horrific situation he was in and, despite the fact that there was so much injustice done to him, he brought forth this Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Respectfully, they agreed to reconcile.

Those are some of the lessons we can learn and we have learned. This is the first step and, going forward, probably we should do more.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke very eloquently as to the educational process to inclusion. I wonder if the hon. member for Don Valley East would elaborate on the process of education and how Bill C-6 takes us down that road.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, our education system is very narrow in its approach. It is important to understand all of the contributions that the first nations, the first people, have made. I think we can work with our provincial partners to ensure that we understand and work with them, just as when we made the lyric change in *O Canada* to “all of us command.”

We have to do this in very small but progressive steps so that we can achieve the reconciliation that we want.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the concerns I have is that this is the 94th call to action. With the passing of the bill before us, that would mean 10 of the 94 calls to action would have been implemented, which is very slow.

I am also concerned that the government is now dragging its feet on moving forward with legislation around the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I wonder if the member could speak to how long reconciliation needs to take with the current government in power.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, we are talking about provincial and federal jurisdictions, and it is important for the provinces to do their work.

Number one, these 94 calls for action really include provincial jurisdiction. Number two, had the Kelowna accord not been destroyed by the previous Conservative government, we would not be talking today.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a great day when I get to rise in this chamber and speak on behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon.

I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the member for Steveston—Richmond East.

The first thing I want to do is acknowledge the importance of the path to reconciliation. This is something that is critical for our country. If we take a look at some of the things that have gone on over the past few weeks, they are exact representations of the failure of reconciliation.

Before I get into the main part of my remarks, I want to briefly talk about some of the things that have gone on in this country that have been so detrimental to indigenous peoples. The first thing that jumps out at me is that, up until 1960, indigenous people could only vote if they gave up their status. This is a shameful history in this country and something that needs to be addressed through reconciliation.

The issue I have today is that this particular piece of legislation is, in my estimation, really about virtue signalling. It is the low-hanging fruit. If this were the 94th of 94 recommendations we were to proceed on, then let us talk about it, but it is not. My colleague from the NDP just pointed out we are at nine of 94 recommendations that have been completed in five years. If we work that out, it is 2.25 per year, and to complete them all will take 38 years. The path the government is on for reconciliation is a winding, meandering path that is taking us nowhere quickly.

I also want to talk about the fact that we have precious time in this chamber. If we look at the 42nd Parliament, we might wonder how many pieces of government legislation actually passed. I took a look, and it was 85. When we factor out budget implementation bills, the budget and other things, it is significantly less than that. It is around 73, which is about 15 or 16 pieces of legislation passed per year.

Why am I saying this is an issue? Let us talk about that, because there are 94 recommendations that have been put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and there has been action on nine. Let us look at some of the things that have not been proceeded on. I think it is important to look at what the Liberals are not doing when we look at what they are doing.

There were 18 recommendations under the category of justice. How many do members think the government has accomplished? Is it half? No. Twenty-five per cent? No. It is one. That is all it has done. We are dealing with an amendment to the citizenship oath, but guess what is in those recommendations? I will start with one, recommendation number 33, under justice. It states:

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to recognize as a high priority the need to address and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, FASD preventive programs that can be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.

Is that what we are debating today? Is that what we are going to be debating down the road? No, it is not. Do members know why? It is because it is a tough one, where the government has to get its nose to the grindstone and do some real work. It is not, so it put this one in to say that it is doing something. It is time to move past doing something and work on issues that are of critical importance.

I will point out one more under justice. This one is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. Call to action number 37 states:

We call upon the federal government to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services.

Where are we on that? Has any progress been made on that? No, absolutely not. This is what we are dealing with.

● (1545)

I am going to continue. On child welfare, there are five recommendations under child welfare. How many have been completed by the government? Zero.

Let us look at some of the recommendations there. Recommendation number 4 under child welfare states:

We call upon the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and includes principles.

Again, this is the federal government. The government cannot say that it has provincial partners and others that are not doing anything. This is the federal government.

That is something incredibly worth pursuing. With the precious time that we have in this House, why would this not be what we are debating today? Instead, we are talking about a symbolic gesture. From what I can tell, first nations communities, indigenous communities are tired of symbolic gestures. They want real action on reconciliation.

I am also going to speak on education.

How many recommendations are there in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report with respect to education? There are seven. How many has the government actually completed out of those seven? It will be no surprise, based on the previous answer, that it is zero. Nothing has been done.

There is another one exclusively within federal jurisdiction. Once again, the government cannot say that it is the provinces or, as it likes to do, bring out the big bogeyman, the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford. The government cannot blame him for this.

Recommendation number 7 states:

We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Why is that not what we are debating? Once again, this is the hard work that has to be done. In fact, right now, there is a \$10-billion class action lawsuit against the government for underfunding education. Are we dealing with that? No. It is tied up in court. The government is going to say, "Look over here. We're making changes to the citizenship oath. Don't worry about all this other substantive stuff we are not doing."

Recommendation number 8, also under education, also the federal government, states:

We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.

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Once again, we hear crickets from the government on a significant and substantial recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The action from the government is like its action on so many files: It is absolutely non-existent. Indigenous communities deserve better than virtue signalling on the citizenship oath.

My final points are going to be with respect to health.

There are seven recommendations with respect to health. I am on a bit of a roll here, so I am going to say this: How many of the seven recommendations on health has the government completed? Zero. That is exactly it.

Recommendation No. 21 states:

We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.

I will conclude by asking this: Why is that not what we are debating here in the House today instead of something simple and easy, like a change to the citizenship oath? Indigenous Canadians deserve real action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and this is not it.

● (1550)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am left a little confused when comments are made that we are doing nothing as a government in the transformation of education for first nations people.

Could the hon. member refer to the www.sac-isc.gc.ca website where we show the new policy for first nations kindergarten to grade 12 education, the progress on investments in kindergarten to grade 12 education, the new engagement programs from 2016 to 2018, the current systems for first nations education in Canada, what we have heard in the past and what we are doing now, and what the report's recommendations are? It is all here, as is the investment in 13 new schools in first nations.

We are making unprecedented investments in education for first nations people, but of course there is always more to do. There is more room to improve. When we look at university input, we see there are things we can do to help students get into university as well.

The new member has maybe not seen this report. Maybe he could comment on whether he has seen it, and if he has seen it, why he is ignoring it?

● (1555)

Mr. Kyle Seebach: Madam Speaker, I will correct my colleague. I am not a new member. In fact, I was a member in this chamber from 2011 to 2015. I served on what was then called the aboriginal affairs committee for the entire duration.

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What I can say is this. Citing one or two things to try to suggest that the Liberals are doing a great job is a great way to try to divert attention from the abysmal points that I raised in my speech. As well, if things are so sunny and wonderful and the member for Guelph says to look at all this great stuff they are doing, why is there a \$10-billion class action lawsuit against the government by indigenous groups for their lack of funding in education?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to centre my comments and questions on call to action number 94 and Bill C-6.

The Conservatives have put forward an amendment to this bill to effectively kill it at second reading, and I understand there are some concerns over the language and call to action No. 94.

Is there a version of this oath that would be acceptable to the member? If so, why is his party trying to kill the bill at this stage, rather than send it to committee, where we could get feedback from witnesses and maybe try to find something that is acceptable to all parties in this House?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I can say, after listening to the remarks that have been made by my colleagues in the Bloc and the NDP, that this particular piece of legislation will pass at second reading and will go to committee to be studied.

The primary objection I am raising today is this, which I think I made very clear in my speech: We have precious House time. We have pressing recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Our time, Canadians' time and indigenous communities' time will be better served with legislation that deals with the critical needs of those communities; not this.

That is my objection. That is why I am proposing we do not proceed with this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative members have actually stood up and said that they do not want to progress with the bill because they do not support the legislation.

When the member talks about the number of calls for action that have been taken, he makes reference to nine or 10. There are 94. Many of those recommendations have nothing to do directly with the federal government. There are other jurisdictions. Many of the recommendations involve the federal government working with indigenous people and other levels of government.

Can the member tell me how many calls for action Stephen Harper ever actually acted on?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I think the member opposite has forgotten that it was actually a Conservative government that brought forward the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission delivered its report in 2015. Then he may recall that there was an election in which his government was elected.

The point I raised in my speech was very clearly that yes, there are some calls to action that deal with provincial jurisdictions and others, but guess what? I spoke about the ones that are exclusively within federal jurisdiction. This member's party and the members

on that side of the House have done absolutely nothing to advance them: zero, zip, zilch.

Let me tell the House that this is shameful. They should do better.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to my constituents in Steveston—Richmond East, British Columbia, for having placed their trust in me by electing me as their representative in Parliament. I also want to thank my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon for sharing his time with me. I am honoured to serve my constituents in this Parliament.

I am here today to debate Bill C-6, an act to implement a change in the oath of citizenship in response to recommendation 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is an amendment to the Citizenship Act to include the promise to respect the treaty rights of first nation, Inuit and Métis people.

I found there is no logic in placing support behind this bill when it is so glaringly exclusionary of the many Métis, Inuit and B.C. first nations who are not under treaty rights. They do not have effective treaties in their respective areas. What purpose would the proposed changes serve for these individuals?

Our nation is a nation of immigrants who stand on the traditional territories of, and shoulder to shoulder with, first nations, Inuit and Métis people. Canada is one of the few countries in the world where indigenous rights and treaty rights are entrenched in our Constitution.

I believe that educating Canadians about these rights is an important part of the path to reconciliation. However, this education is already in effect. New citizens, having completed their residency requirements and having studied the handbook of history, responsibility and obligations, are expected to be aware of the rights entrenched within the Constitution. This gives them at least a general view of the spectrum of resolved and unresolved treaty rights in different parts of the country. In doing so, they develop respect for what is among Canada's existing body of laws and can appreciate the need to fulfill the remaining unfulfilled treaty obligations within the process of reconciliation.

Apparently the Liberal government believes Canadians to be so unsophisticated that they would find this task accomplished merely by adding 19 words in the oath of citizenship.

Over 30 years ago I came to Canada as an immigrant. I have taken the oath of citizenship to our great country. Other members in this House have done the same. I will now read the oath, which has stood unchanged since 1977. It states, "I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen."

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The oath is simple. It represents the final step of the journey from initial entry to planting roots and eventually becoming a Canadian family member and citizen. The oath of citizenship need not be and should not be complicated, nor a thorough examination of the rights and obligations of what it is to be a Canadian. It is merely an affirmation of loyalty to the Queen of Canada, who is the head of state of our constitutional monarchy, and it is an affirmation to obey our laws and obligations as a Canadian.

Let me reiterate: The existing oath of citizenship already includes the promise of citizens to faithfully observe the laws of Canada. These laws include the Constitution, and the Constitution recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. To accept the proposed legislation is therefore unnecessarily redundant.

Therefore, I ask again: What is the purpose of this bill? As I have mentioned, along the way of becoming a citizen, a new immigrant must read materials relating to the origins of Canada, including materials relating to Canadian indigenous peoples. I believe Canada's indigenous peoples would be better served by emphasizing recommendation 93 and not 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action, thus strengthening this education.

● (1600)

I will now read out recommendation 93 of the TRC report:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

My alternative to Bill C-6 is just this. Implementing recommendation 93 would go further to educating new Canadians about our history with first nations and the obligations the Crown has to them. Such content can also discuss part 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 35, which states, "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."

It is because of the lack of forethought by the Liberal government that my initial reaction to this legislation was the same as when the government introduced it shortly before the election as Bill C-99, a mere three weeks before Parliament was to end.

That reaction was that this was yet more virtue signalling by the Liberal government to talk big but not deliver. The bill is a half-hearted effort by the Liberals to distract from something real. The Prime Minister has recently fumbled a crisis of his own making and is desperate to take attention away from his own failings when it comes to Canada's indigenous.

Instead of empowering indigenous communities to act in their economic interests with Canada's vast natural resources, he waited until it was too late to respond, effectively siding with those who would keep our first nations impoverished to suit their own agenda.

Instead of getting on with the program and allowing the Coastal GasLink pipeline to proceed with construction, a pipeline that has signed agreements with all the elected band councils along the planned route, the Prime Minister instead spent significant time actively promoting the obstruction.

Like Albertans, our first nations people want to work. They want to do what is best for their generation and their future generations, and they both have had opportunities denied under the Prime Minister.

Instead of creating jobs, jobs have been lost. Because of indecisiveness on the blockades, Canada has lost the opportunity and the economic advantages provided by the Teck Frontier oil sands mine. This is not good for our country or those in the indigenous communities who actively want to see construction on resource projects proceed. Nor is it good for Canada.

Canada has a long and complicated relationship with its indigenous peoples. I readily agree that further steps are necessary to strengthen our relationship. Changing the oath of citizenship does not accomplish this task.

The leadership of the government has promised so many more sunny ways than it has delivered in any substantial form. Canadians deserve better than another empty promise made by politicians wishing to cater sympathetic favour and reduce proud citizens of this nation to tokens cynically used to curry political favour.

