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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, March 22, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 22, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PROCESS USED TO DETERMINE LIBERAL CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I have given the necessary one hour notice to the Chair of my intention to rise on such a point.

I rise on a question of privilege today related to the departure from the Liberal caucus of the hon. member for Whitby. At its heart, I believe this is a breach of privilege flowing from a violation of section 49.8 of the Parliament of Canada Act. Allow me to explain.

On Wednesday of this week, just before question period, we learned the news of the hon. member for Whitby becoming an independent, which happened shortly after the weekly caucus meeting of the Liberal Party had broken up.

Later that afternoon, the CBC aired an interview with the hon. member, conducted by Chris Rands, a producer with that network. She told Mr. Rands:

I just think it was important to, you know, I understand that there's a lot of people that supported me that were disappointed in, you know, what I did, doing the interview that I did, and I think that it's important to understand that, you know, while I support the values and principles of the Liberal Party, that it might be good since that message did go out, that I sit as an independent for the rest of the term that I'm here.

There was more, but I will leave it there.

Those are words that I have read to the House, but I do urge the Chair to review the footage of that interview. I say this, and I want to tread delicately here, because it was the demeanour of the member that particularly struck me during that interview. The member seemed disappointed, to put it politely.

What I, and what many who watched that interview, saw was someone who was not just disappointed to part ways with her colleagues, which is understandable, or even a touch of regret with the decision, but that I saw and what I think most people would have seen was a visceral look of shock.

I do not speak about this to put the member for Whitby in an awkward place but because I genuinely believe that her so-called resignation is what some might describe as “a negotiated resignation”.

Picture the ultimatum that may have been put to her as I have perceived it, that she had until the end of the day to resign or she would be kicked out, and that it was her decision. That last part sounds familiar.

My point is that I truly believe the hon. member for Whitby was, or was threatened to be, kicked out of the Liberal caucus, that is to say her departure from caucus was not a free and voluntary action on her part.

That brings me to section 49.2 of the Parliament of Canada Act. This section provides:

A member of a caucus may only be expelled from it if:

(a) the caucus chair has received a written notice signed by at least 20% of the members of the caucus requesting that the member's membership be reviewed; and

(b) the expulsion of the member is approved by secret ballot by a majority of all caucus members.

Next, I want to refer to portions of section 49.8 of the act:

49.8 (1) At its first meeting following a general election, the caucus of every party that has a recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the House of Commons shall conduct a separate vote among the caucus members in respect of each of the following questions:

(a) whether sections 49.2 and 49.3 are to apply in respect of the caucus:

....

(3) The vote of each caucus member, in each vote, is to be recorded.

(4) The provisions referred to in each of paragraphs (1)(a) to (d) apply only if a majority of all caucus members vote in favour of their applicability.

...

(6) The outcome of each vote is binding on the caucus until the next dissolution of Parliament.

These provisions were added to the law in 2015 after the Reform Act, 2014 was enacted, a private member's bill sponsored and championed by the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. It was a bill that was supported by several members of the Liberal caucus who today sit in the House, including the right honourable member for Papineau.

It was reported by the Canadian Press on November 5, 2015, that the Liberal caucus failed to conduct the votes required by section 49.8 of the act. Also at the time, the Ottawa Citizen reported that, “rather than vote yes or no to each of the four provisions, Liberal MPs voted during their first caucus meeting on Thursday to send the issue to the party's biannual convention in Winnipeg next year.”

Privilege

As for the vote specifically applying to section 49.2 of the act, the intergovernmental affairs minister, who was then the government House leader, was quoted at the time as saying, “Do you want a discussion in a caucus now of 184 people to reflect on what may be personal, sensitive, family matters? That is something that we weren’t prepared to decide or vote on now.” He went on to say, “I don’t know if in all circumstances it would be appropriate or even desirable...to have a caucus seized of all kinds of this personal and complicated information.”

With all due respect to the member, who is a veteran of this place, that is not what Parliament has, by the act of Parliament, ordered to happen in each parliamentary caucus after each general election. Deferring the mandatory votes to a party convention is also not an available option. Needing to bring party machinery into line is perhaps an argument to vote no to the proposals, but it is not a legitimate reason to avoid voting, which is, to say, to break the law.

After I had finished my prepared notes for this morning, I came across a Toronto Star article from this morning in which the member for Scarborough—Guildwood is quoted in reflecting on those votes that did not happen. The article says, “Asked if there had been a recorded vote, [the member for Scarborough—Guildwood] shook his head. ‘Nothing like that ever happens in caucus, it’s very straightforward, it’s consensus. Nobody ever really opposed it.’”

That is from yesterday’s Toronto Star in an article by Tonda MacCharles. Again, it is further confirmation from a sitting member of the Liberal caucus that those four votes did not happen as required by law.

Further, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills has written to the current Minister of Justice and Attorney General seeking clarity on whether or not the law was applied in that case. He has publicly stated that a letter would be forthcoming, clarifying one way or the other. Again, the House should be seized with the fact that the letter is expected and should have matters of substance in it to the matter at hand.

Going forward to the questions at hand, because of the events this week, these issues have rushed to the foreground and to the matters before the House. Tonda MacCharles of the Toronto Star wrote that, “Who decides who’s in and who’s out of Liberal caucus? Is it the prime minister? Is it caucus? You can be forgiven for not knowing.”

The article later reminds us that the Prime Minister “suggested it would be his call, telling reporters he was ‘reflecting’ on their future”, referring both to the member for Vancouver Granville and Markham—Stouffville.

As my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, has pointed out, the authority to expel a member of the Liberal caucus is questionable, because the Prime Minister and his leadership team deprived Liberal MPs of being able to exercise their rights at their first caucus meeting following the 2015 election. It is because of that that I believe the hon. member for Whitby has had her own rights disregarded. Her departure from caucus occurred without the safeguards and due process for backbenchers that the Reform Act contemplated. That is why I am raising this question of privilege today, and I believe that it meets the requirements for

timeliness. Indeed, this is the first occasion where a consequence of the failure to vote in 2015 has come to a head.

As for the matter of honouring the statute law, I recognize that Speakers in the past have generally declined to intervene on questions of law. However, this is no regular question of law. The collective privileges of the House of Commons include the right to regulate its internal affairs, which is sometimes also known as the privilege of exclusive cognizance.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition, Bosc and Gagnon, observes on page 122 that:

The right to regulate its own internal affairs does not mean that the House is above the law. However, where the application of statute law relates to a proceeding in Parliament or a matter covered by privilege, it is the House itself which decides how the law is to apply and the House’s decision cannot be reviewed in the courts.

Reference has been made to this in paragraph 34 of the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *Canada (House of Commons) v. Vaid*, which interested members can search out if they are so curious, and I know many members would be curious.

• (1010)

At page 183 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, it states:

The privilege of control over its own affairs and the proceedings is one of the most significant attributes of an independent legislative institution.

The right to regulate its own internal affairs and procedures free from interference includes:

...

4. The right to administer that part of the statute law relating to its internal procedure without interference from the courts.

I would also like to refer the chair to page 102 of *Erskine May*, 23rd Edition, which states:

Both Houses retain the right to be the sole judge of the lawfulness of their own proceedings, and to settle or depart from their own codes of procedure. This is equally the case where the House in question is dealing with a matter which is finally decided by its sole authority, such as an order or resolution, or whether (like a bill) it is a joint concern of both Houses. The principle holds good even where the procedure of a House or the rights of its Members or officers who take part in its proceedings depends on statute.

Statutory requirements may previously have been adjudicated as matters of privilege in our House in the past. For example, on April 19, 1993, on page 18,105 of the Debates, the Chair held that the failure to produce a document required to be laid upon the table under the terms of the Customs Tariff constituted a *prima facie* case of privilege. Mr. Speaker Fraser, at the time, said the following:

As the hon. member succinctly stated when this very issue was raised in February 1992: “Subsection 59.5 of the Customs Tariff is a statutory provision and statutes of the highest form of command that can be given by this House. In my view the disregard of that legislative command, even if unintentional, is an affront to the authority and dignity of Parliament as a whole and of this House in particular.

It is an opinion that I share and that I expect to prevail in this Chamber. The statutory laws which have been agreed to by members of this House do serve a purpose and are meant to be respected.

...

The requirements contained in our rules and statutory laws have been agreed upon by this House and constitute an agreement which I think all of us realize must be respected.

Privilege

More recently, statutory provisions in the Canada Elections Act concerning the right of members to sit and vote were held by the Speaker's immediate predecessor to be matters for the House of Commons to adjudicate. These rulings can be found at pages 18,550 of the Debates for June 18, 2013, and page 9,183 of the Debates for November 4, 2014.

The importance of this House adjudicating requirements of section 49.8 of the Parliament of Canada Act are underscored by section 49.7, a provision which lawyers would refer to as a privative clause because it ousts the jurisdiction of the courts to conduct judicial review.

If you, Mr. Speaker, decline to exercise jurisdiction to entertain breaches of the statute here, then members of caucuses, like the Liberal caucus who flagrantly ignore the law, have no protection and no recourse when their rights are trampled. Because of the lack of judicial recourse, general restraint on Speakers interpreting the law and the House's privilege to manage internal affairs, I respectfully submit that the way forward, indeed the only way forward, is to allow the House to deal with this matter.

Accordingly, I urge you to find a prima facie case of privilege. I would, therefore, be prepared to move a motion to refer the matter to the procedure and House affairs committee so as to allow it to investigate this specific instance and to consider the best way forward to allow for the enforcement of the requirement to conduct votes under section 49.8 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

●(1015)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Perth—Wellington for his intervention. Obviously, this will be something that will need to be taken under advisement and looked into carefully. The matters that he raises with respect to the laws that impact on the circumstance that he describes and their relationship to privilege becomes the matter that will take some looking into in this particular case.

I am mindful of the time. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is on his feet.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will come back to the House business. However, initially in listening to the member across the way, it raises some concern in regard to why this mischievous behaviour, at the best of times, comes from the Conservative Party. I want to briefly highlight a couple of things that members and the Speaker might want to take into consideration.

One could reflect, for example, on the member for Beauce, and the level of discomfort that was very obvious with that particular member going from seat to seat and then ultimately leaving the party to start a new party. Probably a better example, which Canadians would be very familiar with, was with the member for Cumberland—Colchester, an individual of great integrity, when Stephen Harper made the promise of the Atlantic Accord and there was an accord that was in place, and a motion.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

●(1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, all I ask is to be heard. Other members want to heckle. I was very patient in listening.

Here I would draw the comparison of having a member of the Conservatives, who at the time was being assured that he could deal with the issue in whatever way he would like to—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter that has been posed by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington, as I indicated to him, will be taken under advisement. It would not be the intention at this point to begin to debate these matters. I have heard sufficiently from the hon. member for Perth—Wellington as to understanding the issue he is commenting upon and raising a question about on whether there has been any kind of a breach of privilege.

