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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Constituency

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Chippewas of Nawash
ATTN: Chief Greg Nadjiwon
135 lakeshore Blvd.
Neyaashiinigiing, ON N0H 2T0

Alex Ruff, MSC, CD
Member of Parliament
Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound

15 June 2021

Dear Chief Nadjiwon,

Thank you for forwarding me a copy of your letter to the Prime Minister, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Minister of Indigenous Services regarding the tragedy at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. I appreciate being included in important correspondence as it helps me stay up to date on current issues and assist the community when possible. As well, I appreciated you taking my phone call last week.

In your letter, you call on the government to implement the TRC Calls to Action 71-76, Missing Children and Burial Information. I'd note, the Hon. Erin O'Toole also wrote a letter to the Prime Minister dated 31 May 2021, calling upon the government to fund the investigation into all former residential schools in Canada where unmarked graves may exist, ensure proper resources are provided to commemorate the losses, and develop educational resources for Canadians of all ages to learn about the tragic history of residential schools in Canada. Further, this is consistent with the NDP Opposition Motion on June 7th. This motion was passed with support by MPs from all parties with the exception of the Prime Minister and Cabinet who abstained from the vote.

Finally, I have included my related interjection during last week's debate on the NDP motion where I quoted the late Chief Wilmer Nadjiwon. Your community has been in my thoughts during these difficult times and tragic findings.

Yours truly,

Alex Ruff, MSC, CD
Member of Parliament
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound

Enclosed:

- (1) Copy of letter to the Prime Minister from the Hon. Erin O'Toole (2021-05-31)
- (2) NDP Opposition Motion (2021-06-07)
- (3) My interjection in the House of Commons (2021-06-03)

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HON. ERIN O'TOOLE, P.C., C.D., M.P.
L'HON. ERIN O'TOOLE, C.P., C.D., DÉPUTÉ
LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION / CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION OFFICIELLE

May 31, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin P.J. Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

Canadians are grieving since they learned the remains of 215 residential school children were found in a mass grave in Kamloops. This is a heartbreaking reminder of the pain Indigenous children, their families, and communities were subjected to through residential schools. I believe that Canada's Parliament needs to show our commitment to reconciliation, and your government must take immediate action to address this unspeakable discovery, and support the Indigenous communities, and a country, in mourning.

As your government indicated in the media, Cabinet will deliberate on the next steps that should be taken. We look forward to a quick announcement regarding your decision and would like to offer some suggestions about meaningful actions that can assist families and communities in their time of sorrow. Specifically, we recommend:

- Developing a comprehensive plan to implement TRC Calls to Action 71 through 76 by July 1, 2021;
- Funding the investigation at all former residential schools in Canada where unmarked graves may exist, including the site where 215 children have already been discovered;
- Ensuring that proper resources are allocated for communities to reinter, commemorate, and honour any individuals discovered through the investigation, according to the wishes of their next of kin; and
- Developing a detailed and thorough set of resources to educate Canadians of all ages on the tragic history of residential schools in Canada.

Conservatives urge meaningful action on this issue. We also recognize that it will take time for such a proposal to translate into resources on the ground.

That said, we need to act now. There is currently legislation before Parliament that can help our nation heal and take steps towards reconciliation.

Last week we joined the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Perry Bellegarde, in his call for the government to prioritize Bill C-5, regarding the establishment of a day for Truth and Reconciliation. To your credit, you changed the agenda to allow the bill to be debated and passed.

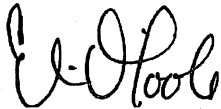
However, Bill C-8, an Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), has been languishing at report stage since February. In the spirit of cooperation, I ask that you call this legislation for debate, so it can be sent to the Senate this week.

While flying flags at half mast, emergency debates, and more Cabinet discussions are important, Parliament can and should act immediately.

We must work together to ensure we bring our dark history to light, acknowledge it, learn from it, and ensure nothing like it ever happens again.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter as we all walk the path towards reconciliation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. O'Toole', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Erin O'Toole, P.C., C.D., M.P.
Leader of the Official Opposition

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Pursuant to order made Monday, January 25, 2021, the House proceeded to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of Mr. Singh (Burnaby South), seconded by Mr. Angus (Timmins–James Bay), – That, given that,

- (i) the discovery of the grave of 215 children at Kamloops Indian Residential School has led to an outpouring of grief and anger across Canada,
- (ii) the vast majority of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action remain uncompleted, despite the clear path to justice and reconciliation that the Commission provides,
- (iii) survivors, families and nations are demanding concrete action to advance real reconciliation, as opposed to just more words and symbolic gestures,

the House call on the government to:

- (a) cease its belligerent and litigious approach to justice for Indigenous children by immediately dropping its appeal before the Federal Court in file numbers T-1621-19 (compensation) and T-1559-20 (Jordan's Principle for non-status First Nations kids recognized by their nations) and to recognize the government's legal obligation to fully comply with Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders in this regard;
- (b) agree to sit down with the St. Anne's residential school survivors organization Peetabeck Keway Keykaywin Association to find a just solution to the fact that survivors' access to justice has been denied as a consequence of the actions of government lawyers in suppressing evidence at the Independent Assessment Process;
- (c) accelerate the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, including by providing immediate funding for further investigation into the deaths and disappearances of children at residential schools in compliance with calls to action 71 to 76;
- (d) provide survivors, their families, and their communities with appropriate resources to assist with the emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, and cultural trauma resulting from residential schools; and
- (e) within 10 days, table a progress report on actions taken in compliance with paragraphs (a) through (d) of the present motion, and that this report be deemed to have been referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for consideration upon tabling.

The question was put on the motion and it was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 131 – Vote n° 131)

YEAS: 271, NAYS: 0

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Business of Supply]

(1025)

[English]

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Action Toward Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

(2021-06-03)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):

Madam Speaker, considering the minister's military background, I think he will appreciate this.

I would like to read from the late Nawash Chief Wilmer Nadjiwon's book, *Not Wolf, Nor Dog*. He wrote:

The effects of going to Spanish [residential school] were worse than the post traumatic effects of a soldier on the battle field; I know ... I was there, and soldiered as an infantryman for most of the Italian Campaign in World War II. When I returned to Canada, I brought some of the battlefield demons with me and they were hard to chase from my mind, but I was eventually able to forget them.

Not so when it came to the residential school. The life I had for the most of six years in the Spanish Residential School cannot be erased. What I experienced there from early spring 1930 to 1935 cannot be erased. It has been a burden in so many ways for the full extent of my life.

Is the minister going to support the motion today?

[Expand]

Hon. Marc Miller:

Madam Speaker, indeed, there are some uneasy parallels to people who have served and have had post-traumatic stress. The residential school system has broken people, languages and culture. My colleague for the Northwest Territories, whom I sat with on the bench for a year in Parliament, has certainly given poignant testimony as to those effects.

We will be continuing to support indigenous communities and those around Kamloops as they navigate this very difficult path. We will provide the supports necessary, and we will continue to reform the child and family services to bring the country to the height of what people expect it to be.