Bill C-6 is another example of more Liberal false and, dare I say, empty compassion, something of which I believe Canadians are getting very tired.

As a Conservative member of Parliament, I stand for the improvement of Canada. My party stands for the improvement of Canada. We represent the many Canadians who want better than a government that consistently fails in its mandate by changing the rules and not providing urgent or transparent actions to address the concerns of Canadians.

Simply put, the Liberal government does not act in the interests of making life for Canadians better. It merely pretends to do so.

In these last few weeks, the Prime Minister has been absent and indecisive as Canada has faced a unity crisis in dealing with the blockades. No matter the gravity of the issue facing Canada or the concerns of its indigenous inhabitants, the House has been served an appealing word salad in his responses. Similarly, the bill is but another response devoid of any substance.

I would like to know when the Liberal government will begin to take action to help Canadian indigenous peoples beyond its typical tokenism and pandering.

● (1605)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member read the 93rd call to action, but did not read the 94th call to action, although he did refer to it.

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Call to action 94 is in fact what we are debating today, of changing the citizenship oath to recognize indigenous peoples as part of our country and that newcomers coming to Canada would know the importance of indigenous peoples to the foundation of Canada. Therefore, call to action 94 is what we are debating today.

As we look at all of these, should we eliminate call to action 94? Should we just focus on call to action 93 and call it a day at that?

• (1610)

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon, who spoke prior to me, already mentioned that it was a matter of priority. When we talk about our first nations, indigenous peoples, there is so much we can do. Instead, the Liberal government has picked something that is virtue signalling and not substantial for indigenous people.

Educating newcomers, having them recognize and understand indigenous histories in our country, would be far more beneficial to everybody in the country. That is why I suggested that recommendation 93 instead of recommendation 94 should be implemented.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on some important aspects in his speech. A lot of the issues dealt with in the calls to action cannot, in fact, be solved by legislation. They will require sustained government policy, adequate funding and so on.

The previous Liberal speaker had a point. This is a simple bill. It deals specifically with call to action 94. These calls to action were not just written on the back of a napkin. They are the result of a very long and sustained process.

Is it my colleague's view that call to action 94 should just be disregarded entirely, given the fact that it was based on so much heart-wrenching testimony and has been conclusively recommended by the TRC as getting us on a path toward reconciliation?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that this is actually a matter of prioritization. We have limited time in the House. We have limited energy in the House. Rather than do something that does not give our indigenous people any substantial improvement, I recommended we look at recommendation 93 instead.

The previous Conservative government did much with cases of social unjust. The Conservatives picked the most important, albeit more difficult, challenges. The member across brought up South Africans. It was under former prime minister Brian Mulroney's leadership that South Africans were brought into our modern history. It was also under Brian Mulroney when the Japanese Canadian internment was settled. It was under former prime minister Stephen Harper that the Chinese head tax injustice was righted. It was Stephen Harper who recognized in the House that the issue of residential schools was a historical wrong in our country.

We need to spend our energy and focus on matters that will actually make the lives indigenous peoples better, and not just on tokenism.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I feel like we are missing the mark a bit. We are missing the idea about

sovereignty and self-determination. What we are really discussing is advancing the rights of indigenous peoples in the country.

I heard many times in the member's statement the words "our indigenous communities". We do not own these communities. They are sovereign in their own right. I ask the member whether he thinks it is a bit pandering itself, a bit token, and a bit patronizing to use that kind of terminology?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, no, I do not think this is pandering when I say the word "our". It is my country, and we consider everybody in this country our people. That is what I meant.

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hochelaga.

I would like to acknowledge that we are on unceded Algonquin territory.

I just got off the phone with a band councillor for the community of Kitigan Zibi, which is a very special Algonquin community in the middle of the riding of Pontiac. It is a community that has not only brought incredible richness to our region, but also to our nation. I thought it would be particularly appropriate today to pay respect to that nation. As I am representing the riding of Pontiac, foremost in my mind are the Algonquin people.

Taking the oath of citizenship is an integral part of the citizenship process. The act of taking the oath reflects our Canadian values of social cohesion, openness and transparency in a free, democratic and diverse Canada.

The proposed amendment to the oath demonstrates the government's commitment to advancing the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reflects the commitment of reconciliation and a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada based on a recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

These changes are an important and necessary step for advancing reconciliation in Canada and strengthening our country's special relationship with indigenous peoples. Also, the new wording will help new Canadians to fully appreciate and respect the significant role of indigenous peoples and their history in forming Canada's fabric and identity.

The new proposed oath of citizenship responds to a call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, but it is also the result of the consultations conducted by national indigenous organizations and targeted testing with the general public across Canada.

Changing the oath of citizenship gives citizenship candidates the opportunity to publicly express their respect for the indigenous peoples, as they go through the important steps of becoming part of the Canadian family.

[*English*]

It is so important that Canadians be able to express that respect for indigenous peoples in their own way. It is so important to be able to express this, because it is who we are and who we aspire to be. It is also an indication of where we have come from. There have been many challenging times in the past. In order to get to a better future, we need to respect constitutionally protected rights, and this is a great thing to have incorporate into that oath of citizenship.

As proposed, the new citizenship oath would read as follows:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Our government is committed to a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on respect, rights, co-operation and partnership. Reconciliation with indigenous peoples, including my Algonquin constituents, remains a core priority for the government.

The new citizenship oath is part of our efforts toward reconciliation, as indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada are working to correct those laws and policies that do not allow for indigenous peoples the commitment to self-determination. The proposed changes allow us the opportunity to both acknowledge our past and move toward a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on inherent rights, respect and partnership.

[*Translation*]

In closing, Canada is firmly committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action and is working hard to make them a reality. True reconciliation will take a consistent and sustained commitment from all Canadians. This is a step in that direction.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one question I have in reference to the bill is this. Parliamentarians who were here in the last Parliament know that in back 2017, the then immigration minister received a mandate letter stating this change should be done. I wonder if the member could speak to the House about why something that was mentioned in 2017 is now being dealt with in 2020. I am not feeling the urgency to the calls to action that I would like to see.

The very important reality is that this is the 94th call to action and to this point, nine of those calls to action have been addressed, this being the 10th. This is how long that process is taking.

• (1620)

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, my colleague from North Island—Powell River and I sat on the indigenous and northern affairs committee in the last mandate. Her commitment to indigenous peoples across Canada is to be commended.

Government Orders

I appreciate that the question is coming from a place of urgency. That urgency is absolutely well placed. In my estimation, our government has done nothing but act on an urgent basis.

The reality is there are also challenges around timing. The House of Commons is a very crowded place in terms of moving forward with legislation that is absolutely in the public interest. This is one piece of legislation that is in the public interest. Our government is only too proud to be moving forward.

I think the member and I share the view that we need to push and push some more. Our government has indicated that it will move forward with legislation to advance the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We supported her colleague Romeo Saganash's bill that was advanced in the last Parliament.

We have demonstrated on a number of fronts that we are willing to move forward in order to address that urgent priority that is reconciliation.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke of urgency and the need for us to make sure we embrace some of the important things that are necessary for our first nations people. I think back to some of the ways they have been treated in the past.

Over 100 years ago, they were prohibited to sell agricultural products that were grown on reserves in the territories except in accordance with government regulations, because they were actually doing a better job than some of the other farmers were. That is the same sort of thing we are talking about today when we look at all of the bands and band councils that are saying that they need to have an opportunity, because they do not want to stay in this environmental colonialism where they do not have an opportunity to look after their people.

That is something we should recognize. There are a lot of things that could be done to help the native population, but the ones I know are saying they want the chance to do those things that are important so they can look after their own people.

I wonder if the member could comment on the urgency of being able to help those folks who really want to get involved, especially with the oil and gas industry.

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, the riding of the member for Red Deer—Mountain View is one that is near and dear to my heart. My great-uncle, Roland Michener, was from Red Deer. This is a special part of the country.

I appreciate the member's question, because it goes to the issue of self-determination. It goes to the issue of ensuring that the Canadian state is no longer an impediment to the fulfilment of indigenous people's dreams, that it is, in fact, the opposite, that it is working in partnership, working in the spirit of reconciliation.

That is exactly what our government is doing right now, discussion after discussion, nation by nation. They will all take on different flavours. They will all take on different tenors based on history, the level of dialogue and the nature of the community that is engaged. That is something our government takes very seriously, from our Prime Minister all the way through to the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin nation. As my colleagues have pointed out, indigenous people have played a fundamental role in Canadian history and continue to do so today.

A few years ago, we began a significant process of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, recognizing that Canada has failed in its duties towards those communities. Our government also offered an apology, as a first step. However, a number of other measures must be implemented to ensure the success of that first step. In order for reconciliation to succeed, we all need to be active participants, since the process will not happen on its own and it is far from over.

Advancing reconciliation is a Canadian imperative, and we will need partners at all levels to make real progress. We know that much more needs to be done and that we must continue to work together. To achieve it, we need to take meaningful action. Canada is firmly committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Our government is working very hard to implement these calls to action, and the proposed amendments to the citizenship oath are evidence of that commitment. This bill would renew the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples in order to move forward together as true partners. One of the most important ways we can show support is by highlighting these relationships in the citizenship ceremonies that are held across the country.

The citizenship oath is a meaningful commitment. The proposed new oath is more representative of our shared history. Recognizing the role that indigenous peoples have played in this country is a fundamental aspect of each citizenship ceremony.

In addition, the judges and those presiding over these ceremonies systematically acknowledge the indigenous territory on which each ceremony is taking place and also allude to the history of indigenous peoples in Canada in their welcome speech to new Canadians. The history of the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is a fundamental part of Canadian history, and indigenous peoples continue to play an important role in the development and future of this country.

The citizenship oath is a public declaration that a person is joining the Canadian family and is committed to Canadian values and traditions. Participants who swear the oath during citizenship ceremonies accept the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Swearing the oath is an important part of an immigrant's journey. I know this first-hand because I was with my mother when she swore the oath. It is a solemn moment, a commitment, a recognition of the history of one's new homeland. It is the final step to becoming Canadian. The oath is not something to be taken lightly, and I am proud that our government wants to change it to reflect all our country's values.

Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act with regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94, acts on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call

to action about changing the oath of citizenship to include a clear reference to the aboriginal rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis.

The proposed amendments to the oath demonstrate the government's commitment to implementing the commission's calls to action. They also signal a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on a recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. Reconciliation is important not only to indigenous peoples but also to all Canadians.

The proposed changes to the oath are a step toward advancing Canada's broader agenda for reconciliation with indigenous peoples and strengthening its relationship with them. The proposed new oath reflects our history and our identity.

• (1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member was speaking, I was thinking about the things that were done in the words of the Crown. As we developed our country the indigenous people were often placed subservient to the Crown. Recommendation 94 would actually bring indigenous people to the same level as the Crown in terms of prominence, and for newcomers to Canada to know that the indigenous peoples are prominent in our history.

Could the hon. member expand on the importance of recognizing indigenous peoples, in terms of the relationship we have with the Crown and with indigenous people?

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As I just reiterated, we should remember that taking the oath is the last thing people do before becoming a Canadian citizen. This oath must reflect the Canadian values of social cohesion, openness and transparency in a Canada that is open, free, democratic and diverse.

With the proposed changes to the oath, new Canadians will be able to understand the importance of indigenous peoples to the Canadian identity. This includes taking an oath that they will respect these aboriginal rights.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Government Orders

I rise today to debate Bill C-6, a bill which must be the Liberal government's most awaited piece of legislation. We heard from the Liberals throughout the election campaign that they were ready. They boasted that their legislative agenda was strong. Here we are debating Bill C-6, their sixth piece of government legislation, and the Liberals have already resorted to what they must surely consider to be time-filler legislation intended to pay lip service and give virtue signalling to the biggest problems facing our country today.

I do not know what I was thinking. I, too, must have fallen for the Liberal rhetoric in the last election, because even I expected that the Liberals would have more meaningful legislation to put forward for Canadians than this bill. However, this is clearly the same old Liberal party that would prefer to pander than to deal with the national crisis at hand, but it is not too surprising. This is actually straight out of the Liberals' playbook. In fact, the Liberals have discussed and/or attempted to change the citizenship oath seven times since their successful change in 1977: in 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2019. Each time they were unsuccessful, and each time they were pandering to the problem of the day.

The Liberal legislation drafters seem to be churning out bills like poorly written songs. They lay new words over the same three notes and expect people to enjoy it in the moment, knowing full well that it will never stand the test of time. On the other hand, the citizenship oath dates back to January 1, 1947, on the heels of Canada defining itself as a nation following the end of the Second World War. It has a special purpose in our history, as it solidified our nation by uniting us in allegiance to Canada as Canadians, not British subjects.