When we start into debate on different other examples, I am mindful of the fact that generally matters of caucus proceedings—and I said “generally”—are not matters for the Speaker to preside upon. These are matters that are taken up by respective parties in their caucus. While they use the spaces here at Parliament for their proceedings, with regard to those proceedings themselves, other than the specific instances as were referred to in the Parliament of Canada Act, there is no particular jurisdiction of the Speaker in relation to those matters.

With that in mind, the hon. parliamentary secretary noted at his opening that he might wish to come back and address the House on this particular question of privilege.

I saw the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Is this on the same question of privilege?

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Perth—Wellington for raising this point of privilege in the House and indicate that I concur with the points he has made and would briefly add to those points, for your benefit, Mr. Speaker.

First, I believe that this matter is timely, because today is the first day of this Parliament that we have confirmation, from the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, that the four recorded votes did not take place in the first meeting of a recognized party in this House of Commons in this Parliament. To be clear, a recorded vote, as required under subsection 49.8(3), has a very specific process to be followed. It is not a show of hands. It is a recorded vote, much the same as we take recorded divisions in this House of Commons.

Finally, the point I want to make is that the patriation reference of 1981 made it clear that constitutional conventions could not be adjudicated by the courts, could not be taken to the courts to defend rights of members of Parliament. It also made it clear that section 18 rights, immunities and privileges, are also to be adjudicated, not in the judicial branch of government, but in this legislative branch of the state of the government.

With the matter in front of us, it is up to this chamber and you, Mr. Speaker, to adjudicate this matter. I hope that you find a prima facie case that privilege has been breached.

Privilege

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-96, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

* * *

● (1025)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF CAUCUS CONFIDENTIALITY

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following my notice to you, I am rising on a question of privilege concerning a leak from Wednesday's meeting of the Ontario Liberal caucus. The leaks were reported in an online article posted on cbc.ca Wednesday evening, entitled "[Member for Markham—Stouffville] faced 'tough' questions from Liberal MPs in [today's] regional caucus meeting". The first two paragraphs of the article make the following disclosures:

[The member for Markham—Stouffville], who resigned from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet earlier this month over the SNC-Lavalin affair, faced a barrage of tough questions from her Liberal colleagues [today] during a closed-door session of the Ontario caucus, sources told CBC News.

[The member for Markham—Stouffville] addressed the group at the beginning of the meeting, which lasted 30 minutes longer than scheduled and was described by people in the room as "rough" and "uncomfortable."

The sixth paragraph of the article states:

Today, some of her fellow Liberal MPs reminded her that others in the caucus had made compromises on sensitive issues such as medical assistance in dying — one of the key pieces of legislation [the member for Markham—Stouffville] fronted as health minister, along with then-justice minister [the hon. member for Vancouver Granville].

Meanwhile, this online article was expanded upon by CBC reporter Katie Simpson, who appeared on Wednesday's edition of *Power & Politics*. I will quote from a transcript of her presentation, which states, "What CBC News can confirm through multiple sources is that when Ontario Liberal MPs met for their weekly meeting this morning, [the hon. member for Markham—Stouffville], who was there, was really the focus of attention at the meeting, and she faced a series of difficult questions about her actions. She, of course, very publicly quit and criticized the Prime Minister, but did not leave caucus when she decided to quit. What we are also told is that while these questions were being asked, the member was also reminded by some of her colleagues of some of the sacrifices and compromises they made to help her with some of her projects like getting the assisted dying legislation passed.... So the meeting went 30 minutes longer than it normally would go. It is described by sources as 'rough' and 'uncomfortable' and 'rocky', but we do know that Liberals that we were speaking with today, while these concerns may exist privately, this is a group of Liberal Ontario MPs that held this meeting."

In a Canadian Press article entitled "Conservatives plan filibuster after Liberals shut down...motion", also published Wednesday evening, it was reported:

Despite the efforts to unite and put the affair behind them, one source said [the hon. member for Markham—Stouffville] faced a "frank and emotional" session with her Ontario caucus colleagues prior to the national caucus meeting she did not attend....

The source spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to publicly discuss confidential caucus matters.

Every single one of us in this House was elected as a member of a party. We sit or have sat in caucuses. Caucus confidentiality is the cornerstone of parliamentary life. That is something we understand clearly, and that is very valuable to me as the national Conservative caucus chairman. It is not because we want to be furtive or secretive; it is because we need to be able to have frank and candid conversations among colleagues without the embarrassment or opprobrium that these exchanges are at risk of producing.

I generally sympathize with the hon. member for Markham—Stouffville. She did something extraordinary on the strength of her principles and convictions by resigning her ministerial commission. She does not deserve the treatment she has received, nor the embarrassment and scorn heaped upon her by her colleagues, including through this caucus leak. The same goes for the treatment that she received after being hidden from, and deterred or intimidated from attending this week's votes, as we heard from the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill in another question of privilege.

Caucus proceedings are discussed on page 34 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Third Edition. It states:

Although each caucus operates differently, most limit attendance to parliamentarians.

Because they are held in camera, caucus meetings allow Members to express their views and opinions freely on any matter which concerns them. Policy positions are elaborated, along with, in the case of the government party, the government's legislative proposals. Caucus provides a forum in which Members can debate their policy differences among themselves without compromising—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I thank the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for his question of privilege and presentation. Again, I am mindful of the time. As I mentioned in an earlier intervention, the matter of caucus proceedings is generally not within the purview. I think we all understand the characteristics of them.

I am certain that the hon. member is going to link this matter as it relates to his specific concern about a potential breach of privilege. I do not know that it is necessary to repeat the various instances of this, but if he could get to the connection he is trying to make with this particular scenario in the next few minutes, it would be appreciated. As was mentioned earlier, questions of privilege are important, but they are also not a means by which the time of the House can be taken up unnecessarily.

The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

● (1030)

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I have a particular passion around this, in respect of being elected by the Conservative caucus in regard to the democratic reform bill. I think I speak for all members that their ability to be able to speak confidentially is important to the entire House, and that is why I am raising this point. I will get to some quotes in regard to parliamentary procedure. Page 57 of Australia's House of Representatives Practice reads:

Privilege

All parties have party meetings in sitting weeks but usually at times when the House is not sitting. The proceedings of party meetings are regarded as confidential, and the detail of discussions is not normally made public. These meetings provide the forum, particularly for backbenchers, for internal party discussion of party policy, parliamentary activity, parliamentary tactics, the resolution of internal party disputes, the election of officers, and they provide a means of exerting backbench pressure on, and communication with, its leaders [for accountability].

Breaches in caucus confidentiality have been treated so seriously in the past as to have been held to be matters of privilege. First, I would refer the Speaker to the question of privilege raised on October 17, 1973 by David Lewis, the leader of the New Democratic Party. Mr. Lewis reported to the House the following sequence of events:

I learned at about two o'clock...that we had a bug at our caucus meeting this morning. During the meeting...the hon. member for Oshawa—Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), who is our caucus chairman, pulled a little [microphone] out from under the table, put it on top of the table, and said to me and to others: "This looks like a bugging device". Having no knowledge of such things, I could not tell him whether it was or [was] not and we went on with the meeting.

Speaker Lamoureux then ruled, at page 6943 of the Debates, "it is obvious to the Chair that there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege involving the type of situation which is normally investigated and looked into by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections."

Instead of referring the matter for a committee to study, and because the source of the surveillance device had voluntarily identified himself and was co-operative—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, to a certain degree, you have already made reference to the content of the matter when raising a question of privilege. I want to add that it is important to point out to you and all members of the House that the rules around questions of privilege are very clear. They are intended to be short interventions that provide facts about an alleged breach. They are not meant to be a tool to monopolize the House's time or to obstruct debate.

I would ask that the Speaker enforce this rule as it relates to a question of privilege. I would suggest that you have even provided extra grace time when the member was reflecting about caucus, which is not the purview of the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for reiterating essentially the basis of my remarks on this as well. As I mentioned to the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook, he is taking up, at least at this point, the issue around his concern about how a potential breach of privilege is informed. I am going to ask him to get to that. It is not necessary at this stage to reach further back in terms of precedence. I get the point that he is making in his submission. We will try to wrap up and get on with other matters before the House.

The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I can sum it up in about 90 seconds with a quote from a Speaker who was formerly with the Liberal Party. On March 25, 2004, Speaker Milliken found a prima facie case of privilege concerning the recording disclosure to the media and subsequent publication of confidential proceedings in a meeting of the Ontario Liberal caucus. In that case, the Speaker's own investigation determined that a human error had been made with respect to the broadcasting equipment present in the room.

Despite learning that it was a human error, the Speaker said:

The crux of the matter for the Chair is not the leak of this information, but the publication of leaked information that was manifestly from a private meeting. The concept of caucus confidentiality is central to the operations of the House and to the work of all hon. members. The decision to publish information leaked from a caucus meeting is, in my view, an egregious example of a cavalier and contemptuous attitude to the privacy of all members and that privacy is something upon which all members depend to do their work. It is a situation in my view that cannot go unanswered.

Accordingly, having examined the situation in the matter of the publication of a leak from the caucus meeting of February 25, I find that there is a prima facie breach of privilege and I am prepared to entertain a motion at this time.

I will sum up with that last quote. That pretty well summarizes exactly why I think you, Mr. Speaker, should get involved in this case. Should you find a prima facie case of privilege, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion. I appreciate the opportunity to present the case.

● (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

I have a notice of a question of privilege for the hon. member for Durham. As the House knows, we generally take these up in the order in which they have been submitted.

Is the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton adding to the same question of privilege as was just introduced by the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: No, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY TO MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising further to the question of privilege that was raised on Monday by the NDP House leader from New Westminster—Burnaby regarding members misleading the House.

I can assure the chair I will not be repeating the interventions that were heard on Monday afternoon. I will be addressing two themes. I will be brief and concise. The first will be to offer additional evidence of the contradictions on the parliamentary record. The second will be to elaborate on an alternative angle mentioned by my own House leader.

As we heard previously on February 7, the Attorney General told the House:

As the Prime Minister has said, earlier today, these allegations in *The Globe and Mail* are false.

There were of course several variants on that answer through question period that day.

Then on February 8, the Attorney General's parliamentary secretary told the House, among other things:

As the Prime Minister said very clearly yesterday to the journalists gathered, the allegations contained in *The Globe and Mail* article are false.

I want to now turn to the actual allegations incorporated by the reference into these blanket denials given to the House and now part of the contradictory evidence before the House. There are a few quotations here, for which I apologize in advance; they are, however, critical to establishing the contradictions given to the House.

Privilege

The Globe and Mail headline was, “PMO pressed justice minister to abandon prosecution of SNC-Lavalin”. It was written by Robert Fife, Steven Chase and Sean Fine, and it was printed on page A1 in the February 7, 2019 edition of the newspaper.

