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HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS ACT

**BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—
DEBATE CONTINUED**

Speech by:

The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Thursday, October 25, 2018

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Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable colleagues, I rise today to support Bill C-374, An Act to amend the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to increase the number of members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and to provide for First Nations, Inuit and Metis representation on the board. It also modifies the entitlements of board members.

This bill came to us from the other place and was a private member's bill put forward by Member of Parliament John Aldag. This call to action was indeed recommendation 79 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The role of the board is critically important. Through their work, sites, events and individuals are recognized for their historic importance to Canada and major contributions to the development of Canada. The monuments and places in our history which have shaped our country.

I believe the resulting plaques in English, French and some in Indigenous languages across the country are key contributors to the knowledge of our history, and are increasing in importance as the study of history and geography in our schools seems to be diminishing.

Indeed, today I think only four provinces still have history in their high school curriculum. The others incorporating it, to a degree, in social studies programs. I remain concerned about the lack of knowledge of our own country in our country. That history, which is the foundation of today and the basis for so much of not only what we do in this chamber but in so many decisions being made across the country in every field.

The research undertaken by the board and the staff at the department in designating sites is thorough. My husband was a member of the board for a number of years. I can attest to the commitment of all members. The piles of documents to be read, commented on and additional research undertaken for each meeting by every member.

Historians, archivists, architects and political scientists are only some of the professions which make up the collective expertise on the board, an expertise essential in meeting the criteria for designation.

I want to thank the library staff for finding me a full list of all designated Aboriginal sites. I could not find such a site in my own research and on the Web.

There have been 192 Indigenous designations, the earliest being made in 1920. In the 1920s, there were indeed 20 designations of Aboriginal sites. Most, however, have been designated in the last 18 years.

As Senator Harder noted, there was an increase in designations of 31 per cent between 1990 and 2015 — those designations at 31 per cent being Aboriginal sites. However, those designations were made without proper Indigenous representation on the board, and thus without Indigenous voices at the table during the designation process. There has, however, been consultation with the Indigenous communities, but honestly, in my view, I do not think that is enough. And I can tell you personally that 20 years and 25 years ago, this was noted as a major concern.

It is important that our history, our story, be told in full — the good, the bad, the warts and the highs — and that it be told honestly. Removing parts of our history to tell the nice, one-sided story is wrong. Our history is not all rosy, and we must tell it honestly with all the facts and from various viewpoints.

This revision was one of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings, Call to Action No. 79, and I truly hope it will be endorsed by the Senate. I hope it will move to committee soon.

I also sincerely hope that this lack of expertise at the board, a serious omission, will be rectified as soon as this legislation is proclaimed.