Aside from my wedding day and the days my two sons were born, the day I took the Canadian citizenship oath and became a Canadian myself marks one of the proudest moments of my life. I was born in Lebanon. Canada is the country that I chose, not the country I was born in. I came from a war-torn country, splintered by the infighting of various sects, to Canada seeking a better life. I played by the rules. I followed the traditional immigration process. I was proud to affirm the citizenship oath in 1994. My oath affirmed that I would faithfully uphold the laws of Canada, and then, now and in the future, I have upheld and I will uphold that oath.

The amendment we are debating today belittles the oath that I and many other Canadians have taken. The Liberals make it seem like, without explicitly spelling it out, new citizens would not recognize indigenous treaty rights. The Liberals make it seem like before today, new Canadians did not even have to respect indigenous rights, or that they have found a glaring oversight of our forefathers. However, new citizens who have completed residency requirements for this country have studied the handbook of history, responsibilities and obligations, and are expected to be fully aware of the rights entrenched in our Constitution.

• (1635)

New citizens are expected to have at least a broad view of the resolved and unresolved treaty rights in different parts of the country, and to be aware of the history of residential schools and other reconciliation-related issues. However, what is sad is that, after watching the debate today, it has become clear that this is nothing more than Liberal lip service.

Canadians are in a time of crisis. We have divisions between segments of our country that the Liberal government failed to address over its last term in office. The recently shortened benches of the Liberal Party here today are proving that they have no intention of ever addressing this in a meaningful way. Liberals on the opposite side know this. They know that their fancy speeches, working groups, talk shops, round tables and working lunches, pay-for-play dinners, virtue signalling and heartfelt-sounding press conferences are all smokescreens for their inaction, which has led to the division in our country that has boiled over onto our streets and our train tracks. A great example is what we saw today outside on Wellington Street.

The Liberals know that they are not taking concrete steps, and they know this because they were told that by a member of the chamber who was formerly one of their own. The member for Vancouver Granville, a former member of the Liberal Party and former minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, said that:

For Attawapiskat and for all First Nations, the Indian Act is not a suitable system of government, it is not consistent with the rights enshrined in our Constitution, the principles as set out in (UNDRIP) or calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

The Conservative Party supports treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with Canada's indigenous people. Conservatives support real action to address reconciliation with the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, but what we are debating here today is simply an interim lip service to the indigenous communities in Canada.

This is the Liberals attempting to distract from the fact that they have been weak on this file for years and have no real plan to move forward. This is yet another empty gesture offered up in place of meaningful and substantive legislative change from the Liberal government. On a fundamental level, Bill C-6 is flawed at its core.

Bill C-6 incorrectly gives the impression that the Inuit and Métis people have their own distinct treaties with the Government of Canada. It is as though the Prime Minister's Office took a virtue-signalling bill proposed by the Minister of Immigration, and then Gerald Butts and Katie Telford insisted on adding the words, "Métis and Inuit", because their internal studies showed that these buzzwords perform better than the truth in Liberal focus groups.

That must have been what happened, because there is no way that the new Minister of Immigration would willingly put forward his first piece of legislation as a minister with such a glaring oversight.

Besides that unfortunate oversight, Bill C-6 would do nothing to support real action to address reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis people. Instead, the Liberals brought back this lip service, a continuation of legislative disappointments that we became far too accustomed to in the last Parliament.

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In conclusion, it is unfortunate, but it appears that we can expect this Liberal tradition on legislative smokescreens instead of dealing with the real pressing and demanding issues that Canadians need to be addressing here today.

• (1640)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing his experience of being an immigrant, coming to this country and going through the citizenship process. Many Canadians like him and indeed just about all Canadians, unless of aboriginal descent, have immigrated here over the last couple of hundred years. My parents came from Italy and Holland when they were young children and their parents were seeking out better lives for them. That is quite the story of Canada to a large part.

I take issue with the fact that he said that this legislation would do a disservice to the oath that he was required to swear, or affirm, when he became a Canadian citizen. I have a simple question. If that oath had been the way that it is proposed in this legislation, would he have turned down the opportunity to become a Canadian citizen?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, many of the 36 million Canadians shared the same experience when they came to this great country and took the oath to commit to their responsibility among the rest of the Canadian fabric.

I see this as a strange way to ask the question. I will respond to that question by asking the hon. member this: What is going to happen to the 36 million Canadians who took the previous oath compared to the new oath?

Are we going to keep having these kinds of debates from members of a party that tried seven times in the past, and failed, to make any meaningful changes, and for the last five years has failed to address reconciliation properly? What we have seen in the last three weeks, and today, is a great example of their failure. I am very surprised to hear a question coming from that side, which is accustomed to what the Liberal government is trying to serve Canadians.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing his story about how he came to this country. I am one of those Canadians who was born here. I had the privilege of being born in Victoria, British Columbia. I did take the oath of citizenship at a recent citizenship ceremony, and I recommend to everyone who was born in Canada to do that one day.

I have my criticisms of Liberal policy as well, but those do not take away the fact that Bill C-6 was born out of one of the calls to action. Those calls to action were developed after a prolonged process that involved a lot of heart-wrenching stories. The TRC put a lot of faith in all of those calls to action.

I understand that Conservatives have some reservations with the bill and that maybe our time could be spent better. However, is there a version of the oath that the member could find himself supporting, if not in the bill as it is currently written, perhaps the version that is recommended by call to action number 94?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, in 2016, the member was one of the supporters of my private member's bill. I do appreciate his work and co-operation.

I do not think we are here to debate what kind of oath is going to be taken. This is bizarre. We want to find a meaningful way to implement reconciliation properly and make sure actions speak louder than words.

This kind of debate is unfortunate coming from my hon. NDP colleague. Our Constitution protects everyone and our charter of rights is the envy of the world. Between our Constitution and our charter, every right is protected in this country. I do not see any necessity to change the oath of citizenship rather than doing the real work and talking to the people on the ground, talking to the indigenous community and finding concrete solutions that are going to last for the next 152 years in this great nation.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Foothills, Public Safety; the hon. member for Bow River, Tourism Industry; and the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock, Public Safety.

[*English*]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to rise in the House for the first time in debate. I am grateful for the support of my family, friends, volunteers and of course the residents of Calgary Forest Lawn for putting their trust in me to represent them in this great House.

I immigrated to Calgary Forest Lawn when I was five years old and grew up there along with my parents, brother and sister. I am forever grateful to my parents, who sacrificed so much. My mom worked multiple jobs and my dad worked hard as a taxi driver to provide for my siblings and me. We lived through many racist experiences. When I look back to them, rather than being angry, I use them to help me grow and to teach others important lessons. I learned to work through it all.

I went to high school there, where I met my beautiful wife and played many different sports. My wife's dedication to me and our two daughters is the reason I am able to be here. Her endless love and support keep me going every day and remind me of why I am here. She really has three children to put up with, and she does it with a smile.

I am a son of the community and learned many valuable lessons growing up here. This great country provided my family and me the opportunities to succeed, and we are so grateful for that.

Government Orders

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the service of the previous member, the late hon. Deepak Obhrai, who served the residents of Calgary for 22 years until his untimely passing last year. Mr. Obhrai saw a lot of changes throughout his years in the House, including four prime ministers. He served in the Harper cabinet and he travelled the world. He is missed by many, and his 22 years have set a standard for me to live up to.

I also want to pay tribute to a mentor of mine who passed away far too young: the late hon. Manmeet Bhullar, an amazing MLA and leader. He taught me that *seva*, or selfless service to community, was the most important aspect of life. Manmeet died doing what he loved and what he taught, helping someone on the side of the highway on his way back to the legislature in Edmonton. His shoes are very big, both in the northeast and in communities at large. My goal is to continue what he started.

Turning to the topic at hand, the citizenship oath is very close to me and my family and so many of my friends and constituents. There are 108 languages spoken in Calgary Forest Lawn, so one might guess that many immigrants to Canada live in my area. Truly, I am proud to stand today as the member of Parliament for one of Canada's most diverse ridings, a place that people from all over the world call home and that is a success story of Canadian multiculturalism.

For many of those so privileged to recite the oath of citizenship, the moment is the culmination of a long journey. Some may have fled conflict-ridden countries in search of safety. Others may have fled poverty in search of opportunity. Whatever their story, they carry with them their experiences and cultures as they begin a new chapter with a solemn promise to bear allegiance to the Queen, to faithfully observe the laws of Canada and to fulfill their duties as a Canadian citizen.

While short and succinct, the words are not to be taken lightly. I do not believe for a second that any well-intentioned person who recites the oath is taking it lightly. Therefore, when individuals promise to faithfully observe the laws Canada, they are doing just that. They are not promising to obey some laws and not others, as if leisurely browsing a diner's menu for their preferred items. It is implied, indeed obviously understood, that they are promising to obey all laws. This of course includes the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations.

There are also some practical issues with the wording proposed in the bill. A 2017 National Post article anticipating similar changes to the oath remarked, "just as with a peace treaty between nation states, there's no real room for individual citizens to uphold or invalidate them."

• (1650)

Also in the article, Michael Coyle, a Western University legal expert on indigenous land claims and treaty rights, is referenced as saying, "Off-hand, I cannot think of how an individual non-Indigenous Canadian could 'fail to observe' a treaty unless they were acting as a representative of the federal or provincial government." If they were, and if I am not mistaken, in this situation indigenous communities can already make a legal claim against the Crown.

Additionally, what about the indigenous communities that never signed a treaty with the Crown? The majority of nations in B.C. are not under a treaty. The proposed wording of the statement would not acknowledge them and may even be perceived as an exclusion. The reality is that the current citizenship oath is fine as is and that this consideration of additional wording only brings up unnecessary issues. Why, then, has the Liberal government moved the bill in the infancy of this parliamentary session when there are more pressing issues facing this country?

The Liberals are wasting time in having the House debate the wording of an already well-worded oath. There are so many nations around the country that need access to fresh water and employment opportunities. There are daily suicides from despair, especially in the north, and the Liberals are focused on meaningless virtue signalling. The Liberals would say this is an important step on the path toward reconciliation, but Canadians see through their endless virtue signalling. Canadians see through the Liberals' desire to mask their inaction, at worst obstruction, by fixing an oath that was never broken in the first place.

The Conservative Party believes in the reconciliation process. After all, it was under a previous Conservative government that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. Rather than focusing on fixing an unbroken oath, we believe in bringing forward policies that make real and measurable improvements in the lives of Canada's indigenous peoples.

The Liberals have failed to create sustainable, economic opportunities for indigenous people. There can be no lasting reconciliation without economic reconciliation. The Liberals deliberately delayed approval of the Teck project, which was recently pulled by the company due to the Liberal inaction that created regulatory uncertainty. They held a project hostage that had the wide support of the local first nations communities and would have provided their children with jobs and opportunity.

Within the last two weeks, the Liberals' inaction on the blockades has allowed radical protesters, many of whom are not indigenous, to harm the national economy and threaten the LNG project that has the support of the majority of the Wet'suwet'en people. These blockades are an example of the blockades the Liberals have been putting up against the energy industry.

For the Liberals to claim that they are advancing reconciliation by including additional words in the citizenship oath, while hindering legitimate economic projects that provide jobs and opportunity to first nations communities, is ridiculous. We should get the federal government out of the way and allow the first nations that want to get out from under their dependency on the government to succeed on their own.

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• (1655)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am an immigrant to this country and am a proud Canadian citizen. I am a little concerned about the member's wording. One of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports states, "Precisely because 'we are all Treaty People', Canada's Oath of Citizenship must include a solemn promise to respect Aboriginal and Treaty rights," yet the member is dismissing this as something created by the Liberals.

I find this a little disconcerting, because there is talk about reconciliation and everything else. The Kelowna accord was the best reconciliation effort with aboriginal people, yet the Conservative government destroyed it.

Could the member explain what he means? Why is he speaking from both sides of his mouth?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I would like to focus on reconciliation. The Conservatives know the best way to reconcile is to get indigenous people back to work. We should give them jobs and sovereignty by giving them an economy that can grow, help their kids and help people in trouble.

What we saw recently was inaction by the Liberal government, and it did not help anyone. Fourteen indigenous communities were on board and they were all affected by this decision. It was the inaction and uncertainty by the Liberal government that caused all of this.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we have heard the Conservatives say a number of times that there are more pressing matters to discuss, that the House should be engaged in other things and that this debate does not really need to happen. Would the member agree that perhaps it is time we stop discussing the bill and get to a vote on it? In the spirit of not wanting to drag this on and on, because we have other things to do, perhaps it is time that we vote.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, dragging things on and on brings up the Teck project all over again. I thank the member for his comments and question, but we do have more pressing matters.

The Teck project needed to be approved and the Liberals dragged their feet on it. They should have voted within their cabinet and it should have been a yes. We would have been able to move the Canadian economy forward. However, we did not because the Liberal government dragged its feet. It is rich that I hear a comment like that from the hon. member across.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the work the previous Conservative government had done on reconciliation and the fact that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was started under the Conservative government. Is he aware that creating the commission was a requirement of a court settlement? It was not done out of the goodwill of the Harper Conservative government.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, it showed we were willing to work with the recommendations. Ninety-four recommendations were brought forward and very slowly we have come to nine. This shows that we were willing to work right away with

whatever recommendations we had. It was a big accomplishment for the Conservative government. We proved that we could act on it.