In the article's first paragraph, we learn:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office attempted to press Jody Wilson-Raybould when she was justice minister to intervene in the corruption and fraud prosecution of Montreal engineering and construction giant SNC-Lavalin Group Inc., sources say, but she refused to ask federal prosecutors to make a deal with the company that could prevent a costly trial.

The most eloquent rebuttal here would be simply to quote the former attorney general's own words at the justice committee on February 27, which are at page 2 of the evidence. She said:

For a period of approximately four months, between September and December of 2018, I experienced a consistent and sustained effort by many people within the government to seek to politically interfere in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in my role as the Attorney General of Canada in an inappropriate effort to secure a deferred prosecution agreement with SNC-Lavalin.

These events involved 11 people, excluding myself and my political staff, from the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office and the office of the Minister of Finance. This included in-person conversations, telephone calls, emails and text messages. There were approximately 10 phone calls and 10 meetings specifically about SNC, and I and/or my staff were a part of these meetings.

Within these conversations, there were express statements regarding the necessity of interference in the SNC-Lavalin matter, the potential for consequences and veiled threats if a DPA was not made available to SNC. These conversations culminated on December 19, 2018, with a conversation I had with the Clerk of the Privy Council.

For his part, the Prime Minister's longest-serving and closest adviser, Gerald Butts, told the justice committee on the morning of March 6, at page 22 of the evidence, “Well, I think that 20 points of contact over four months are not a lot of contact”.

However, the former president of the Treasury Board, the hon. member for Markham—Stouffville, had a different view in her recent sensational Maclean's interview. She said, “Whether there is one attempt to interfere or whether there are 20 attempts to interfere, that crosses ethical and constitutional lines.”

Members may recall what the Attorney General told the House on February 7:

[T]he Prime Minister dealt with this matter very clearly earlier today. He stated that neither he nor anyone in his office pressured my predecessor or myself to come to any particular decision in this matter.

As the Prime Minister stated earlier today, the allegations contained in The Globe and Mail article are false.

The following day, his parliamentary secretary told the House, “at no point has the current Minister of Justice or the former minister of justice been pressured or directed by the Prime Minister or anyone in the Prime Minister's Office, including the individual just mentioned”. He was referring to Gerry Butts.

We now know that these denials were outright wrong. Either the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary misled the House or someone misled them to that end.

Turning to the Globe and Mail article, at the sixth paragraph we read:

Sources say [the member for Vancouver Granville], who was justice minister and attorney-general until she was shuffled to Veterans Affairs early this year, came under heavy pressure to persuade the Public Prosecution Service of Canada to change its mind.

At page 3 of the evidence from the former attorney general's justice committee appearance, she outlined the September 17 conversation with the Prime Minister. It was a back-and-forth exchange of at least four rounds, which culminated in a statement that produced goosebumps. She said, “I was quite taken aback. My response—and I vividly remember this as well”—

● (1040)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that matters of privilege are intended to be short interventions that provide facts about an alleged breach. I do not believe the member opposite has brought anything new to the table. Questions of privilege are not meant to be used as a tool to monopolize the House's time or to obstruct debate.

I would ask that we reflect on what has taken place over the last 45 minutes and maybe apply the rule accordingly.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his additional intervention in the matter. I am waiting to hear what the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has to add. I note that this question of privilege was raised some time ago in the House. The parliamentary secretary is right in the sense that it would need to include some new, additional material for us to reflect upon.

The decision on this particular question of privilege is still being worked out, so new information can be received. However, as the parliamentary secretary points out, questions of privilege have to be succinct and should not reflect on matters that have already been introduced in the House.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the government member is attempting to tell the member for Sarnia—Lambton what she can and cannot say. One of the reasons we have come into this whole scandal in the first place is that top men in the government have tried to silence strong women and tried to tell them what they are allowed to say and what they are not allowed to say.

The member has the right to raise a question of privilege and to say whatever she wants. I would add that she is an extremely qualified former engineer with a brilliant reputation in the business community. I think the House would be wise to listen to her and let her speak.

Finally, the member across the way would like members to think that this House works for the government. Actually, it is exactly the opposite. The government works for the House. Just because he wants to get on with more promise-breaking deficit spending by having us all talk about his government's financial failures does not mean we have to—

Privilege

• (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: I think we have heard sufficiently from the member for Carleton. I recognize we have been given notice of other questions of privilege that members wish to introduce today. I would remind hon. members that these questions of privilege are opportunities to intervene in the usual proceedings of the House, but they are not opportunities for debate.

As with points of order, members should get to the essential infringement they believe has occurred. They should get to that matter without the editorializing, if I could call it that generally, and without beginning to move those comments into areas of debate. There are other times in the daily proceedings where members will have those opportunities, but these should be points specific to what they believe to be a legitimate breach of a member's privileges.

I would ask the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton, if she could, to get quickly to the point that she believes represents such a breach of privilege.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that if you check the parliamentary record, you will find that I do not often rise on a question of privilege. I think I have only risen one other time in this whole four-year parliamentary session. The reason I am rising on this specific point is that it is egregious. We have members of Parliament misleading the House. We saw this yesterday with the voting. People could not even be honest about whether they were here for a vote.

I am going to continue with additional evidence that is to the point brought by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, and then I will take another angle on that.

On the morning of March 6, Gerry Butts, the Prime Minister's ex-principal secretary, decided to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We are trying to get through the matters at hand here. Members have brought positions forward that they would like to air, and the sooner we get to that, the better. It does not help when we get other members talking over the top of those who have been recognized to speak.

I see the hon. member for Carleton is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North was just heard audibly, as the member for Sarnia—Lambton was speaking, saying, “You are a child.” That is insulting language, and I ask the member to do the honourable thing and quickly stand and apologize and withdraw that insulting comment.

The member for Sarnia—Lambton is not only an adult, but an extremely qualified and successful engineer and businesswoman.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, of course, should always avoid those kinds of characterizations. I did not hear the offending comment in this case. I do see the parliamentary secretary on his feet, if he would like to address the point.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what I indicated was that the Conservative Party members were behaving like children the other day. I suspect people who were watching would have seen the chanting, the slamming, the yelling and the screaming coming from the Conservative benches. They might have agreed, but—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This is what happens when we get into exchanging what are supposed to be points of order.

As I said, I did not hear the comment that the member for Carleton referred to, but I had hoped that the hon. parliamentary secretary would address that point and not introduce another point of debate.

We are in the midst of hearing a question of privilege intervention by the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

I see the hon. opposition House leader is rising. Is this a different point of order?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, it is regarding the apology that is required.

The member for Winnipeg North has tried to say I was calling everybody childish, but he called our colleague, the member for Sarnia—Lambton, a child. He needs to unreservedly apologize and withdraw that insulting comment made to a woman who is accomplished, who is clearly an adult, and who is doing the mature thing right now—her job. That member should not be qualifying it if someone felt or experienced it differently. He should just stand up and apologize, as a man should.

• (1050)

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. parliamentary secretary on his feet. We are not going to entertain any more debate on this point.

I will refer back to an earlier comment I made: Questions of privilege are interventions that members make, not to interrupt the ordinary course of debate before the House but to get to what they believe are specific breaches of members' privileges, which they can address.

I will say it again that they are not opportunities to expand and editorialize. If members have specific precedents in sufficient quantity they wish to use to support their arguments, that is fine, but it is not always necessary to have numerous precedents to make a point.

I will ask members, essentially to ensure that the House has time for the matters that are before it and are on the projected order of business for the day, to get quickly to their points on this question of privilege.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I will wrap it up quickly.

Let us recall again that the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary have called these allegations false. The evidence that I have been presenting begs to differ. These two government spokespersons misled the House or were themselves misled to that end.

Additional evidence came forward when Gerald Butts took his place at the witness table. He said at page 2 of the evidence in the morning of March 6:

So it was, and is, the Attorney General's decision to make. It would, however, be Canadians' decision to live with—specifically, the 9,000-plus people who could lose their jobs.

At page 3, Mr. Butts euphemistically spins this effort to drop corruption charges against a well-connected large corporation with Liberal ties by saying:

It was our obligation to exhaustively consider options the law allows....

Privilege

Once again, the House was told that the statements by Fife, Chase and Fine were false, but the evidence has shown that to be anything but the case.

We heard testimony from the CEO of SNC-Lavalin that he never said 9,000 jobs would be lost. This again is a falsehood that has been repeated by the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary.

The next allegation is at the 18th paragraph of the article, which states:

Sources at SNC-Lavalin told *The Globe* the PMO was furious with the justice minister's intransigence on the remediation agreement and that the company was pleased to see her moved out of the portfolio.

The former attorney general told the justice committee on February 27, at page 5 of the evidence:

On December 18, 2018, my chief of staff was urgently summoned to a meeting with Gerry Butts and Katie Telford to discuss SNC. They want to know where I—me—am at in terms of finding a solution. They told her they felt like the issue was getting worse and I was not doing anything.

This was followed by the quotation of the text message exchange between the member for Vancouver Granville and her former chief of staff, a portion of which is particularly relevant to this and is also in *The Globe and Mail*.

Let me get to the part of this that is the alternative. It is on page 12.

However we cut it, the House was misled and conflicting versions are now before Parliament. As for whether the Attorney General, his parliamentary secretary or both of them misled the House—or were duped into it through a misleading briefing or in other ways—is not material to determining that the House has competing accounts before it.

I will conclude by saying that whether it was done directly or indirectly, the House has been misled. To be blunt, this is happening on a more frequent basis, so I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to assess the weighty evidence before the House and consider how it contradicts the bald denials given on February 7 and 8. These denials were meant to be a wet blanket thrown on an explosive scandal. They could not have been offered for any purpose other than to obstruct the House of Commons on its core constitutional capacity to hold the government to account.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the NDP House leader's question of privilege for your favourable consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: I recall that the hon. member for Durham provided notice for a question of privilege. It can only be for about five minutes, and then we will have to interrupt for Statements by Members.

The hon. member for Durham.

* * *

• (1055)

PRIVILEGE

SOLICITOR-CLIENT PRIVILEGE IN THE CONTEXT OF PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for your indulgence for more time than that. I do think questions of

parliamentary privilege filed under Standing Order 48(2) would trump members' statements.

Parliamentary privilege, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is both individual and collective. My parliamentary privilege as a member of Parliament and as the shadow minister for foreign affairs has been breached, as has the collective parliamentary privilege of every member of the House of Commons to deliberate, debate and legislate in accordance with their parliamentary function, in accordance with what their constituents sent them to Ottawa to do.

These have been tiring days. There is lots of stress on both sides, but I would implore the Liberal members to remember that they are sent as individual members to Parliament to represent their constituents, not to represent the Prime Minister's Office. My privilege and the collective privilege of this chamber have been impeded in debate, in committee inquiry, in question period responses and in voting, so it is an extensive breach of parliamentary privilege.