• (1700)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

I would like to start by acknowledging that we stand on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in support of our government's bill that would revise the oath or affirmation of citizenship. I am also extremely happy that Karina Scali has been shadowing me today, on a day when I am speaking on such an important bill.

As we know, the bill responds to call to action number 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report. It is important for newcomers to Canada to take on the responsibility of citizenship, and in doing so, with the passage of the bill, newcomers would state their commitment to respect the rights and treaties of indigenous peoples and recognize the significant contributions the Inuit, Métis and first nations have made to Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report lists 94 calls to action, with number 94 calling on the government to amend the oath of citizenship to specifically add a reference to the phrase "observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples".

In 2017 a few things happened that highlighted the need for the bill. In my riding, I hosted a screening of *We Were Children*, a film about residential school survivors. The profound impact of the residential school system is seen through the eyes of two children in this movie. It is a profound and disturbing film.

Following the screening, we had a panel discussion with three indigenous residents of Halton. There were two new Canadians in attendance who asked why they had never learned this part of Canada's history when they became Canadian citizens. Even those of us born in Canada have had a lack of education about the impact and trauma caused by the Canadian government's residential school system. It really hit home that we can do better.

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That same year, during the summer, I had a young woman working in my Ottawa office as an intern. She decided she wanted to do an e-petition on this very issue. Working with Steven Paquette, an indigenous knowledge keeper in Oakville, she developed e-petition 1228, which called on the government to continue its consultation with indigenous peoples across our country. It also asked the government to modify the study guide to acknowledge treaty rights. The petition received almost 650 signatures and a response from the government. I am extremely proud of Mariam Manaa, who developed this petition. She made sure it was not developed in a way that came from her knowledge about the past. Rather, she worked with someone from our community who is indigenous and could guide her on the right way to move forward on that petition.

Mariam's petition highlighted the importance of consultation. The government has been conducting full and thoughtful consultation in order to bring the bill here today. It has also been conducting thorough consultation to update the citizenship guide, which should be forthcoming in the coming weeks.

There are those in the official opposition who have called the changes suggested by the bill a token gesture. Given the experience in my riding at the film screening and the conversations I had because I sponsored Mariam's e-petition, I would argue that this change is far from token or a waste of time. It is extremely important as we move along the path to reconciliation.

I have also heard during debate members of the Conservative party talk about the need to do more in indigenous communities. I would like to highlight that the government has made significant new investments of \$21 billion through four budgets, which has resulted in the building or renovating of 62 new schools, the completion of 265 water and wastewater infrastructure projects and the approval of more than 508,000 requests for products, services and supports under Jordan's principle. There is also a new funding formula for K-to-12 education, which resulted in regional funding increases of almost 40%. The number of first nation schools offering full-day elementary kindergarten programs has increased from 30% to 59%.

Those are just a few examples of the steps we are taking and the investments we are making in indigenous peoples across the country. There is certainly a need to do more, but we are taking this seriously. We are making the necessary investments and making a commitment to reconciliation, something that is included in the bill.

• (1705)

Only by educating new Canadians and Canadians who have been on this land for generations about treaty rights, indigenous history and the trauma caused by policies like residential schools can we actually make progress on reconciliation. Unlike the Ford Conservative government, which immediately upon election cut mandatory indigenous curriculum from the Ontario high school education system, we firmly believe that education is an important component of reconciliation.

The proposed changes to the oath are the result of the government's consultation with national indigenous organizations on the precise wording of the oath of citizenship. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada included the following organizations in these consultations: the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis Na-

tional Council, the ITK, and members of the Land Claims Agreement Coalition, which represents indigenous modern treaty organizations in governments in Canada.

There was support for the intent of the call to action, but through engagement, the need for a more precise and inclusive oath also became clear.

A key point that came up was that the term "indigenous" does not reflect all preferences of self-identification. I understand this point deeply through many conversations held over the years. I know that many people identify by their home community, homeland or territory, and that there are many ways to identify. The oath of citizenship and all Crown-indigenous relations need to be based on an understanding and respect for self-identity preferences, and at a broader level, reflect many experiences and histories.

Another example is the call to specifically include treaties in the oath of citizenship, which is deeply important. Treaties are foundational to the creation and future of Canada, and through consultations it became clear that this reference needed to be expanded. "Treaties with indigenous peoples" was not relevant to all indigenous peoples and therefore not inclusive of all indigenous experiences. For example, Inuit peoples generally are not party to existing pre-1975 treaties or their agreements with the Crown are not characterized as such.

As a result of these consultations, as well as our pre-existing understanding and commitment to respectful relationships, the new oath will read:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

I am proud to support this bill for the revised oath of citizenship. This oath is much more than just words. It is a public declaration of joining the Canadian family and a commitment to Canadian values and traditions.

On Canada Day, I host a citizenship reaffirmation ceremony. It is my sincere hope that when we affirm aboriginal and treaty rights in the oath of citizenship this year, it will be an important reminder to all Canadians and will also serve to open conversations in my riding and across the country. The changes to the oath are also an important step in advancing reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people, continuing to build Crown-indigenous relations, and fulfilling the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

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This bill is another step forward towards full implementation of call to action 94, and I am pleased to speak in support of it today. As members listen to the speeches and make their own decisions on whether or not to support this bill, I hope they recognize that sometimes it can be small actions that make a big difference in the lives of indigenous peoples, of new Canadians and, in fact, all of us here in Canada.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been sitting in my chair here for the last couple of hours listening to the speeches delivered by members opposite, expressing their commitment to truth and reconciliation and to moving forward with positive relationships with our indigenous communities. I appreciate the strong words they have had.

A couple of years ago, a young lady went into a Liberal Party function to protest mercury poisoning in the water in Grassy Narrows. The Prime Minister made a joke at her expense, and she had to be forcibly removed from that event.

My question is this: Do any of them have the courage of their convictions to bring up to their leader and Prime Minister how poorly he treated that individual, and how he did not have any respect for truth and reconciliation on that day?

• (1710)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that on a day when we are talking about reconciliation, the member opposite is trying to make this a partisan issue. This is an important issue and one that should be non-partisan, and it should not matter what party we belong to; we should all be conscious of making sure we are moving on the right path toward reconciliation. I would hope that members opposite would not make this a partisan issue.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality of this situation is that throughout our history we have failed in our responsibility to properly highlight what indigenous communities have contributed to Canadian society. What we are seeing in this piece of legislation is one way to entrench that into a citizenship ceremony. I wonder if the member can speak to the benefits in the long term, in particular in relation to educating new members and new citizens of Canada as to what that relationship really was all about, as opposed to the way that we have, unfortunately, collectively been dealing with it over the last couple of hundred years.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, that is an important question. I mentioned that during the film screening that I did, two new Canadians asked why they did not learn this. I find that when I go to talk to grade 5 students now, and I am sure other hon. members have had the same experience, I actually have young people asking me questions about our very deplorable history with indigenous peoples.

I gave the example of Canada Day. It would be amazing if on Canada Day we affirmed our citizenship and included this in the oath, and it provoked conversations among people in attendance about why we are including that and they asked to be told more about treaties. We could be making sure we are having those broader conversations.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have such limited time in this House to pass important pieces

of legislation, and there are many important recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, one of which is:

We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.

That is number 8.

The member also just talked about education and how it would be important to educate new Canadians. That is actually recommendation number 93, which would be the educational component.

Why are the Liberals going for the easy recommendation, a couple of lines in the citizenship oath, instead of doing the hard work that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called on the government to do?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I am a little puzzled as to why we cannot do more than one thing at once. I highlighted the investments in education that were not made under the Conservative government. The Conservatives had 10 years to make a difference for indigenous children, and they did not.

We are actually investing in education. We are ensuring that young indigenous people have the best opportunity at life, something that we often take for granted. Certainly in my community, there are a lot of people who take it for granted that their kids may not have access to education.

I would argue that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations were not ranked in terms of having to address one recommendation before moving on to the next. We need to do all of the recommendations, and we certainly should be doing this one.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to recognize that we are gathered on traditional Algonquin territory here.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak in support of our government's bill to revise the oath of citizenship. As we know, this bill responds to call to action number 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report.

It is important for newcomers to Canada to take on the responsibility of citizenship, and I want to share my own experience with the House.

I immigrated to Canada when I was 12 years of age. I went through our school system, and what I learned when I was studying for my test of citizenship was not something I learned in my high school classes. It was not something that was part of my formal education.

As a young adult of 18, I did not know about indigenous rights, about our first nations, about the history of the indigenous people here in Canada. I did not know. As I continued throughout my years in life, it was not through schooling but through experiences and interactions with people that I learned about the very historic significance of why this matters.

With regard to multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion, as a first generation immigrant myself, it is fantastic to me that as a country we have adopted the multiculturalism policy. I feel we must include the indigenous lived experience within the way we govern ourselves, not just in this chamber but in all aspects of our lives. We must include it in what we teach to our children so that we can continue to build upon those experiences and continue to develop policy to really intrinsically absorb ourselves in what the history of Canada is really all about and make sure that the wrongs of the past will not be repeated in the future. That is really what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report is all about.

I see a lot of value in what this bill would do for newcomers in their understanding of what indigenous and first nations issues are and how we can be part of that conversation and solution to ensure they are included in everything we are as a nation.

I see a lot of value in this bill for newcomers in stating their commitment to respect the aboriginal and treaty rights for indigenous people and recognizing the significant contributions of Inuit, Métis and first nations to Canada.

Importantly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report lists 94 calls to action, with number 94 calling on the government to amend the oath to citizenship to specifically add reference to observe the laws of Canada, including treaties with indigenous people. The changes made here ensure this oath is as precise and as inclusive as possible of diverse indigenous identities and experiences.

I will take the time here to focus my remarks on the government's progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action provide all Canadians a path forward for Canada's journey to healing and reconciliation of 150 years of continuously building upon these wrongs.

To date, close to 80% of the calls to action have been completed or are well under way. Our government fully understands the importance of the calls to action and will continue to work with our partners to accelerate that progress. This work will require sustained and consistent action to continually make progress on the journey of reconciliation.

To redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the Government of Canada, the provincial and territorial governments, churches, corporations and schools to implement its 94 recommendations or calls to action during the announcement of the commission's final report on June 2, 2015.

● (1715)

During the commission's closing event on December 15, 2015, which included the release of the final report, the Prime Minister committed to implementing the commission's calls to action and reiterated the government's commitment to a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

The calls to action provide Canada with a road map to advancing reconciliation. Some 76 calls fall under the responsibility of the

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federal government alone or a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial, territorial governments, and other key priorities.

Canada has adopted a distinctions-based, whole-of-government approach to implementing the 76 calls to action that fall under federal or shared responsibility. It is a collective commitment involving 13 lead federal departments and agencies with the support of another 25 federal departments and agencies. Given the scope of the task and the wide range of partners involved, implementation requires time, continued substantial investments, sustained partnerships and, in many cases, legislative changes, such as this one.

Permanent bilateral mechanisms are one of the ways we are moving forward with the Assembly of First Nations, self-governing first nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the four Inuit Nunangat regions, and the Métis National Council and its governing members. These groups develop policies on shared priorities, monitor progress going forward, including implementing the calls to action, and meet annually with the Prime Minister.

The calls to action focus primarily on the following: closing socio-economic gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous people, such as calls to action numbers 1 to 5 under child welfare, numbers 6 to 12 under education, and numbers 18 to 24 under health; addressing systemic issues faced by indigenous peoples in Canada, such as call to action number 30, eliminating the overrepresentation of indigenous people in custody; increasing transparency and accountability with respect to renewing the relationship, such as calls to action numbers 43 and 44, implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and calls to action numbers 53 to 67, establishing a national council for reconciliation; and, providing public servants with skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism, such as call to action number 57, professional development and training for public servants.

Nearly 80% of the calls to action under the responsibility of the federal government alone or the shared responsibility between the federal government, and provincial and territorial governments and other key partners are well under way.

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Twelve calls to action have been fully implemented including enacting indigenous child welfare legislation; acknowledging indigenous language rights; enacting an Indigenous Languages Act; developing written policy regarding independence of the RCMP; launching the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls; funding the Canadian Museums Association; dedicating funding for Canada 150 projects on reconciliation; funding for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation; funding for the Canada Council for the Arts projects on reconciliation; increased funding for CBC/Radio Canada; providing public education that tells the national story of aboriginal athletes in history; taking action to ensure long-term aboriginal athlete development and growth; and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games.

In April 2019, our government implemented a new co-developed policy and an improved funding approach to better support the needs of first nations students on reserve, addressing call to action number 8.

I could start listing all of the legislation that we have worked on over these past four years to ensure that we are really being that inclusive government that we, in principle, believe that we are. I am more than happy to address them during questions and answers. I believe I am almost out of time.

In closing, I will say that I believe that this bill is significantly important, because it really speaks to the crux, the very depth, of the issue of reconciliation, and that is to raise awareness, to talk about the issues as they happened and to make sure that it does not happen again.

• (1720)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened very closely to my hon. colleague's remarks. I find it more than a little ironic that she and other Liberal members today have talked about meaningful reconciliation when it comes to indigenous education and children while the government is still fighting indigenous children in court.

I also believe, and I am somewhat disappointed, that my colleague is unaware of the abundant indigenous history over four centuries in the citizenship handbook and the questions within that handbook, which look at our indigenous peoples over those centuries, both heroic and tragic, and the victimization and cruelty of the residential schools.

I would like to ask my colleague about meaningful reconciliation when it comes to the Prime Minister.

Remember that in his first of three run-ins with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner he said that he sees his job as ceremonial and leaves negotiations to ministers. In light of his late return from his search for UN Security Council votes in Africa, and his refusal over the past two weeks to meet with hereditary or elected chiefs of the band in question in British Columbia, does my colleague think it would be a meaningful gesture of reconciliation for the Prime Minister to actually meet with those leaders, both the hereditary and the elected?

• (1725)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I did not speak in my remarks about what was in the citizenship handbook. I talked about my own education through the Canadian public school system, what impact that had on me, or lack thereof, and how much I would have wanted to learn more about the struggle of indigenous and first nations communities within Canada.

The member speaks about trying to resolve the issues of reconciliation. Over 150 years of Canada's Confederation, we have seen the challenges that have come about. I must say these are not issues that can be resolved over one conversation, over one day, over one piece of legislation or over one policy; these are challenges that have been brewing. These truth and reconciliation calls to action need time. They need consistent dialogue. When we talk about providing support to indigenous communities and children, we can talk about the end to the long-term boil water advisories or the major investments this Liberal government has made into education for indigenous communities, providing support and making sure that we are continuing that path toward progress. Unfortunately, there is not much the Conservatives can say about their progress when they were in government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, given the last question that came up from the Conservative member regarding the abundance of information in the immigration handbook about indigenous issues, would my colleague not agree that it supports the case even more, and that changing this oath of citizenship to reflect the fact that relationship exists is even more important now, given that abundance of information that apparently is in the handbook?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, over my tenure here as a member of Parliament, having sat on the international human rights subcommittee, and really delving deep into the issues of indigenous rights across the world, when newcomers come to Canada, we want to ensure that everybody in our country knows that indigenous rights and the indigenous framework are very important issues to be highlighted for newcomers. I completely agree with the member's comments and question that this is substantial. It is very important for newcomers to realize the distinction between the rights that we have here in Canada versus the rights of indigenous communities as they suffer abroad. As Canadians, we must do better.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Fredericton.

As has been said by other speakers today, we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people. That is historic. That is something more than just a phrase on paper.

I was born on Treaty 1. I was born in the land of the Anishinabe and Swampy Cree in the city now known as Winnipeg, at the forks of the Red River and the Assiniboine River, all the history for thousands of years of indigenous people living in the area that is Treaty 1.

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I now live on Treaty 3, in the city of Guelph, which is on the traditional land of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Anishinabe and is a land of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant. Having peaceful communication and sharing meals together has been practised for millennia in the area where I now live.

It is important to know that it is not just about using words in terms of acknowledging territory, but it is also important to know what territory we are in and what it represented in the past.

The government's commitment to reconciliation really is to bring this renewed relationship forward, the relationship of understanding the people who lived in the areas that we now occupy, sometimes occupying without resolution, looking at recognizing rights, co-operation and partnership and working on the complex relationships that we have now and will have going forward.

Acknowledging call to action number 94 in our oath of citizenship is important today. I have heard members of the House say that this is a minor piece of legislation, that it is just a sleight of hand, that it is just a few words on a page, but there is nothing more important than the oath of citizenship. It really speaks of the land that immigrants are joining and that land having the history of indigenous people as well as the history of the Crown and what that means to us as a country.

My hon. colleague from Sydney—Victoria last week gave a very powerful speech during the midnight emergency debate. He looked at the ongoing protests and acts of civil disobedience. We saw some of that as we were coming into work today. He made the important point that reconciliation is not a destination, that it is a journey.

The 94 calls to action put out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada are part of that journey, but it is a shared journey. It is a journey involving working on solutions with indigenous people, first nations, Métis and Inuit. Each community will have its own way of interpreting what that journey means.

The 94 calls to action mean working together to change policies and programs in a concerted effort to repair the harm that had been caused over a few hundred years, harm such as residential schools, harm such as the abduction of children in hospitals before they could be united with their parents, things that we are working on today and things that we will be working on tomorrow.

The amendments to Bill C-6 to bring our Citizenship Act in line with call to action number 94 urge us to replace our oath, but it really is what it means to be a Canadian citizen in terms of our relationship with the people who were here before the colonial settlement of Canada.

When I thought of speaking today about the oath of citizenship, I was thinking of the years I have spent working in the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. This institute was founded by former governor general Adrienne Clarkson as an outgoing gift to Canada. It involves bringing people who want to join the Canadian family together, to have conversations with them, to have round table meetings with dignitaries and with people from service organizations in the community, so they can tell us their stories. Why did they choose Canada? How has it been since they arrived here? What are they hoping for their future and for the future of their children?

• (1730)

It is always emotional and poignant. When one sees the pride on the faces of the family members who are joining the Canadian family before taking the citizenship oath, and knows the struggles they have gone through to get to the point of affirming their oath of citizenship, working with the planning committee to figure out how to create a festive atmosphere but also give it the dignity that oaths of citizenship really require is important. This is because citizenship, especially citizenship in Canada, is something that comes with a great value.

When we look at the citizenship language used in the oath right now, what are we talking about changing? It is something very similar to a debate we had a few years ago in the House of making our national anthem more gender-inclusive. It changed “in all our sons command” to “in all of us command”, which leaves open the question of gender definition.

This now opens up the door to reconciliation by including our Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. That is precisely the phrase we are asking to be put into our citizenship oath. Personally, I hope this is not going to meet with the type of partisan struggle we had in the Senate and the House around changing words, because words do matter. Our citizenship oath was last amended in 1977, and I think we can all agree that the world has moved on greatly since then.

I attend citizenship ceremonies. We have discussions beforehand, and then go to Riverside Park in Guelph. On July 1, 10,000 people are in the park and 30, or 40 or 45, people stand on a stage and declare their new allegiance to Canada. The Rotary Club organizes Canada Day celebrations and other people from the community are around. The chief of police is always there, as are the mayor and the member of provincial parliament. We celebrate together to say that leadership comes from each individual, and that the responsibility of citizenship is not just with elected officials. In particular, it is the citizens of our country who build our country. We simply serve them.

It is an important day for these new Canadians. Some of them have come back years after to volunteer on the citizenship committee and help other people understand what the journey was for them and where they now are in terms of their citizenship. In March 2019, at a citizenship ceremony at Bishop Macdonell high school, some of the people there were children of people who had become citizens previously. We had 37 community members become Canadian citizens that day, and to watch them wave their flags and officially become Canadian citizens was like watching a game where somebody had just scored a goal. The cheering and support demonstrated really showed the excitement and joy we have when people become Canadians.

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It is just so important they also know that Canadian citizenship comes with a history, and the history is not always great. This change we are looking at today is to try to undo some of the previous history that needs to be reconciled. The Citizenship Act is a reflection of the government's commitment to build a fair, diverse and inclusive country. It is also there for the benefit of newcomers for their overall quality of life and to make a good future for their families. However, it is all based on our having mutual respect, and in particular respect for the indigenous people who were here before we were citizens and to include them in the family we have joined.

I will be supporting this motion going forward. I hope we see it go through the House expeditiously, and I hope we can continue to work with the indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples to build a better Canada in the future.

• (1735)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, of course we support these changes in terms of the citizenship oath reaffirming aboriginal treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. That is important symbolism, it is important talk, but the government has been so short on actually walking the talk. I think it came up in debate today that aboriginal kids are being taken to court when trying to maintain their rights. Instead, the government is willing to spend an incredible amount of money on lawyers rather than allowing them to access the services and rights they deserve.

We have also seen with the Wet'suwet'en crisis that the government was directed years ago with the Delgamuukw decision to sit down and negotiate treaty rights around hereditary territory of the Wet'suwet'en. The government has been in power for five years and has done absolutely nothing in this regard. In fact, the Prime Minister refuses to meet with the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en.

What gives with the contradiction between the talk that is important in this bill, and actually walking the talk?

• (1740)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, it is a question of whether the glass is half empty or half full. We look at the progress we have made in five years and the discussions we have had. Yes, during the election campaign there was a court order that came forward.

We are now addressing and looking at that, doing things the right way in terms of the settlements that need to be done. However, they cannot be done by forcing a fast solution. It is something that we have to work on together to come to the right solution, and that is reflective of things like the Wet'suwet'en Nation as well.

Some of the chiefs are thinking one thing and some are thinking another. How do we get their governance to discuss, and how do we then discuss as a whole and come to the right solution for all Canadians, including especially our indigenous brothers and sisters?

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, a very interesting point that we have been talking about today is reconciliation, and more so the symbolism that we have been seeing today. The symbolism that is being talked about is what I am more concerned about. In the reconciliation report there is just a change

of four words to the swearing-in ceremony, yet the Liberals want to do more, which is fine.

The point is that we keep hearing about symbolism and how we are going to address reconciliation, but was there not a protest today out on the front lawn of Parliament? Have there not been blockades these last couple of weeks? When are the Liberals actually going to do something about reconciliation, instead of the symbolism that we keep seeing?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, I have driven the Yellowhead Highway many times in the past, and when I do I always think of the Métis, the hunters, the people on horseback and the freedom that they had. What we want is for them to live within the freedom context of the nation that we now all are in together.

When we are talking about symbolism, as the member is calling it, there is nothing more fundamental than the oath of citizenship when we are talking about how our country sees itself and how we show it to newcomers. This is far from simple symbolism. This is a fundamental change that was called for in call to action number 94. We need to do it because it is a priority item.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will echo what my colleague from the NDP and what my colleague from Yellowhead said. The member said, and I say this respectfully, that words matter, and I agree with that.

However, I would argue that we have the opportunity to say that action matters more. It matters more to do things that are concrete and tangible for improving the quality of life for those who live in first nation communities.

I am fortunate that my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is home to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the residents who are there. A great point of symbolism would be that actions matter, for example, talking about the joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps and the discrepancy in first nations education.

When we talk about symbolism, I wonder why this was chosen to be a symbolic first. I would argue that there are more tangible things that can make a difference.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, there are 93 other calls to action, and those are action items. I have visited the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. There are five boil water advisories that we are working on together. The call to do it together is really what we are talking about, not enforcing our actions on them but working on solutions together.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House to speak and to represent the people of Fredericton.

Today we debate Bill C-6, a bill to amend the citizenship oath. I wish to provide context for my words today with some of my background. Before being elected in this House, I was a teacher and an advocate for indigenous youth in our public schools. I worked to remove barriers in the New Brunswick education system for indigenous children. I worked to educate the broader population on the true history of Canada and the implications for ignoring it. I remember learning about residential schools on my own time and not as part of my formal education. It took two years to comb through testimonials, letters, documents and photo evidence. It was a roller coaster of emotions as I confronted my identity as a non-indigenous person, and my role and responsibility in repairing the damage that had been done. Understanding that responsibility led to my passion for teaching and it led me into this House where I stand today.

The 94 calls to action that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada were designed to be a road map to reconciliation, covering a variety of aspects of life, including business, education, health, youth, women, justice and more. Canadians might be asking where this road has gotten us, and how many calls to action have been completed. In the Prime Minister's words, he made a commitment, in partnership with indigenous communities, the provinces, territories and other vital partners, to fully implement the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That was in 2015.

CBC's Ian Mosby has been tracking the TRC's progress. He commented, "One thing that the calls to action that have been completed have in common, is that they are very simple to complete, or they are calls for things that were already happening to continue."

Dr. Cindy Blackstock said, "In 2020, it is time to stop feeding the government's insatiable appetite to be thanked for its inadequate measures and to demand a complete end to the inequality".

Particularly poignant are the observations of the Yellowhead Institute on assessing progress. It writes:

We have also operated from the assumption that completing any particular Call to Action cannot be solely determined by gestures of process, budgetary promises, or otherwise "recognition of concerns" on the part of Crown-Indigenous Relations (CIR). Rather, we have judged their status based on whether or not specific actions have been taken that are capable of producing the kinds of clear, meaningful, structural changes necessary to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada.

Let us review the scorecard. Out of the 52 broader reconciliation recommendations, seven have been completed; under justice, one out of 18; language and culture, one out of five; health, zero; education, zero; child welfare, zero. Five were completed in the first year, and just four since 2016. At the current rate, it will take approximately 38 more years before all of the calls to action are implemented. We will see reconciliation in the year 2057, just in time for zero emissions.