I would remind the Chair and the House that this privilege is absolute, going back to 1689 and to our Constitution Act of 1867. In fact, solicitor-client privilege, which has been the subject of discussion in recent weeks in relation to the member for Vancouver Granville, is superseded by parliamentary privilege. That has been considered and is a precedent of that Chair. In fact, the April 27, 2010, a decision by Speaker Milliken said:

It is the view of the Chair that accepting an unconditional authority of the executive to censor the information provided to Parliament would in fact jeopardize the very separation of powers that is purported to lie at the heart of our parliamentary system and the independence of its constituent parts.

That was Speaker Milliken saying that national security, confidentiality at the highest levels, cannot stand in the way of any member of Parliament in this chamber exercising his or her privilege as a member. That was recently reaffirmed in Westminster with the decision in the matter of Lord Hain in 2018, in which public interest and parliamentary privilege superseded court injunctions.

Therefore, it is fundamental that solicitor-client privilege is secondary to parliamentary privilege, and I would note that Justice Lamer, as he then was, in the *Descôteaux* decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, confirmed this. There is the legal ability under law to insert itself into the solicitor-client confidentiality relationship.

That is important to understand, because certainly the member for Vancouver Granville, as a lawyer, takes that responsibility seriously.

What we can take from the decision of Justice Lamer is that the law gives authority to intercede into solicitor-client privilege and that it should be done narrowly. In his words, it should be done “only if doing so is absolutely necessary to achieve the ends sought by the enabling legislation.”

In this case, the enabling legislation is our Constitution. My parliamentary privilege and our collective parliamentary privilege is impeded by the executive's, the Prime Minister's Office's, persistence in limiting the waiver of privilege. The member for Vancouver Granville wants to speak further. The Prime Minister is not allowing her, but this Parliament can allow her. I would remind members that I have seen some of her own colleagues criticizing her.

I would ask for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, for two more minutes of my presentation.

The Law Society of Ontario Rules of Professional Conduct recognizes that privilege—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We are going to interrupt for the time being, and we will get back to the hon. member for Durham immediately after question period and Routine Proceedings later this day. When we get back to regular matters of business, we will come right back to the hon. member for Durham.

I would ask the indulgence of the House for proceeding now at this time to Statements by Members. We will start with the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)
[English]

JAIME ADAO

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, imagine a 17-year-old boy about to graduate Tec Voc High School at home in the north end of downtown Winnipeg when someone starts banging on the door and busts through.

Recently we had a home invasion, and the sad reality of that particular home invasion saw a wonderful, beautiful 17-year-old young man with so much potential meet his death as a direct result.

The community has been grappling with this. I have known the family for many years, and Imelda and Jaime Adao are truly wonderful, genuine, generous individuals. Family and friends have been pouring their love and prayers and condolences to the family.

I want to make a commitment to the family and community that have come together at this very tragic moment that I will continue to work with others in an apolitical fashion to ensure that Jimboy's death will not go unnoticed.

* * *

2019 BRIER

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in early March Westman was swept up in a curling frenzy as Brandon hosted the 2019 Brier, its first since 1982. It was at that Brier that the Patch was invented. I have been to a few Briers since then, and I have to say that this may have been the best one yet.

I wish to thank Curling Canada for choosing the Brandon bid, and I want to congratulate the sponsors, curlers and all of the volunteers who rose to the occasion and made this event a huge success for curling fans and the city of Brandon. In particular, I want to thank Nate Andrews, Jackie Nichol and Ryan Shields, who co-chaired the Brandon Brier. With the help of an army of volunteers, they hit it right on the button.

I would also like to congratulate Team Koe for winning in spectacular fashion. I would be remiss not mention that Kevin has now tied the record for the most Canadian men's curling championships by a skip. I know that Team Koe will make us proud as they

Statements by Members

will now compete in their home province for the World Men's Curling Championship in Lethbridge, Alberta, starting on March 30.

Go, Canada, go.

* * *

WEST VANCOUVER ROBOTICS PROGRAM

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about five years ago, a bunch of high school students in West Vancouver decided to form a robotics club. Within one year, that club became a full-fledged academic program in robotics.

It is innovative, not just because they are learning AI, tech, engineering, math and science, but also because they are learning collaboratively with all high school students of all ages and elementary school students of all ages. The students learn in two huge rooms, the board room and the Robo Dojo room, and the noise level is through the roof. They collaborate and get marks for failing. This club has now turned into 140 students.

Globally, 16,000 students compete for the world championships, and four of those kids from West Van High are going. Last year they came second. This year we hope they come first.

I would like to congratulate principal Steve Rauh, director of instruction Diane Nelson, head teacher Todd Ablett and faculty lead Dr. Mahesh Chugani. I encourage them all the way.

* * *

TUBERCULOSIS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of World Tuberculosis Day, which takes place March 24.

Around the world, nearly 4,500 people lose their lives to TB daily, to a disease that is preventable and curable. Here at home, too many communities are still living with tuberculosis. Nunavut has the highest rate of TB in Canada. My home province of Manitoba is second.

First nations people living on reserve have an eight to 10 times higher TB notification rate than other Canadians. TB is a disease linked poverty. It is caused by crowding, poor ventilation and mould.

Earlier this year, I joined with my northern NDP colleagues in calling on the Prime Minister to address the mould crisis in homes on reserve. We had hoped that budget 2019 would make clear a Liberal commitment to ending this housing crisis, but the budget ignored it, so today we once again call on the government not just to acknowledge TB Day but to make the investments necessary to commit to eradicating TB once and for all.

Statements by Members

● (1105)

SWIMMING SCHOLARSHIP

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the fantastic achievements of a young person from my riding of Sudbury.

After attending Collège Notre-Dame and graduating in June 2018, Nina Kucheran received an NCAA Division I scholarship to attend Florida State University and swim for their varsity team.

With the support of her family, Nina began swimming at the age of five at the Nickel District Pool before joining the Sudbury Laurentian Swim Club. In August 2018, Nina earned two silver medals representing Canada at the Junior Pan Pacific Championships in Fiji.

[*Translation*]

Physical activity is a big part of Canadian culture. Nina's hard work and intense passion can inspire us all. Our community is proud of Nina, and we are excited to see what amazing things she does next.

[*English*]

I wish her great success as she competes at the 2019 women's swimming and diving national championships in Austin, Texas.

Not only does Nina make Sudbury proud, but she makes Canada proud.

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPIAN

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, St. Patrick's Day, Special Olympian Linda Renner brought pride to my riding of Cariboo—Prince George and indeed our entire country.

While competing for Team Canada at the 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, Linda struck gold, bowling over the competition, as she captured the women's singles championship, but Linda was not finished there. She added another gold medal and a silver medal to her tally. At 56 years of age, Linda's dedication to her family, her community and her sport is second to none. To quote her coach, Tracey Cole, "She is such a positive and committed athlete".

Linda was representing our country for the second time on the international stage as she also competed in the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games where she also brought home a silver medal.

The Special Olympics motto is "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt".

Linda has made us all so very proud. We thank her for being an incredible ambassador to our country, to our community and to her sport.

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2019

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 kilometres southwest of Miramichi, there is a small community with a big heart called Renous.

This year, Renous and the Tom Donovan Arena have made it to the final four in the campaign to become the next Kraft Hockeyville. Last weekend, I joined the community as we all watched the exciting live results together.

For this community, it is about more than just the title and it is about more than just a rink. The campaign is a tribute to a young hockey player, Thomas Dunn, who was killed last year in a tragic accident. This is just one of the heartbreaking tragedies that the small community has faced over the last few years.

The Tom Donovan Arena in Renous is the heart of the community and could certainly use the \$250,000 prize, as it is in great need of repair and modernization.

On March 29, I invite all my colleagues to go online and vote for the community of Renous and the Tom Donovan Arena to be the next Kraft Hockeyville, in memory of Thomas Dunn.

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPIANS

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1969, our country has been dedicated to enriching the lives of Canadians with a disability through the transformative power and joy of sport. Our government continues that commitment by ensuring we support all of our athletes, of all ages and abilities, from the playground to the podium.

[*Translation*]

Over the past two weeks, 109 of our athletes participated in the Special Olympics Games in Abu Dhabi. The games ended yesterday. I would like to congratulate and thank all the incredible athletes who represented Canada in their respective sport.

[*English*]

Their feats and commitment inspire all of us each and every day. I want them to know that their country is proud of them. On behalf of all parliamentarians, I congratulate them and welcome them home.

* * *

TUBERCULOSIS

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, March 24, is World Tuberculosis Day, and I invite you and all members to wear the pin and help raise awareness about this terrible disease.

Last year, the World Health Organization reported that 10.4 million people fell ill with TB. There were 1.8 million TB deaths in 2016, making it the top infectious killer worldwide.

While many people think of TB only in the least developed nations, there are about 1,600 new cases of active TB reported in Canada every year, primarily amongst newcomers and indigenous communities.

The issue is not about finding a cure. The cure exists. It is about ensuring that everyone has access to life-saving treatment.

I encourage members to join me in raising awareness of this issue by tweeting "#ItsTimeToEndTB" for those living with tuberculosis here in Canada and around the world.

* * *

• (1110)

[Translation]

YOUTH

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that young Canadians are the future of our country. I strongly believe that the best investment we can make is an investment in supporting and educating our young people and helping them become independent.

The young men and women in our communities will soon be our doctors, engineers, soldiers, professors and caregivers. They will also be the leaders of our country.

[English]

The time I have spent with members of my Hull—Aylmer youth councils since 2015 has been invaluable to me as a member of Parliament. Whether it be on subjects such as the environment, public transit, equality or heritage, their profound and penetrating discussions have reminded me of the immense responsibility we have when speaking in this House.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the members of my youth council and all young Canadians. I appreciate their work, their vision and their enthusiasm.

* * *

[English]

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the recent terrorist attack which killed 50 Muslims praying in a mosque in New Zealand, the Prime Minister, to show solidarity with Muslim Canadians, visited SNMC mosque in my riding of Nepean. He addressed over 1,000 people and held a meeting with young Muslim Canadians.

Words matter. I call upon all political leaders to check whether the words they use or the actions they take create an environment that provides a platform for extreme anti-Muslim or anti-immigration individuals or groups.

I am thankful to SNMC mosque and Dr. Emdad Khan, Imam Zijad Delic, Raheemuddin Syed, Dr. Asma Amjad, Muhammad Zulfikar Bangash and other volunteers and community leaders for organizing this visit.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister leaned on the former attorney general to cut a deal for SNC-Lavalin, he justified his actions by claiming that many

Statements by Members

jobs would be lost and the company would move from Montreal if there was no DPA. For weeks the Prime Minister has repeated his mantra that what some perceived as interference in a criminal prosecution was in fact an effort to protect threatened jobs. However, like so much of what the Prime Minister has said in relation to this scandal, we know that was not true.

On Wednesday, the CEO of SNC-Lavalin directly contradicted the Prime Minister when he said that the company's jobs in Canada were never threatened.