In the 2019 mandate letters, the Prime Minister reiterated, "No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous People". I think it is time to call in the marriage counsellor. Take, for example, Canada's ongoing legal challenges to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's September 2019 ruling that "the Federal government was wilfully and recklessly discriminating against First Nation children in ways that contributed to child

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deaths and a multitude of unnecessary family separations." For a government so concerned with appearances, this does not look good.

With no reminder needed, let us look to the current and ongoing Wet'suwet'en crisis in Canada, testing the Prime Minister and his government's commitment to this mandate of reconciliation, as well as the public interest. This could have been a slam dunk, setting the tone for positive, peaceful relationships for years to come. However, due to what I believe to be a catastrophic mishandling of the situation, we are seeing effects like the explicit, overt racism breeding in online comment sections and spilling into the streets and schoolyards.

This is the true barrier to the calls to action, to reconciliation and to the hope of a better tomorrow for indigenous peoples in Canada. We have heard a lot of rhetoric over the last couple of weeks. We had the opposition leader attempt to educate us on privilege. Mind you, he is a white, affluent man who was standing in front of the grand doors of the House of Commons. He should know privilege well, yet somehow he missed the mark.

We have heard a lot of platitudes, punch lines and patriarchy. We have heard promises made and, three days later, promises broken as well as a gross overstating of the role of dialogue.

● (1745)

The exhaustive TRC, the previous Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry were the hard work of dialogue and set a course of action for Canada to take. Dialogue is a conversation among parties, but Canada does not seem to be listening.

In closing, I will change my tone. I will of course support this effort to fulfill one of the 94 recommendations, but I wish to note the timing of this effort as well as question the actual impact in today's Canadian political climate.

Things have changed. We have failed in the bridge building, in the healing that is required of this work, which is embedded in each of the 94 recommendations. Today we address one call to action, the 94th, with 84 incomplete before it. We will potentially move this request to committee stage and in time perhaps we will see our newcomers repeat an oath that acknowledges something the majority of settler Canadians have not.

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Having said all this, this change will have a positive impact on the immigration experience in Canada, despite falling flat as a call to action for indigenous peoples so long after it was originally recorded.

• (1750)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to consistent support for reconciliation, it is encouraging to hear some of the support for it. However, I do not think that is universally applied throughout the chamber. We often find the Conservatives lacking. They need to reaffirm where they stand. This is just one important call to action, and they are opposing it.

From what I understand, the Green Party is supporting the legislation.

It is important that we recognize this is just one piece of legislation dealing with the call to action 94. A number of steps have already been taken, but many other steps still need to be taken. However, it is not only the federal government that has to take action. Provincial governments and other entities need to recognize this and start to work more toward getting some of these calls for action complete.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, yes, we are supportive of the bill before us. Again, it puts forward one of the 94 recommendations. If we are looking at prioritizing or placing importance on these recommendations, it is rather symbolic, if we are going to talk about symbolism, and it is the 94th call to action. It would seem that the hard-working individuals who were involved in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would have rather seen some of the others addressed long before we got to this one.

Again, while it is one step that is necessary to take, 93 others steps should probably have been taken before this one.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my friend's speech with interest. She talked about being an educator. Education is an important aspect of reconciliation.

We have limited House time. On average, 16 government pieces of legislation get passed per year. Would it not make more sense for us to be dealing with, for example, recommendation 93 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which talks about revising the information kit for newcomers to talk about indigenous treaty rights and other things? Would this not be a more productive use of the House time rather than 17 words being inserted into the oath?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, the simple answer is yes. With our limited time here, we have to address things with a certain level of urgency and prioritize them in a very important way. However, this is the bill before us, and I support it.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Fredericton seemed a little frustrated, not with what is before the House but rather the lack of government action in other areas. I think we all understand that when we realize indigenous kids are still having to go to court to get their rights. We see the government's lack of follow-up on a whole range

of issues, to sitting down and negotiating so we get the free, prior and informed consent that is part of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Could the member express the frustration that so many people feel about the lack of action and could she help us with the road map for the future? What should the government be doing so it is actually walking the talk that is expressed in the bill?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I am very frustrated. I sat very patiently and listened to the midnight debate without a speaking slot, so I took this time to really address those concerns.

My children are indigenous. What I see from all this, as I mentioned, is some of the racism that is really pouring out of the comment sections and in society. I am very concerned. Therefore, I would like to see a strong focus placed on anti-racism.

With that, comes all the rest of the recommendations as well. They are very much embedded in that spirit. We need to understand how to better relate to one another, but we have to tear down the walls we have seen. The power of racism in our society is there and I worry for my children, my students and Canada. We need to address this right away.

• (1755)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to once again address the House as the member of Parliament for Chilliwack—Hope, a constituency that has a large number of reserves.

The Sto:lo Nation and the Ts'elxweyeqw tribe are a key part of my community and they play a key role in partnership with the City of Chilliwack and the District of Hope in making us a great community. In a bit, I will talk a little about some great examples of reconciliation just over the last number of years in my community.

Today we have heard the parliamentary secretary to the government house leader take partisan runs at the Conservative Party. Of course, it was the Conservative Party, under the leadership of Stephen Harper, that brought forward the historic apology to former students of Indian residential schools. This was on June 11, 2008.

That was after a lot of hard work by the government and first nations, Inuit and Métis leadership. The groups were represented by chiefs and leaders from across the country, who were right on the floor of the House of Commons in the old Centre Block. That was a moving moment for all Canadians.

My father, Chuck Strahl, was the minister of Indian affairs, as it was called at the time, and it was one of the proudest moments of his long career, to be a part of that apology recognizing the impact it had on survivors of the residential school system, which was, quite frankly, a dark chapter in Canada's history. That was acknowledged for the first time here under a Conservative government.

As part of that agreement for the settlement for the residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created by the Conservative government. Over seven years, it heard from survivors from across the country. It listened to their experiences and how the residential school system had changed their lives forever, not just for them and their parents and grandparents in many cases but for future generations. We acknowledged that and we acknowledged it was wrong. We acknowledged the lasting harms the residential school system brought to first nations, Métis and Inuit communities across the country, and that was an important step.

A number of recommendations came out of the TRC, one of which we are dealing with today.

I remember I was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of aboriginal affairs when the 94 recommendations were tabled. The reason I remember it is because now Senator Sinclair gave the government the 94 recommendations just before question period. By the time the Liberals' first question had come up, they said that they supported all 94 recommendations without having read them. That is a fact.

There was an election on the horizon and the current Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations was their critic. She said that the Liberals supported all 94 recommendations without having read them. That was indicative of the importance they placed on this file. It was all symbolism right from the beginning. Unfortunately, we see that continuing here today.

I have been here for quite a while. I have been watching as well. I heard one Liberal speaker say that this was important symbolism, that words mattered. Yes, the words do matter. We can look at the words, and I will read the proposed change into the record again. It says:

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

If we believe that words matter, the words of the current oath matter as well. They cover the addition to this. When we say “including the Constitution, which”, we are saying that this is already covered in “faithfully observe the laws of Canada”. Therefore, this really does not add anything of substance.

• (1800)

The treaties, which we are called upon to recognize here, already form a part of the laws of Canada, which new Canadians are asked to affirm that they will faithfully observe. This, quite frankly, is trying to use words to make the government feel better about its relationship with indigenous Canadians, because right now that relationship continues to be strained.

The Liberals say that if new Canadians have to say these words, will that not be an important symbol to indigenous Canadians? I would argue that it would be a better symbol, a better action to indigenous communities to actually respect the laws or the treaties of the country as the Crown. I have not heard in all of my work on this file or in all my work as a member of Parliament a lot of indigenous leaders complaining that the people of Canada, individuals, new Canadians, are failing to faithfully observe the treaty. I have heard

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many times that the government, the Crown has failed to live up to its obligations under the law.

If we actually want to make a difference, if we want to satisfy the concerns of indigenous leadership, indigenous individuals, it will be for the government, for the Crown to fulfill and honour its obligations instead of saying to new Canadians that they should affirm the aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people. It is a bit of misplaced symbolism if the government takes that action because it believes it is important.

The government should focus on recommendation 93 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is on education. One of the lasting legacies of the apology in 2008 is the increased awareness of residential schools, that chapter in our history, and the need to learn from it.

In the same way, recommendation 93 calls on the government to increase that portion of the new citizenship guide so when people come to that last step where they swear the oath, they have learned all about the various relationships that have formed our great country. Whether it is our two founding nations or the indigenous treaties, that it is all part of this. The residential school system and that dark chapter is all part of it.

My fear is that once we start to say follows all the laws, “including the Constitution which”, and the government will probably say, no, that this would never happen, why not at some future date say “including the Constitution, which includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms”? We all believe in the charter. We should include that. It should be something that new Canadians swear an oath to, that they will follow not only the laws that are in the Constitution, which includes treaties, but also the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What about the fact that there are two official languages in the country? Why should we not include that in the oath? Once we start to go beyond the law to include the Constitution, to include the treaties, what is stopping us from expanding it further? Saying we will faithfully observe the laws of Canada covers this quite well.

My colleague from Yellowhead mentioned this as well. We have heard a lot about reconciliation today. We are told that this debate is all about that.

• (1805)

I believe, and I have said this before in this House and certainly in my own community, that reconciliation is a process. It is a journey. It is not a destination that one gets to by completing checklists. It seems that this is what this is today. It is a belief that if we check this one off, if we check off recommendation 94, we will be well on our way to achieving reconciliation.

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I would argue that this is one of those times when what is happening in this chamber is at fundamental odds with what is happening in real Canada. We have seen it in protesters, quite frankly, who have been out to stall an energy project; that is their main goal. Many of the protests include banners that say “Reconciliation is dead.” We see, from the Mohawks here in Ontario to the Wet’suwet’en people in British Columbia, there are some who disagree with these projects, and they are protesting the actions of the government.

Today in this place, a very safe place to speak about reconciliation, a very sterile environment, we can have these debates, these words in the House, but outside of these walls, a very different story is emerging. Indigenous communities and indigenous leaders feel let down by the government that repeatedly says, and we heard it again on Tuesday, that there is no relationship more important than the relationship with indigenous peoples.

Has that been the record of the government? I would argue that most certainly it has not. When it comes to the government’s record on indigenous peoples, it is a record of profound disrespect. We saw this on many occasions. I think Canadians will remember two very clearly, and I want to talk about a few more.

There is one that sticks out the most, outside of the House of Commons where there are rules that govern how we conduct ourselves. We are all honourable members. We cannot even call each other by name. That is how structured it is here in the House. However, when we get outside of this place and we are confronted by reality, how we react there shows more of our true character.

Many Canadians will remember when the Prime Minister was giving a speech to a group of well-heeled lawyers and donors, Liberal Party donors who had given the maximum donation to his party, and he was interrupted by a young indigenous woman who could well have been referencing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendation on clean drinking water. This time it was in Grassy Narrows. She said that the Prime Minister had promised they would have a water treatment facility, that there was mercury in their water and they were dying.

The Prime Minister mocked her to her face, saying, “Thank you for your donation.” That is what he did when he was confronted outside of this safe space that is this chamber, when he was confronted with the reality of an indigenous protester. “Thank you for your donation,” he said to great laughs from the well-heeled rich donors in a downtown hotel room, who had never had to worry about a clean drink in their entire life. That is what he did when confronted with that issue.

Talking about reconciliation, I know in British Columbia how proud first nations communities in my riding were to have the first indigenous justice minister as a member of the Liberal cabinet in 2015. She was a former Assembly of First Nations B.C. regional chief. She had been a spokesperson for indigenous issues in my province for a number of years. We did not always disagree, and in fact she was usually there to tell me, when I was the parliamentary secretary in our government, how we could be doing things better. She was a respected leader, as was her father.

We saw the reaction here when she decided to stand up to the Prime Minister. She was summarily fired from her post as the justice minister. She was then humiliated. I remember well the former member of Parliament for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Mr. Jati Sidhu, who said that she did not know anything, that she was just taking direction from her father, patronizing a lawyer, and justice minister and attorney general.

● (1810)

That was the true opinion the government had of her when she told the truth and then got kicked out of cabinet and then got kicked out of the party. One of the indigenous services ministers who got the most done in her tenure was Jane Philpott. I remember her too. She similarly got kicked out of cabinet and the Liberal Party for telling the truth to the Prime Minister.

I want to talk about a couple of other ways the Liberals have been disrespecting indigenous communities. We saw with the Wet’suwet’en, 20 first nations chiefs and councils and nine hereditary chiefs, and were told by one of those hereditary chiefs that 85% of the people in the territory support the Coastal GasLink pipeline, and that the government was nowhere to be seen. In fact, the Liberals were talking about dialoguing with people who wanted to shut down that project that would bring economic prosperity to that region.