The Prime Minister is hemorrhaging credibility. Cabinet ministers are resigning and MPs are leaving the Liberal Party rather than participate in his cover-up.

There is still time to make this right. Will the Prime Minister do so today by allowing the member for Vancouver Granville and the member for Markham—Stouffville to finally speak their full and unfettered truth?

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPIAN

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate Josée Séguin, a distinguished athlete from Valley East. Josée is a fierce competitor and one of our nation's top powerlifters. This month she represented Canada at the Abu Dhabi Special Olympics World Games, winning three gold medals, one silver medal and earning the title of the number one female in her division.

Prior to her departure, I had the privilege of meeting Josée and her mother Linda. Josée is a joyful and grounded individual who refuses to bow to adversity. Josée is an extremely dedicated individual, who works a full-time job at St. Gabriel seniors residence caring for the aging.

[Translation]

Congratulations to Josée and all the other Special Olympic athletes who represented Canada so well on the world stage. May their stories be a source of inspiration and motivation to all Canadians.

We are very proud of you. Keep up the good work.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "I want you to panic. The climate is changing; why aren't we?" On March 15, young people from around the world took to the streets to demand action from their elected leaders on climate change. Among them were students from Vancouver East. The quotes I just read are some of their messages to the government.

Over 1.5 million students participated in this global climate strike. After the strike, the Prime Minister tweeted that he hears the young people, yet budget 2019 is still subsidizing big oil and he is still trying to ram a pipeline through our province without consent.

Oral Questions

The youth are saying, “I care. Why don't you?” “If not now, when?” “Why study for a future if we won't have one?” “Like the ocean, we rise.” “Make earth cool again.” “There is no planet B.” “The earth needs you to give a frack.” “Respect existence or expect resistance.”

It is time to act.

* * *

• (1115)

JUSTICE

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 31 straight hours over the past three days, members of the House voted 200 times on essentially one question: “If nothing wrong took place, then why don't we waive privilege on the whole issue and let those who have something to say on it speak their minds and share their stories?”

That quote is from a current member of the Liberal caucus who inarguably was considered on all sides as one of the most respected members of the Liberal cabinet until she resigned her post this month, citing her lost confidence in her government.

The marathon vote taught us a lot of things: first, that the Prime Minister will go to extraordinary lengths to cover up this story; second, that there is constantly more to this story to uncover; and finally, that members of this Conservative team, and indeed all opposition parties, are resolved that Canadians will have the information they need to hold their government to account.

It has been said, “Things do not happen. Things are made to happen.” This is going to happen one way or another. Canadians will demand the truth.

* * *

EPILEPSY

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in 2012, the member for Halifax West's Purple Day Act received royal assent. His efforts made Cassidy Megan's dream of establishing Purple Day a reality. Now, because of this, Purple Day is celebrated each year on March 26 in over 100 countries.

Every year, more than 15,000 Canadians are diagnosed with epilepsy, yet many Canadians do not know a lot about this disorder. In fact, due to the stigma surrounding epilepsy, many people do not seek the care they need.

That is why Cassidy Megan created Purple Day to raise awareness and to make sure that more people understand what this disorder means. Purple Day is an important time to help people with epilepsy learn that they are not alone.

I encourage all Canadians and folks around the world to join us by wearing purple for Purple Day on March 26. Together we can raise more awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding epilepsy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that China will stop purchasing Canadian canola, wheat, peas, linseed and canola meal. This is devastating news for our farmers. More than 40% of Canadian canola is currently sold to China. The loss of this market is catastrophic, and it will cost billions of dollars to our economy. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is so consumed with scandal and cover-up that he is completely incapable of managing these critical economic issues.

What is the government going to do for our farmers, who are caught in the crossfire because of the Prime Minister's incompetence and his cover-up?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that access to new markets for high-quality Canadian canola means more money in the pockets of our farmers and support for middle-class jobs for Canadian farming families.

Representatives from the two countries will continue talks to find a science-based solution to this issue as quickly as possible. We are working closely with industry representatives and we will keep them informed as new information becomes available.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers do not need handouts from the government. They need their trading partners in China, and they need those relationships restored.

The House just finished over 30 hours of voting, where Liberal members continued the cover-up, over 30 hours of protecting the Prime Minister and his corruption, and over 30 hours of refusing to let the former attorney general speak. If these are the lengths the Prime Minister is willing to take to stop the truth from being told, then what he is hiding must be absolutely terrible.

If he has nothing to hide, why does the Prime Minister not come clean with Canadians and stop the cover-up?

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that our thoughts are with Father Claude Grou and the entire community affected by the terrible incident at St. Joseph's Oratory—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1120)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Oral Questions

We have limited time for question period, as members know, and these extra interventions delay and possibly remove questions from what might be intended otherwise. I would ask hon. members to keep quiet while other members are answering questions that have been posed.

We are going to go back to the hon. government House leader to finish her response, and then we will continue.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that our thoughts are with Father Claude Grou and the entire community affected by the terrible incident at St. Joseph's Oratory this morning. The Service de police de la Ville de Montréal is investigating, and we will follow the developments closely.

[English]

When it comes to the last 31 hours, let us not let Canadians be mistaken. That was 31 hours of Conservatives denying funding to services Canadians benefit from. I have no problem being up all night to fight for Canadians. That is what we will do.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were watching last night throughout the 31 hours, and they saw exactly what the Liberal government and these Liberal caucus members were doing and the cover-up the Prime Minister continues.

In an explosive interview with Maclean's, the former president of the Treasury Board said there is much more of this story that needs to be heard. Canadians deserve to know the truth. Even after the former president of the Treasury Board said that more needs to be heard, the Prime Minister continues to cover up.

When will he stop the cover-up, allow these former members to speak and waive the client privilege that he has put on them? Stop the gag order. Let them speak.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should get to hear, and that is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. Canadians should get to hear, and that is why the justice committee brought witnesses.

The Conservatives will continue to chirp. They will not let me speak, because they know that institutions are intact in Canada. They know that the justice committee is doing its work. Conservatives should stop playing politics and get to work. It is really unfortunate, because when they were in government, they made these same comments to the NDP, talking about the costs of having the House run all night long.

We know that we will fight for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can always count on the Leader of the Government for comic relief.

When the Business News Network asked the president and CEO of SNC-Lavalin if failure to obtain a remediation agreement could mean job losses, he replied that he never said that, never talked to the Prime Minister about it, and does not know what he made up or had in his mind.

When will the Prime Minister end the cover-up and allow the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics to investigate this scandal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is mixing things up on purpose. People on this side of the House respect our institutions. We know that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights did its job and that the Ethics Commissioner is investigating. We respect their work. I think the Conservatives should have a modicum of respect, but clearly, they do not.

Members on this side of the House will let those people do their jobs.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, while we respect Canadians' intelligence, this government clearly does not.

The SNC-Lavalin boss never said that jobs were at risk. However, the Prime Minister, his aide Gerald Butts and the Clerk of the Privy Council, who stepped down on Monday, I would remind the House, said on several occasions that was the case.

We now know that that part of the story was completely fabricated to try to justify their abuse of power towards the former attorney general and towards Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister stop the cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anyone who respects Canadians will recognize that the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence so that Canadians could hear everything the witnesses have to say.

That is exactly why the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights held public meetings, so that Canadians would be able to follow what was happening. The Conservatives are confusing matters, and they are doing so intentionally. Their actions contradict their words.

● (1125)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers are with Claude Grou.

Every Liberal in the House knows very well that they are in serious trouble because of the interference scandal involving the Prime Minister's Office. They promised that this affair would be studied by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, but the Liberal majority shut it down.

They are now saying that the Ethics Commissioner is investigating, but the Liberals know full well that political interference falls outside his mandate. The former president of the Treasury Board says that there is much more to tell Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and agree to launch a public inquiry, as the NDP is calling for?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the committee did its job. We know that the former attorney general wants to say more, and she can do so. We know that Canadians want to make up their own minds, and that is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

We know that we, on this side of the House, have many responsibilities. If there are changes that affect jobs, the NDP will be the first to say that the government did nothing. That is exactly why we will take our responsibilities very seriously and continue to do our job.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not get it.

The Liberals have to realize that despite all their efforts they cannot deflect attention from this scandal. People no longer trust the Liberal Party. They know that the Prime Minister did something inappropriate.

Two former ministers are telling us that they want to tell Canadians the whole truth, but the Prime Minister is doing everything he can to stop them. People need to hear the truth. Canadians deserve some respect from this Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister launch a public inquiry?

It is a simple question. We deserve an answer today.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the Ethics Commissioner are doing their jobs and we have confidence in them.

It is the Conservatives who said that members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights would not get the meetings they wanted, but they did. They said that the witnesses would not get the chance to testify, but we saw that several witnesses came to committee and testified.

The Conservatives will keep casting doubt on the system, but we have confidence in the system and we know that it works.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his office have been accused of interfering in the most important and serious prosecution of corporate corruption in modern Canadian history. They have had a slew of high profile resignations over the issue. Yesterday, the former Treasury Board president clearly stated, “There’s much more to the story that should be told.” She went on to say, “there’s been an attempt to shut down the story.”

With allegations this serious, the country cannot move on until Canadians know the whole story. Will the Prime Minister do the right thing to clear the way for the truth to come out and call a public inquiry for a fair, non-partisan assessment of the facts, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the NDP said that the justice committee would not meet, and it met. The NDP said that witnesses would not be able to appear, and they appeared. The NDP said that the former attorney general would not be able to speak, and the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client

privilege, as well as cabinet confidence, something that has not happened in the history of our country, to ensure that she could speak.

The NDP will continue to say no, but we will say, “Yes, Canadians; we will fight for you”, while New Democrats choose to play their politics, just like the Conservatives. There was a time that New Democrats would at least talk about the issues of the day, but today they are talking about politics as well.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but one does not move on to talk about other issues when there is a serious cloud of corruption hanging over us. Public service is not transactional. It is not that we announce a little program here and get to help our buddies over there. That is not how it works.

With respect to the justice committee, we know full well that a Liberal majority on that committee shut down the study. We know because the former attorney general wrote the justice committee today and said that she has more to say and hopes that the committee will accept her comments. She also said that those comments will be limited by the restrictions on the waiver that the Prime Minister issued.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister lift the waiver and create a forum for these former ministers to speak?

• (1130)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice committee members decided on parameters that it would be looking at, and that dealt with the time that the former attorney general was the Attorney General. When it comes to solicitor-client privilege, that is only pertinent to an attorney general. Then, all of a sudden, after the justice committee members set parameters, the Prime Minister lifted cabinet confidence and solicitor-client privilege for those parameters. The member is basically insinuating or implying that they should be working outside of those parameters.

Have some regard and respect for this place. I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to remind hon. members of that.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former president of the Treasury Board made it clear that the Prime Minister is hiding something from Canadians. She told Maclean’s magazine, “There’s much more to the story that needs to be told”. The Canadian people deserve to know the truth and to hear that story. The cover-up must end.

Will the Prime Minister allow the ethics committee to conduct a public investigation into his corruption scandal, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when you listen to opposition members, you know that they have different approaches and styles. That is because when it comes to the way they function with their members on these committees, they have always believed in a centralized system. The former Stephen Harper government was the most centralized PMO; it was the most controlling Prime Minister’s Office.

Oral Questions

We committed to Canadians that we would do government differently. That is why they cannot comprehend that members are able to make choices, and they cannot comprehend that members might have differences of opinion. We on this side are okay with that.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former president of the Treasury Board made jaw-dropping statements that confirm the Prime Minister is hiding details on the SNC-Lavalin scandal. She said, “we actually owe it to Canadians as politicians to ensure that they have the truth.” The Prime Minister’s talking points are misleading. Canadians deserve the truth. The cover-up must end.

Will the Prime Minister allow the ethics committee to conduct a public investigation into his corruption scandal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are watching, and they are noticing that every single day the members of the opposition read their questions that are provided to them by the leader of the official opposition. They talk about talking points. They are spitting out those talking points pretty well that their leader’s office is providing to them. On this side, we know that members are having tough conversations.

They will always yell over me. They say that people should be able to speak, should be able to have a respectful workplace, but that is not something that they provide.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems we are not yet out of the woods with the Liberal SNC-Lavalin scandal.

We have moved on to the next chapter and Canadians have lost all confidence in this Liberal government. What is very disturbing is that the former president of the Treasury Board claims that there is much more to the story that needs to be told.

Will the Prime Minister maintain his gag order or will he let the former president of the Treasury Board put an end to this cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence so that the former attorney general could testify in committee. We know that Canadians listen to the conversations we have here. They watch our debates. Canadians watched the Conservatives spend 31 hours voting against measures that benefit Canadians. We know that the Conservatives will cut these programs. Canadians must see that the Conservatives do not plan to drive our economy or Canadians forward. They plan to cut the measures that benefit Canadians.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an investigation by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics is the only way to put an end to the Liberal cover-up. The former attorney general of Canada and the former president of the Treasury Board still have a lot more to tell Canadians.

This cover-up operation is destroying our country’s international credibility. Will the Prime Minister let the Standing Committee on

Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics conduct a public inquiry into this corruption scandal?

• (1135)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a performance. This member keeps asking the same question over and over, but we on this side of the House are going to keep working for Canadians. We know that the committee did its work. We know that the Ethics Commissioner is going to conduct an investigation, and we have confidence in his ability to do so. We on this side of the House are going to keep working for Canadians to make sure they get the programs and measures that will help them and make their lives better. We are working for Canadians, while the Conservatives prefer to play politics.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his team repeatedly and inappropriately pressured the former attorney general to drop bribery charges against SNC-Lavalin, claiming that 9,000 jobs were at risk. However, the CEO of SNC-Lavalin said, about the 9,000 jobs number, “That’s incorrect and we’ve never said that.”

Canadians deserve the truth, and the Prime Minister must end his cover-up. Will the Prime Minister allow the ethics committee to conduct a public investigation into his corruption scandal, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, because that is one of the very members who believed that the justice committee would never meet, and the justice committee was meeting.

The Conservatives and that member were saying that witnesses would never get to appear at the justice committee, but Canadians saw, for over five weeks, which is longer than even most legislation is studied in committee, that witnesses were appearing.

That member and the Conservatives said that the former attorney general would not get to speak, because they know that when Stephen Harper was in government, he would not have waived solicitor-client privilege.

This Prime Minister did waive solicitor-client privilege and did waive cabinet confidence, because that is what we committed to.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the last 30-plus hours of voting has shown Canadians is that the Liberals will go to any lengths to keep up the Prime Minister’s corruption cover-up.

The Liberals shut down the justice committee, intimidated the former attorney general, bullied the former president of the Treasury Board and have members of the Liberal caucus doing the Prime Minister’s dirty work.

Will the Prime Minister finally end the cover-up and allow the ethics committee to investigate, including hearing from all those who have been named in his corruption scandal?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the justice committee studied it. We know that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is investigating this matter. We know that there is an ongoing court case.

I have confidence in the institutions. If there is more that needs to be done, I have faith, I have confidence, that it will be done.

I was elected by the people of Waterloo. I was elected to be part of a government to ensure that I fought for Canadians. Canadians saw that for over 31 hours, the Conservatives actually voted against measures that benefit Canadians. They chose to do that. Yesterday, for over 31 hours, Canadians got a clear vision of the programs and services the Conservatives will cut if they ever get to be government.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general just wrote to the justice committee and is trying to find a way to tell her whole truth.

The Liberals kept changing their story. First the former attorney general was difficult to work with. Then it was simply that she interpreted it differently. Now the Liberal machine is trying to convince Canadians that both ministers who resigned due to a lack of confidence in the Prime Minister can say whatever they want in the House and be protected by parliamentary privilege.

We went through 31 hours of votes yesterday, and the Liberals will not let her speak. Once and for all, will the Prime Minister completely waive privilege and cabinet confidence?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the attorney general was able to appear at justice committee, and that is because the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and that is because the Prime Minister waived cabinet confidence. Should there be submissions and so forth as we see these conversations take place in public, it is interesting, because the opposition seems to be very concerned, but we have confidence in the system. We know that if they want to submit information, they should be able to, because Canadians deserve to know. When the Prime Minister said that Canadians should get to know, these meetings took place in public so that they would get to know.

I encourage Canadians to look at the record of the members who voted over the last 30 hours.

• (1140)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sorry, it is because the former attorney general wants to tell her whole truth. What part of that does the government not get?

No one is buying the government's talking points. The Liberals shut down the justice committee. They are moving heaven and earth to prevent Canadians from learning the truth.

The former AG hired legal counsel to advise her on what she can and cannot say. Unlike the Prime Minister, she is not willing to break the law. The former Treasury Board president made it clear. The Liberals assume that the best interests of Canadians are their own political interests. They are one and the same.

Is that the real reason the Prime Minister will not call a public inquiry?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member need not be sorry that witnesses appeared at justice committee. It is okay for the member to recognize that the former attorney general did appear at justice committee and the former attorney general confirmed that the rule of law in Canada is intact and that Canadians can have confidence in it. The member can appreciate the fact that the former attorney general also stated that the law was followed at all times.

The Prime Minister recognizes that we can always improve our institutions, and that is why he took that witness very seriously, and that is why he acknowledged that there was a breakdown in communication and trust in his office. That is why the Prime Minister has put forward measures to ensure that we continue to strengthen our institutions.

The NDP is playing politics.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the foreign affairs minister.

The OECD is investigating the SNC-Lavalin affair, and the foreign affairs minister promised that the government was co-operating with an independent investigation. The trouble is, her own Liberal colleagues ended that independent investigation, and the Prime Minister is refusing to allow the key witness to speak.

When will the foreign affairs minister stop her role in this cover-up and allow the former attorney general to speak at the ethics committee?

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is proud of its participation in the OECD. The rules-based international order and the institutions that underpin it are absolutely essential to the defence of the Canadian national interest in the world.

We have been clear from the start that we support the work of the OECD working group, and we will continue to co-operate with the OECD throughout this issue.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can that member be proud when the OECD is investigating Canada for corruption?

A few years ago, the Prime Minister said to Canadians that he had an admiration for basic dictatorships. Now he is running one.

When will the minister live up to her lofty language about the international rules-based order and demand that the Prime Minister pay attention to domestic rules of order?

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that our government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has reinforced Canada's interest in a multinational rules-based order. We are proud of our work with the OECD. We are proud of the work we have been doing in Syria, which I just returned from last week. We are proud of the work we have done to defend human rights around the world.

Oral Questions

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the CEO of SNC-Lavalin said about those jobs the Prime Minister said are at risk because he had to engage in an egregious corruption scandal, no. He completely debunked that.

Meanwhile, today, Canadian farmers are waking up to a complete catastrophe in their market because of his incompetence. Meanwhile, 100,000 people are out of work in the energy sector because of the no-more-pipelines jobs. We know from the former attorney general that he said to her that he was concerned about the SNC-Lavalin scandal because he was a Quebec MP. Why does the Prime Minister only—

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like on the article people are reading, they will come to their own conclusions. That member is entitled to read that article and take what she would like out of it.

However, I know that the justice committee did look at this matter. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is investigating this matter. We know that there is an ongoing court case. Canadians can rest assured that the rule of law in Canada is intact. We know that we can always improve and strengthen our institutions. We will continue to do that, and Canadians can have confidence that we will ensure that it happens.

• (1145)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody is buying that. There are farmers waking up who are wondering where they are going to market their goods. There are hundreds of thousands of people out of work because of the government's failure and incompetence, because it has been mired in scandal for weeks. That is all they care about.

Why will the Prime Minister only move hell and high water to protect his own job?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we will move on. Canada is intact. The justice committee has looked into this matter. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is investigating this matter. There is an ongoing court case.

The member stands and points her finger and does whatever. Over 31 hours, Canadians were able to see the voting record of members. Conservatives voted against programs and services that benefit Canadians, programs on gender and women's equality programs, programs for National Defence, programs for indigenous people, programs to help build the pipeline, but no. Every time the Conservatives voted against them, Canadians saw it clearly.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals had a chance to take action to fix the spring gap problem for seasonal workers and address the labour shortage. Instead, they chose to keep plundering the EI fund.

Workers are sick and tired of broken promises, like the Liberals' promise to fix the spring gap problem, which affects thousands of families.

Will the Liberals finally admit that they would rather give handouts to the rich than actually help workers?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the work we have done on EI reform in this government, which includes addressing the issue of seasonal workers in industries that are affected by the surges and the loss of work due to the seasonal nature of the employment. We have also made it easier to work while on benefits, and in fact, in this year's budget, we also added additional measures to make sure that people who are transitioning between jobs, people who are working while on claims, can get the support they need to participate in the economy in the way they want to in the communities where they live.

Our government continues to reform EI and continues to be focused on making sure that vulnerable Canadians not only get the support from EI but that EI is there to make sure they get to a better future. That is why we are doing the job we are doing.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Wednesday's question period involved the Prime Minister touting his own feminism. Now, as all good feminists know, there is nothing more feminist than a man bragging about his feminism.

However, let us check the facts of budget 2019. Budget 2019 has nothing for child care and nothing for pay equity, and it fails indigenous women. The budget has nothing specific to address the tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. In fact, indigenous women's groups have been clear that they feel ignored and have been left behind.

When will the Prime Minister stop bragging and act on the priorities of Canadian women, the priorities they deserve action now?