I remember the Aboriginal Equity Partners. This is one of the greatest tragedies in the last five years. The Aboriginal Equity Partners had a 30% stake in the northern gateway pipeline. They had worked with the company. I believe it was 31 first nations and Métis communities that had worked with the company to come to an agreement that they would receive \$2 billion in benefits for their communities.

With a stroke of a pen the Prime Minister tore that economic prosperity away from them. When we asked if the Liberals had consulted with them, he said that they had no obligation to consult with those first nations and Métis communities because they were taking something away. Cancelling a project and taking away that economic prosperity was not even a consideration for the government.

We saw it with Teck Frontier just today. I know many Liberals have been celebrating all day long the decision of Teck Frontier to abandon this project, the 7,000 jobs, the \$20 billion in economic development up front, the \$70 billion in tax revenue for all the governments. The Liberals have been celebrating that, but they have not been talking about the fact that 14 first nations are also now having an economic opportunity ripped away from them by the government. The first nations are having that torn away because the government has created such an impossible environment. It reminds me of the energy east pipeline where the Liberals said that it is just the company making the decision. Yes, the company has finally made the only decision that the government left it with. After changing the regulatory process, after moving the goalposts time and time again, the company finally said that it cannot operate in that environment.

Among the people who have lost hope and opportunity, the most tragic are those experiencing poverty and health outcomes that we would never accept in our own communities. The government seems to be willing to accept that some first nations are just going to have to continue to live in poverty, that the economic opportunities the private sector wants to work in partnership with them to achieve, those are not worth pursuing. In fact, the government will do everything it can to rip that economic opportunity away.

Again, this is a symbolic bill that is designed to make the government feel good about its reconciliation agenda. Out on the ground, out in Canada where people right now are seeing first-hand how well the government's reconciliation agenda is working and how well its economic and environmental partnering are working to get the balance right, the balance for the government is no economic development, no economic opportunity for indigenous communities that have been working in close consultation with those communities.

This is an unnecessary change to the oath. It is, quite frankly, designed to make the government feel good about itself when it is failing on the reconciliation front. We cannot support it.

• (1815)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on December 15, 2015, the Prime Minister accepted the final report of the commission. Justice Murray Sinclair, Chief Wilton Littlechild and Dr. Marie Wilson worked on this report, which resulted in the 94 calls to action. These calls to action were made to the government not in order of preference but as calls that we had to address together.

The member across the way and some of his colleagues have said they do not like recommendation number 94 and do not think we should be debating it today. Apart from call to action number 94, could he tell us what other calls to action we should not be addressing that the report gave us?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, there are some recommendations that I do not think we should be implementing, like increasing the funding for the CBC. That is an easy one. We do not believe this should be part of the document. We believe the CBC should be able to struggle and make ends meet on a billion dollars a year. However, there are other calls to action that I do support, such as the aboriginal language bill that we supported as a party.

I do not support changing the oath. I do not support increasing the funding for the CBC. Maybe I will get an opportunity to pass along a few more of my observations on the TRC report as we go along.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the member for Chilliwack—Hope raised some important points, notably about how reconciliation cannot simply be a list of items to check off.

In the oath of citizenship, we swear or affirm that we “will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second...Her Heirs and Successors”. It was the Queen's ancestors who were often taking land away from the first nations, which existed on this land as sovereign nations with their own governance structures. That is why the bill is particularly important, more so

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than making reference to Canada's official languages or the Constitution, because this land was inhabited by people before the Europeans came and we fundamentally changed their way of life.

I am asking the member to possibly consider why this might have some importance. It allows new Canadians to recognize that this land was inhabited before the Europeans came and that the first nations' way of life was fundamentally altered by that contact. This is just a way of recognizing how important that is.

Yes, it is a small step and more needs to be done, but surely this one step can mean quite a bit given that it did come out of the TRC, which did months of work on this.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that the TRC was a very important initiative. It was set up by our former Conservative government. It worked for years to hear from survivors and develop recommendations.

I believe recommendation number 93 is the answer to his concern. It states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

I would argue that any member who has helped someone prepare for the exam knows how seriously it is taken by the people who want to write it. They study the guide diligently, like it is a university course. There is much more value in changing or including information on treaties and indigenous history in the guide than there ever will be in the oath, so I think recommendation number 93 is the way to address those concerns.

• (1820)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was an MLA for eight years prior to being elected, and today was the first time, as I was telling my colleague who was sitting next to me, that I have been involved in heckling. I was just so infuriated with what I am seeing, with how the Liberals are using indigenous people with tokenism to advance their projects, and they are not helping indigenous people. I am speaking as an indigenous person, as a Métis myself.

I am infuriated with how phony it is. They are saying they are standing up for the Wet'suwet'en people when 85% of the people are supporting the projects. Whether it is the Coastal GasLink or the Teck mine, these projects have the support of the indigenous first nations people. What they say in the name of supporting indigenous people is absolutely phony, and it is extremely disturbing that they are allowing this type of tokenism.

I wonder if the member would be able to respond to some of my comments.

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Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I want to thank that member for his work on this file. I believe he also had a role in the Government of British Columbia as a parliamentary secretary dealing with aboriginal issues. As a Métis individual, as he said, he has experienced this first-hand.

I want to quote one of the member's former colleagues. MLA Ellis Ross, who is a member of the legislative assembly in northern British Columbia, I believe Skeena, and a former Haisla chief, says that the government's actions and the actions of the protesters here have been "setting back reconciliation 20 years." He has talked about how governments and people who support their agenda take away opportunity from the first nations indigenous communities that need to make these decisions themselves.

When a government will not stand up for the rule of law, when a government emboldens those who want to take away that economic opportunity, I will take the advice and the words of MLA Ellis Ross, a former chief, over this Prime Minister or anyone sitting on that side of the House.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot today from the Conservative bench that this is a waste of time, asking why we are spending time on this, and saying we could be doing more productive things. Given that the member is the opposition whip, I am sure he values the time that this House has.

The member concluded his remarks by saying the same thing, that this was pointless, and asked why we are even debating this issue, so why did he just spend 30 minutes talking about it? Will he, as part of the leadership of the Conservatives, push this measure forward so that we can have a vote on it and we can get moving along with the very important business that he was talking about?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, this is what it has come to. The Liberals who schedule the debates and schedule the House time just want the opposition to go away. If we can just let this all pass without any debate, that is how they would prefer it.

I would be happy to debate any time and any place with this member, who has been fundraising and paying for advertisements to shut down the energy sector in Canada. That is shameful. He has been using money that he has raised against—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member's time is very important and very short-lived, so I would just ask members to hold their comments and questions.

The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I will take no lessons on how I should speak in the House of Commons from a member who is actively campaigning against jobs and prosperity for first nations communities in Alberta and British Columbia.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to advise him that I will have to, unfortunately, cut off the debate at one point soon to go to the rest of the orders of the day.

Resuming debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and address the chamber.

I am disappointed in the Conservative Party. Those members have been consistent in terms of not really being genuine with respect to supporting the important issue of reconciliation. It has been interesting throughout the day to listen to members stand up and in essence belittle the legislation or outright oppose it, not really recognizing just how important this is.

I have heard members say it is just one bill, that it just deals with the citizenship oath. The citizenship oath is very important. Every year, more than 100,000 individuals will take the oath of citizenship. I suspect no one would try to underplay the importance of the swearing in of a new citizen.

The debate that we have been hearing today has been about reconciliation. The opposition, particularly Conservative members, have been giving the false impression that Bill C-6 is all we are doing for reconciliation. Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth.

Virtually from day one back in 2015, when our government replaced the Harper regime, Canadians finally had a government that was committed to reconciliation. For many years, indigenous communities in all regions of this country had been calling on the government to do something on reconciliation, and the Conservatives stood by and did virtually nothing.

I remember sitting on the opposition benches and calling for a public inquiry in regard to the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, well over 1,400 of them, and the Conservatives did absolutely nothing. I had the opportunity to ask that question myself. One of the first things our government did was to establish a public inquiry into that.

It is not just the calls for action. It is things such as our investment of hundreds of millions of dollars into indigenous-related issues, whether it was clean water, whether it was the environment, or whether it was education. The Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations would tell us a long list of actions that have been taken. Bill C-6 today is just one aspect of an ongoing way to deal with reconciliation. The Conservatives say we are taking low-hanging fruit from the trees, or whatever they are implying. Again, nothing could be further from the truth.

I spoke inside this chamber not that long ago in regard to other calls for action, such as the preservation of heritage language, such as child and family services, such as foster kids. In my province alone, well over 10,000 children are in foster care. One of the calls for action dealt with that particular issue. We brought in substantial legislation last year to help in ensuring that we are able to assist in foster care and able to provide the necessary care by enabling indigenous communities and leaders to take back more responsibility with regard to their children. That is fairly substantial.

We have taken action on eight or nine calls for action. Many of these recommendations are not even completely under federal jurisdiction.

I will continue my comments at a later point, as it appears my time is running out.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have 15 minutes and 30 seconds left in his time when this matter next comes before the House.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Cariboo—Prince George relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1855)

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

(Division No. 17)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek

Kusie
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Lukiwski
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Patzner
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Soroka
Strahl
Sweet
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Wagantall
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 115

Business of Supply

Lake
Lehoux
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Morrison
Nater
Paul-Hus
Rays
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Saroya
Schmale
Shields
Shipley
Steinley
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Waugh
Williamson
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

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

Adjournment Proceedings

Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemire
Levitt	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Manly
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathyssen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Michaud
Miller	Monsef
Morrissey	Murray
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Powlowski
Qaqqaq	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schieffe	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simard
Simms	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Tabbara	Tassi
Thériault	Therrien
Trudeau	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vignola
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Yip	Young
Zahid	Zann
Zuberi — 199	

PAIRED

Members

Desbiens

LeBlanc — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity for me to rise today and build on a question I asked last week with regard to the illegal blockades and the ramifications they are having on Canada's economy, but certainly specific to Canadian agriculture.

I want to reiterate that this is a critical situation. The situation for Canadian agriculture is at a crisis, where producers are not able to move their products. The agriculture industry is so trade-reliant that their inability to move their products from farm to terminal to port has crippled their ability to do business.

I had said there are about 50 ships off the port of Vancouver and about 19 ships off the port of Prince Rupert. I want to apologize to the House because I was a little off on my numbers during my question. In fact, it is not 50 ships off the port of Vancouver, it is actually 85. We have seen in just a couple of days how that number has expanded to a critical stage.

As a result, when there are 100 ships off of the B.C. coast waiting to be loaded with grain, that is having a profound impact on Canadian grain farmers. They are short about 400,000 tonnes of grain. We have a backlog of 20,000 grain cars and this is costing Canadian grain farmers more than \$300 million.

I want to quote Mary Robinson, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, "How many blows can we take? The rail barricades are already causing propane shortages used to heat livestock barns, and delays in grain shipments, which are estimated to be costing the industry about \$63 million...a week."

We are close to three weeks into this crisis and there is still no resolution. On the good side, the Prime Minister said on Friday that these blockades must come down. It is ironic that he felt those comments disqualified the Leader of the Opposition from even participating in a meeting to discuss this crisis, but three days later he took almost verbatim the same position as the Leader of the Opposition.

However, my concern is when the Prime Minister said the blockades must come down, which are illegal as stated by a court injunction, he did not table a distinct plan to ensure that those blockades would come down.

We have heard that some blockades have been dismantled, but at the same time, other blockades have arisen in their place, maybe a few miles away on a different railroad or a different bridge or a different highway. We have to see very distinct, concrete plans from the government to ensure that illegal blockades are removed. As I said, for Canadian agriculture this is particularly damaging.

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I spoke with some of the Canadian National Millers Association members as well. They mentioned it is days, not weeks, before they are out of wheat and oats. Let us imagine Canadian shoppers going to grocery stores this week or next week and there is no bread on the shelves. The other issue is there is no feed for animals. If the millers do not have the source wheat, they cannot produce feed for livestock.

Therefore, this is going to be more and more a critical problem for Canadian agriculture, but especially the Canadian economy which is on its knees. I would like to hear a concrete plan from the parliamentary secretary on how these blockades are going to be removed.

● (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are still a lot of conversations going on in the House, and I would just ask those members to take it out into the lobby out of respect for those who are trying to do their late shows.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this important issue.

As we know, rail transportation is deeply embedded in our nation's history. Rail has connected communities from coast to coast and allowed them to grow and prosper. The desire for greater connectivity was one of the drivers of Canadian Confederation, leaving an indelible mark on our shared history.

Efficient, effective and sustainable transportation is still the backbone of our economy today. It is the key to our economy's strength, enabling trade, supporting business, serving as an employer and enabling Canadians to get to their jobs. It is a marvel of interconnected modes of transportation working together. The rail sector employs thousands of Canadians with almost 37,000 employed by it and almost another 4,000 employed in support activities.