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2019 builds on almost \$17 billion of investments in indigenous priorities, with an additional \$4.5 billion to advance indigenous self-determination, redress past wrongs and close socioeconomic gaps. This includes \$1.4 billion to forgive communities' outstanding comprehensive loan claims, \$126 million to establish a national council for reconciliation and more than \$15 million to ensure that federal policies and programs reflect the voices of indigenous youth. These sustained investments of more than \$21 billion affirm and reaffirm our commitment to reconciliation.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Pontiac measures over 30,000 square kilometres, and all of it lies within traditional unceded Algonquin territory. Therefore, this week I was so honoured to join the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations in celebrating the signing of an MOU and the global settlement of 29 separate claims between Canada and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in the north of my riding. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update the House on what this MOU and \$116 million in compensation means for reconciliation with this Algonquin community?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Pontiac for his tireless commitment to reconciliation and, more specifically, his engagement with the people of Kitigan Zibi. I also want to highlight his undertakings in learning the Algonquin language. He is an example to us all.

With the signing of this MOU and the settlement of these claims, which includes compensation of over \$116 million, we are supporting the acceleration of community-led social and economic initiatives and advancing reconciliation in a way that respects the rights and interests of Kitigan Zibi. By working together, we have not only helped address past wrongs, but also have taken important steps to renew and strengthen our nation-to-nation relationship with Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg—

● (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government keeps repeating the refrain that committees are independent of the PMO and masters of their own domain. Therefore, have there been any communications from either the office of the chief government whip or the office of the government House leader and Liberal members of the ethics committee about next Tuesday's meeting?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to some information from a member of the committee, she says there has not been.

I have the utmost respect for this place. When I am asked a question, I always do my best to answer that question. When it comes to my office, I work with a solid team of people. I have been in the House for over 31 hours voting. I slept for not even five hours and I am right back in my seat.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one believes that the Prime Minister is not manipulating these committees to cover up his scandal. The Prime Minister told the former attorney general and all Canadians a complete fairy tale. We now know no jobs were ever at risk.

The CEO of SNC-Lavalin said he never cited 9,000 jobs as a reason to end its criminal trial. In fact, when asked about these mythical job losses, the CEO said, "I don't know what people...have in their minds."

When will the Prime Minister come clean with Canadians? When will he end this cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, the justice committee looked into this matter and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating this matter. There is currently an ongoing court case in this matter. We have respect for these institutions, on this side. The Conservatives never had respect, and definitely not under 10 years of Stephen Harper.

I would say that Canadians are actually wondering, when will the Conservatives start having respect for institutions and when will the Conservatives show up to work and stop voting against measures that benefit Canadians? We on this side will vote for these measures to ensure that we have a cleaner, greener future for our kids and grandkids and a stronger—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beauport—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beauport—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we voted against anything, it was against the cover-up.

The former president of the Treasury Board has said that there is much more to the story, and the former attorney general has said that she has more to add. Today, we learned that she will be providing copies of her emails and written correspondence to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

When the Prime Minister says that he is working to save 9,000 jobs at SNC-Lavalin, he is giving the House untruthful answers because the CEO of the company, Neil Bruce, has indicated that it was never about jobs.

When will the Prime Minister stop his cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are now trying to justify the fact that they voted against measures that are good for Canadians.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives voted against programs like that of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec that helps individuals and businesses in Quebec. The Conservatives claim to support all of those programs and measures, but they voted against them.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights did its job and so did and the Ethics Commissioner.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former attorney general told us that the Prime Minister insisted that jobs would be lost if she did not end the corruption trial of SNC-Lavalin. The Prime Minister told the media that his 9,000 job-loss figure came from the company itself.

Now the CEO of SNC-Lavalin stated that he never talked to the Prime Minister about a DPA or about jobs.

Will the Prime Minister allow the ethics committee to conduct a public investigation of his corruption scandal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the answer, I will remind Canadians once again that the justice committee looked into this matter for over five weeks. There is a process here. Legislation goes through the House and then it goes to committee. Most pieces of legislation are not even studied for five weeks. However, five weeks was devoted to these meetings to ensure that Canadians could hear from witnesses.

The Prime Minister actually waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence. The Prime Minister ensured that everything was available so that Canadians would be able to hear and to come to their own conclusions.

What the Conservatives do not want to talk about is that they voted against programs like western—

• (1155)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

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CHILD CARE

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget acknowledges that lack of affordable child care is putting education, employment and home ownership out of the reach of parents, particularly mothers. Despite this, there is no new funding for child care and the crisis persists across the country outside of Quebec.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women said almost 50 years ago that universal child care was critical to women achieving true equality, yet the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development is still calling this a “long-term vision”.

Will the government stop making promises and show leadership on the child care crisis?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the funniest thing about the NDP members is that when we put something in the budget, they

complain that it is long-term, and when we do not put something in the budget because we did it the previous year, they ignore that we did it last year.

The reality is that \$7.5 billion has been invested in child care agreements. These agreements are with provinces and territories, but they also have specific agreements with indigenous-led organizations through the NIOs.

Our \$7.5 billion over the next 10 years is now in the system and delivering child care spaces in B.C., Ontario and right across the country from coast to coast to coast. We are proud of our investments.

We realize that more needs to be done. That is why we are also focused on lifting women out of poverty. The numbers on that are even better. If members want to ask me a question about that, I would be happy to answer.

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PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have failed on their promise to protect pensions and benefits in cases of corporate bankruptcy. The Prime Minister had one last chance to deliver on his promise in budget 2019, but he chose to leave Canadian workers and retirees without protection.

Despite having seen the damage that Sears has caused to Canadian workers and retirees, the Liberals want us to rely on the good faith of rich corporations to protect pensions. What? Are they serious?

Canadians are not buying that. Why are the Liberals more committed to protecting shareholders and rich banks over Canadian workers and retirees?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has had extensive and thorough consultations with industry and Canadians about workplace pensions. We have taken immediate action. Through budget 2019, our government will strengthen courts' power to review executive bonuses, root out attempts to asset-strip companies, compel stakeholders in insolvencies to be honest about their interests, invest \$150,000 in the national pension hub to continue to support pension research and invest \$12.5 million in the Global Risk Institute so it can continue its important work in developing new approaches to financial risk management.

When it comes to seniors, we will continue to deliver for seniors.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told the former attorney general twice on September 17 that SNC-Lavalin was threatening to move its headquarters unless she shelved the charges for fraud and corruption. BNN asked SNC's CEO this week, “Did you threaten to move your headquarters from Montreal?”. The answer was, “No.... No”.

Oral Questions

Where did the Prime Minister get this falsehood, and why would he say something he knew was untrue to a top law officer in order to shelve charges?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us see how long we can go before the Conservatives start speaking over me so that I cannot answer.

Let us make sure that Canadians understand that when it comes to the way governments work, they all work differently. The member was once a cabinet minister, and different cabinet positions will have different responsibilities. This is where we have confidence that the ministers of justice and attorneys general would fulfill their duties, and I would say they have done a pretty impressive job. However, when it comes to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Innovation and the Minister of Seniors, they also have different responsibilities. When it comes to a government, we will always fight for the national interest.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claimed that either the AG shelve the charges against SNC-Lavalin or the headquarters would leave.

The question from BNN to the CEO: “Did you threaten to move your headquarters from Montreal?” The answer: “No.”

A further question: “So where did this issue come up from, that that was a possibility for SNC?” The answer: “I don't know what people make up or what they have in their minds.”

The Prime Minister is the one who spread this falsehood. What exactly did he have in his mind?

• (1200)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Prime Minister, or any prime minister, would always have in mind the best interests of Canadians and the country he fights for. That is exactly what we have been doing since we were elected.

The Conservatives are sitting on those benches because they forgot that their priorities are Canadians, and not only those of Conservatives. We on this side can fight for people we share a political stripe with, but whom we fight for first and foremost is all Canadians, and that is what we will do.

We are going to have tough conversations, and sometimes we will not agree, but it is okay. When the Prime Minister says that diversity is our strength, he includes the diversity of perspectives, of regions, and the list goes on.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that when I asked what the Prime Minister had on his mind, I was being presumptuous. However, let me quote from BNN's question yesterday: “because the inference is that if you do not get to go the way of a deferred prosecution agreement, 9,000 jobs disappear.” The SNC CEO's response: “That's incorrect, and we've never said that.”

Now that we know that the 9,000 jobs excuse was a lie and that the Prime Minister was not protecting jobs, exactly who was he protecting?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to ever imply that the

Prime Minister of Canada would not protect jobs is, frankly, not true and pathetic. That member knows very well that he is going pretty far in making an accusation.

Any prime minister, those I have liked and those I have not, have been prime ministers of the country I am proud to serve and fight for. There is a spot for partisan politics, and that should be in campaigns. When we are sent to this place, we should raise the bar in the work that we do. We are all hon. members, and every member of Parliament should be fighting for jobs.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forests are important to Canadians in a number of ways. Canada's forests and forest products play a major role in our meeting climate targets, creating good jobs, stimulating economic growth and building more resilient communities. Indeed, Canada is home to the third largest forest area in the world and 36% of the world's certified forest.

In light of International Day of Forests, can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on how our government is ensuring that Canada's forests are protected and that the forestry industry remains a source of jobs for communities across the country?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for his hard work.

Yesterday was the International Day of Forests. I grew up in Kapuskasing and know that in northern Ontario the forestry sector has always been an integral part of the community. Canadians are proud this industry is a recognized world leader in sustainable forest management. To further support the work taking place and the good middle-class jobs it creates, budget 2019 includes an investment of over \$250 million for forest transformation and innovation. Our government will continue to support a competitive and sustainable forestry sector.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal MPs voted for 48 hours straight for one reason and one reason alone: to protect the Prime Minister, who is refusing to disclose all the facts about the SNC-Lavalin case.

Over the past two weeks, two ministers, the Prime Minister's senior adviser and the Clerk of the Privy Council resigned. This week, a Liberal MP even quit the caucus. There is clearly more to the story.

When will the Prime Minister give Canadians the whole truth and shed light on the SNC-Lavalin affair?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians have the right to hear the testimony of the witnesses who appeared at the justice committee. That is exactly why the Prime Minister waived client-solicitor privilege and cabinet confidence. He did so to let the former attorney general say what she wanted to say.

We voted for 31 hours. We were here. The government is working very hard for Canadians. However, as we saw last night, the Conservatives voted against economic agencies, including the agency for Quebec regions. Where was the member?

* * *

•(1205)

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my constituents often tell me how important it is to have good Internet access and connectivity. We know that this is an important issue that contributes to development in rural regions. It is an important concern for the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and all Canadians in rural areas across the country.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development give the House an update?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his tireless work on broadband infrastructure, which will help rural communities realize their full potential. I am proud of our government's commitment.

[English]

In budget 2019, we are making an ambitious new commitment to ensure that every single household and business in Canada has access to high-speed internet by 2030, no matter how rural or remote. Where a person lives in Canada should not limit one's ability to participate in the digital economy. Our government has a real plan to get everyone connected.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Prime Minister's stories do not add up. The former attorney general testified before the justice committee that she was pressured by the Prime Minister and his staff to save 9,000 jobs at SNC-Lavalin, but the CEO of SNC said that he never made any such claims. The Prime Minister must end his cover-up.