Every Canadian purchases, produces or eats something that travels by rail. Whether it is in the car they are driving, the grain our farmers work so hard to produce or the chlorine that is used by municipalities to provide drinking water, products that are transported by rail are as diverse as they are essential. Our manufacturers, farmers and other exporters need an efficient, resilient and reliable rail network. That is why we have said from the beginning that we needed a peaceful and quick resolution to the blockades.

Some people across the aisle wanted a rash and brutal intervention by our armed forces, but this is a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation. Acting in such a reckless way would have been creating a riskier environment for our railways, but also for rail workers and for businesses that depend on rail to get their products to market.

Our government has been working tirelessly and diligently on two fronts. The first is to meaningfully engage with indigenous communities and leaders in order to find both short-term and long-term solutions to the issues that first nations face both on and off

reserves. The second is to mitigate the impact of Canadian blockades both on our economy and on Canadians themselves.

We have been working with the railways to ensure more goods reach communities, including essential commodities like propane and chlorine. We are also supportive of a safe rail transportation network. As we know, rail safety is the minister's top priority, and we have taken serious actions to reinforce the resiliency and safety of transportation over the past four years.

We have also warned that while the right to peaceful protest is fundamental in Canada, anyone who chooses to exercise this right must do so in accordance with the law. We have seen examples of illegal and very dangerous behaviour that could have dire consequences for the people carrying out these acts. Interfering with rail operations is both illegal and extremely dangerous.

In my time today, I have barely scratched the surface of how important Canada's rail system is to Canadians. The prosperity of our country depends on that rail network, and we will never stop working to improve it.

● (1905)

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, this proves my point that this is not a top priority for the Liberal government. I was not asking for a history lesson on Canada's railway system.

Let me put this in perspective. Every day these blockades are in place costs Canadian grain farmers \$9 million. Let me put this into a different perspective. In a little more than two weeks, on March 15, Canadian grain farmers who took money out on the advance payments program through Farm Credit Canada must start paying those loans back at 19% if they miss that deadline.

How are they going to start paying those loans back if they cannot sell their grain because of the illegal blockades on railways across the country, which the Liberal government is doing nothing to end? Where is the plan to ensure these illegal blockades are removed today and in the future? We do not need a history lesson on using the train tracks from one part of the country to another.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I was disappointed on Friday when, during question period, I mentioned that the government was engaged in dialogue and heard laughter from the other side.

I am disappointed by the creation of the misinformation that the Prime Minister or the minister responsible can direct the RCMP. It is unfortunate that the rule of law is not being respected on the other side, and that there is a belief that the police or the army should rush in at the whim of the minister or the Prime Minister. That is not allowed under the rule of law or under the laws of Canada.

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We are going to do what we can do, which is to continue to offer the hands of dialogue and let police do their jobs because we, on this side of the House, trust them.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this august place and speak tonight.

One of the news items today was about the cancellation of the Teck project in Alberta. This is devastating news in Alberta. It is devastating news for the whole country. This is a big mining company, one of the largest in Canada, which had invested more than \$1 billion over 10 years on this project. It would have spent another \$20 billion developing this project with another 7,000 jobs created. It would have meant hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue across the country. That could mean hospitals, schools and roads all over this country from this project.

The company withdrew because it could see that the government was not going to approve it. It could see that there is no reason to invest in the resource sector in this country any longer. It is also a huge message to other organizations and companies outside of this country that say this is not a country to invest in, that this is not a place they want to do business. Billions have left. Billions will not come again.

Another topic is the prison needle exchange program that the government is planning to do. There is a large penitentiary bordering my riding. Many people work in that prison. This is a place where there are not supposed to be drugs. We know there are drugs. There is a place in a hospital setting, a safe setting where they can do drug exchanges in that centre.

However, handing out needles puts staff at risk. The people we pay to take care of prisoners in our jails are now at risk. There is a risk of being poked by a needle if staff members search a prisoner's room or clothes. This means they will have to take a litany of drugs for prevention. This is a horrendous idea.

For prisoners who are addicted to drugs when they go into prison, this is an opportunity for them to get off drugs. Now, this needle exchange program just encourages drug use. Instead of the possibility of prisoners getting off drugs, there will now be even more prisoners on drugs as the needle exchange is permitted in the jails. This is a horrendous idea and should not happen.

This puts many people who work in a tremendously stressful job at risk. The stress this causes is horrendous.

I have one more thing I would like to mention, and I know the parliamentary secretary thinks we are talking about \$5,000 pictures, but not tonight. We are talking about more urgent issues, and we will wait to see how he responds to my question on \$5,000 pictures.

• (1910)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we were here to talk about tourism and the importance of tourism, which was exciting to my heart as a member representing one of the most popular tourism destinations in Canada, the Niagara region, where 15 million peo-

ple visit annually. However, the hon. member did not really pose any questions in regard to that.

I will speak to the issue. I wish he had brought this up earlier so that I could have better information. It is disappointing to hear from Conservatives, not only here but in our provincial legislatures as well, in terms of harm reduction, the view that people who are addicted should be treated as criminals and there is no desire to reach out, provide assistance and use programs that work.

I was very happy to see the Doug Ford government break an election promise in St. Catharines, when it allowed for the creation of a supervised injection site. We have seen the incredible work that is being done. I am sure the hon. member on the other side would scoff and say that we are giving needles to addicts, looking down on the most vulnerable people in our society.

However, the people at Positive Living Niagara who are operating this supervised injection site are saving lives. It is disappointing to see the misinformation being spread by the Conservatives in terms of preventative measures on health. We should look at addiction as a health concern. It is disappointing to see our Conservative friends thinking that police action could solve the problem.

We are seeing thousands of Canadians die every year from the opioid crisis. I believe it was 4,000 last year. We need partners from the Conservative Party to stand up and say that we need evidence-based solutions. I cannot speak specifically to the program that the member has brought up, but I know that the needle exchange in my community is working. It is saving lives. It is helping people. It is stopping the spread of diseases, like HIV and hepatitis C which is on the increase in a place like St. Catharines.

It is truly disappointing. I wish we had a partner in the Conservatives to say that there are science-based solutions to help stop this epidemic. It is sad that we do not have that.

Perhaps there will be a tourism question coming afterwards, and I will be happy to answer it.

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, what I would like to do is read a recommendation regarding the CRTC from a report that just came in. It states:

We recommend...to reduce the maximum number of Commissioners to a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and up to seven additional Commissioners, each appointed for a single term of up to seven years. For the term of their appointment, Commissioners should reside in the National Capital Region or within a prescribed distance thereof.

I read that and think the people in my jurisdiction would think that it has not been made inclusive. It says one has to live in the national capital region. That means someone from western Canada would have to move to Ottawa.

This recommendation fans the flames. It fans the flames like the Teck agreement. This kind of recommendation is not acceptable and should not be instituted by the government.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it is clear the hon. member does not want an answer to the question or he would have asked the question specifically to the parliamentary secretary who is responsible and I would have brought the information required for his answer.

We hear again from the Conservatives that more jails will be the solution to all of society's problems. It has not worked. It did not work under Stephen Harper, and it is not going to work again.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, last month I asked the Minister of Public Safety an important question. I asked if he would support bringing Canada into full alignment with the Palermo protocol. I was a bit alarmed by his response. He did not seem to know what the Palermo protocol was.

I am sure that the parliamentary secretary has been well prepared for this discussion and is aware that the Palermo protocol is an international protocol to prevent, suppress and punish human trafficking.

The parliamentary secretary will know that Canada signed the protocol in 2000 and it was ratified in 2002. The protocol defines three elements of human trafficking.

The first is the act, meaning what is done, including the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.

Second is the means, meaning how it is done, including by use of threat or force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.

Third is the purpose, meaning why it is done, including for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The challenge is that when Canada added the offences of human trafficking to the Criminal Code in 2005, we added another element that departed from the international standard in the Palermo protocol. Canada's Criminal Code defines exploitation in human trafficking offences as follows:

a person exploits another person if they cause them to provide, or offer to provide, labour or a service by engaging in conduct that, in all the circumstances, could reasonably be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety or the safety of a person known to them would be threatened if they failed to provide, or offer to provide, the labour or service.

This extra burden of proof has become a real challenge in securing human trafficking convictions across Canada. Proving exploitation requires evidence that a reasonable person standing in the shoes of the survivor would be afraid or fearful. The problem with that is that in many cases of human trafficking, there may not be fear of any kind.

For example, the Palermo protocol lists fraud, deception and abuse of power as examples of how traffickers might exploit someone. In cases of trafficking involving these examples, fear is quite unlikely to be present.

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We know that in Canada the most common types of human trafficking cases involve the Romeo pimp, or boyfriend pimp, where a young girl or woman is exploited by a person she believes to be her lover or boyfriend. Police see this over and over again.

In these cases, police know the girl is being trafficked but she has no fear of her trafficker. She is in love with him, and in many cases the hands of the police are tied, even when she becomes fearful. It could take months before the trafficker becomes violent or the first time she disobeys him or tries to leave, but she is being trafficked the whole time.

I suspect that the parliamentary secretary has prepared a response about how Canada is fully in alignment with the Palermo protocol, and will talk about the national hotline and the strategy they finally released last September, three years after it expired.

I am proud to say that the alignment of the offences with the Palermo protocol is part of the Conservative Party's platform and would like to see this as a priority for the government.

● (1920)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, human trafficking is a heinous crime and a human rights offence. Our government is committed to strengthening its efforts to combat human trafficking and better protect its victims, who are among our society's most vulnerable.

We are proud to be one of the first countries to ratify, in 2002, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This is one of the three protocols under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo convention. The protocol articulates the most widely accepted international framework to address human trafficking.

It is important to bear in mind that the Criminal Code's human trafficking offences go beyond the minimum legal requirements imposed by the Palermo protocol. For instance, the Criminal Code criminalizes broader human trafficking-related conduct than what is required by the protocol, and imposes penalties up to life imprisonment for certain circumstances. Furthermore, the main trafficking offence does not require proof that the recruitment, transportation or harbouring was effected through illicit means.

Human trafficking is not only difficult to find; it is an incredibly complex crime to prove, with arms reaching into the financial sector, organized crime, law enforcement and beyond. However, its under-the-radar nature makes it more important that we are not complacent. We are aware that 95% of human trafficking victims in Canada were female, 70% were under the age of 25 and one-quarter were under the age of 18.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Government of Canada is taking action to combat this crime both domestically and abroad. We recently announced the new national strategy to combat human trafficking, a whole-of-government approach that brings together federal initiatives under one strategic framework. The framework aligns with the internationally recognized pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. The comprehensive national strategy is supported by an investment of \$57 million over five years and \$10 million ongoing.

It is important to note that the national strategy builds on existing federal anti-human trafficking initiatives, which have continued since the national action plan to combat human trafficking came to an end in 2016. We are proud that the new national strategy includes a new pillar of empowerment to ensure that there is a greater focus on enhancing support services to victims and survivors affected by this crime.

Under the new empowerment pillar, the Government of Canada will soon launch a survivor-led advisory committee. This committee will provide a formal platform to hear views and experiences of victims and survivors to help inform our efforts in combatting this crime. Through the prevention pillar, the government will seek to increase public awareness of human trafficking and build capacity in strategic areas to prevent human trafficking from occurring in Canada and internationally.

Canada will also continue to protect victims and potential victims from this crime, including through supporting organizations that provide critical services to victims and survivors. We will coordinate with law enforcement outreach operations to proactively identify potential victims in human trafficking. We will also enhance compliance under the temporary foreign workers program.

New initiatives under the national strategy will focus on a victim-centric criminal justice system, while building on the efforts to prosecute offenders. The national strategy will strengthen partnerships to ensure a collaborative and coordinated national response to human trafficking.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the problem with requiring fear in trafficking cases is that the burden is placed on the victims. A 2013 review of our human trafficking offences highlights that this “standard focuses scrutiny and inquiry on the inner work-

ings of a victim’s mind rather than on a trafficker’s actions and, hence, makes the victim’s testimony crucially important to the case.” It further notes, “Given this complexity in proving exploitation, one can understand why prosecutors have shied away from human trafficking charges or allowed the charge to be dropped in the plea bargain process.” Our laws need to be written in a way that can help the police and prosecutors bring justice to human traffickers instead of being an obstacle.

In the last Parliament, the member for Oshawa tabled a bill that would bring our human trafficking offences in line with the Palermo protocol. Having spoken to law enforcement and NGOs across Canada, I can attest that this is their desire as well.

Would the parliamentary secretary be willing to consider the bill when it comes back to the House, or, even better, would the government bring it forward itself when it brings forward other legislation? From the parliamentary secretary's response, I am not convinced that the government understands the issue.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the passion from the hon. member and that he wants to make it easier to convict people of this heinous crime. There is, however, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the burden of proof, which is “beyond a reasonable doubt”.

Even though we would all like to see the bad people go to jail, we have to ensure that laws are crafted in a way that respects the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is why I am proud of the government's actions with regard to this heinous crime and the work that is being done.

I would be happy to see recommendations, but they would have to be in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:24 p.m.)

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