Will the Prime Minister allow the ethics committee to take a full investigation into the corruption scandal involving SNC-Lavalin, or will he once again make his Liberal MPs stand in the way of justice?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the exact same question that the Conservatives have been asking at every opportunity that they have had a question to ask today. That is their prerogative.

However, what we see clearly is that the Conservatives are projecting. This is what they do. They know how their benches

operate. They know that they have no room to be able to negotiate or have real conversations. All they can do is throw mud. We voted for 31 hours because they advertised; they made sure that everyone knew they were going to ensure that the budget would not be presented in this chamber. When the budget was presented, they were upset.

Do colleagues know who is not upset? Many Canadians from coast to coast to coast are not upset, because they will benefit from our programs—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the budget, the government just announced that it will be procuring three new ferries. That is a good thing. The timing is great, because Quebec's Davie shipyard has had to lay off 1,200 workers due to a lack of federal contracts. These 1,200 workers lost their jobs because the Liberals and the Conservatives have chosen to spend the past 10 years enriching shipyards in other provinces, even though those shipyards have not delivered a single ship in 10 years.

Could the government finally restore justice and fairness by awarding the ferry contracts to Davie?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to remind the House that during the Conservatives' 10 years in power, the Davie shipyard was shut out of the shipbuilding strategy. Whereas Davie was awarded 0% of contracts under the Harper government, it has received fully 15% of the value of the contracts awarded since we took office. Unlike the Conservatives and the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, who was at the cabinet table at the time, we on this side of the House recognize the workers' potential and the shipyard's expertise. We are going to keep tapping that potential to meet all of the federal government's needs.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my guess is that 15% is a knock-on effect of marijuana legalization.

We now know that the *Apollo* ferry is a rickety and dangerous old boat that should have been pulled from service long ago. This information should have been available before now, because Transport Canada is responsible for inspecting vessels.

Apparently Transport Canada rubber-stamps vessel certifications without inspecting or investigating the vessels thoroughly.

Will the Minister of Transport take responsibility, get serious about inspections and compensate Quebec, whose only mistake here was trusting the Minister of Transport to do his job properly?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of passengers is a priority. In the case of the *Apollo*, it has never been compromised.

Pursuant to an inspection that lasted multiple days, Transport Canada asked the STQ to make modifications before the ferry was put in service on February 11. A few minor problems were raised, none of which compromised the vessel's safety.

We share in the Transportation Safety Board's commitment to safety. It has shared some preliminary findings, but it is too early to speculate at this time. I offer my sincere thanks to the member from Matane for his hard work on this file.

● (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the TSB's investigation is ongoing, but we already know that the *Apollo* had all kinds of problems: deck and hull watertightness, fire protection, life-saving equipment, main and auxiliary propulsion, electrical distribution, instrument controls and more. We know the problems are not new even though Transport Canada said everything was fine.

Is the Minister of Transport aware that Transport Canada's extreme negligence is costing Quebecers a fortune and could pose a major threat to users' safety?

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that this purchase happened between two provinces.

The transport ministry is responsible for looking at the seaworthiness of these vessels. As I stated, there was an inspection that lasted multiple days. There were changes asked of the STQ to make these modifications before the ferry was put into service on February 11.

Safety is our absolute top priority. We will make sure, in every case, that we take the actions necessary to protect Canadians.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, until today's breaking news, the only thing growing faster than the number of independent MPs was Canada's canola exports.

Now our largest customer, China, has stopped buying Canadian canola. Prairie farmers should not pay the price for an unrelated diplomatic tiff.

What actions is the government taking to reopen the Chinese market and to support our canola farmers until this is rectified?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that access to new markets for our high-quality canola means more money in the pockets of farmers and that it supports good middle-class jobs for Canadian farm families.

Talks will continue between representatives of both countries in order to find science-based solutions to this issue as quickly as possible. We are working very closely with industry representatives on this issue, and we will continue to keep them informed as new information becomes available.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

March 22, 2019

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 22nd day of March, 2019, at 9:44 a.m..

Yours sincerely,

Marie-Geneviève Mounier

Associate Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-95, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019; and Bill C-96, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1215)

[Translation]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2018 annual report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a charter statement for Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a charter statement for Bill C-93, An Act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 30 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 60th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled, “Report 3, Canada’s Fighter Force—National Defence, of the 2018 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[English]

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 61st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Report 5, Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour—Canadian Armed Forces, of the 2018 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

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

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Taking Action: Improving the Lives of Canadians Living with Episodic Disabilities”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

● (1220)

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance that, during its consideration of Bill S-6, An Act to implement the Convention between Canada and the Republic of Madagascar for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, the Committee be granted the power to travel throughout Canada to hear testimony from interested parties and that

the necessary staff do accompany the Committee, provided that the travel does not exceed ten calendar days.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

The motion relates to issues of international taxation, and one international company that is affected by that issue is of course SNC-Lavalin.

In the debate over SNC-Lavalin, the Prime Minister has claimed that the reason for his pressuring the former attorney general to shelve charges against the company was to save jobs. Even if we believe that jobs trump the rule of law, there is still a problem with this story: It is false.

Let us start with the claim that the Prime Minister made on September 31, when he was speaking to the former attorney general. He told her that either she had to shelve the charges against the company or the headquarters would move.

Let me quote the former attorney general's testimony before the justice committee when she was speaking about the September 17 meeting. She stated:

The Prime Minister again cited the potential loss of jobs and SNC moving. Then, to my surprise, the Clerk started to make the case for the need to have a DPA. He said, “There is a board meeting on Thursday September 20 with stockholders”, “they will...be moving to London if this happens” “and there is an election in Quebec soon”.

She reported that the finance minister's chief of staff and a senior prime ministerial adviser also told her that the headquarters would leave Montreal unless she shelved charges against the company.

That claim, of course, makes no sense on the face of it. Moving its headquarters would be impossible for the company, and I will get to why in a moment, but would not actually reduce the company's criminal culpability. Even if the headquarters were in Beijing, London or Kalamazoo, criminal charges would proceed here in Canada; thus, leaving the country would make no sense as a strategy to avoid legal penalty.

Furthermore, it is impossible for SNC to move its headquarters. It must stay in Montreal as part of a \$1.5-billion loan deal that the company signed with the Quebec pension plan.

To quote a March 20 SNC report written to its shareholders, SNC-Lavalin “...has undertaken that, for the period of seven (7) years, the head office of SNC-Lavalin will remain in Montreal and will remain the focus of the Company's strategic decision-making; a significant portion of the Company's management team, including its CEO, will be resident in the Province of Quebec....” That is the agreement that the company signed to retain this \$1.5-billion loan from the Quebec pension plan.

Routine Proceedings

Furthermore, the company just signed a 20-year lease and is undertaking a major workplace renovation for its 2,000 employees. Companies do not renovate their office space for 2,000 employees if they are moving. Even after the director of public prosecutions and the former attorney general decided not to grant the company a remediation agreement and even after the CEO learned that the charges would go ahead, the CEO, Neil Bruce, told the Toronto Star that SNC is not moving. The Star article says, "Bruce also insisted the company is committed to remaining headquartered in Montreal", adding that he stated "We absolutely want to be based here in Quebec, here in Canada."

Again, that is in the Toronto Star from December 17, 2018. These comments were made after the company learned that it would not get a deferred prosecution agreement and that charges would in fact go ahead.

Remember, the Prime Minister told the former attorney general that the company's headquarters was moving, and months later the company's CEO said no—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe the issue before us deals with Madagascar and the tax treaty. That being the case, I suggest what the member said is absolutely irrelevant to the issue at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for raising the matter of relevance. Of course, it is a pertinent part of our Standing Orders with respect to speeches.

I recognize that the hon. member for Carleton is halfway into his remarks and is splitting his time. I know that he has been referring to points in his speech and I urge him to focus on the issue that was articulated in the motion that is in front of the House.

The hon. member for Carleton.

• (1225)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said twice on September 17 to the former attorney general that either she should shelve the charges against SNC-Lavalin or its headquarters would leave Montreal.

This week, Business News Network asked the CEO of SNC-Lavalin, "Did you threaten to move your headquarters from Montreal?" CEO Neil Bruce replied, "No." He was asked, "Never?" and again he replied, "No." The interviewer then asked, "Where did this issue come up that it was a possibility for SNC?" The CEO replied, "I don't know what people make up, or what they have in their minds."

When he said people, he was referencing the Prime Minister. It was the Prime Minister who said twice on September 17 to the former attorney general and then once a few weeks ago at a press conference that SNC would move out of Canada altogether if the criminal charges went ahead.

Now that we know the Prime Minister's claim to the former attorney general was false, this raises a number of important questions.

Section 139 of the Criminal Code makes it an offence for anyone to attempt to obstruct, pervert or defeat the course of justice. The course of justice at the time the Prime Minister met with the former attorney general was for SNC-Lavalin's fraud and bribery charges to go to trial. That is where the course of justice was leading. He was attempting to interrupt that course of justice by persuading his attorney general to sign a deal with the company, or have the prosecutor do so, that would shelve those charges. If he deliberately stated a falsehood to the top law officer to have charges shelved, his own criminal culpability may be at stake, and we will examine that issue more as the days go on.

That is the issue of the headquarters, but the other half of the Prime Minister's jobs claim is that, according to him and to testimony by his top adviser, Gerald Butts, "9,000 people's jobs are at stake". I am quoting Mr. Butts in his testimony.

Earlier this week a reporter for BNN asked the CEO of SNC-Lavalin about the claim. She said, "The inference is that if you do not get to go the way of deferred prosecution agreement, 9,000 jobs disappear." The CEO answered, "That's incorrect, and we've never said that."

The CEO was asked directly about the Prime Minister's claim that 9,000 jobs would vanish if the charges proceeded, and he replied, "That's incorrect, and we've never said that."

The Prime Minister suggested he got that information from the company. Who else would have told him that 9,000 jobs would up and vanish if charges were to go ahead? Now we know that his 9,000 jobs claim was a falsehood; we know that he looked Canadians in the eye and told them something that was not true. Not only do we have the mendacity around the Prime Minister's defence, but we also have a broader and bigger question that has not been answered or even explored.

If the Prime Minister was not protecting jobs when he tried to shelve the fraud and bribery charges for SNC-Lavalin, then who was he protecting? What motivated him to personally interfere with the former attorney general and to direct his staff and ministers to contact her 20 times in order to shelve these charges? That is an extraordinary amount of activity for a prime minister and his team under any circumstances. In the interest of dropping charges on a corporation accused of a serious crime, it is spectacular in its weirdness.

In all my years I have never heard of a prime minister or any politician trying to interfere to have charges dropped. However, to personally interact with an attorney general in order to do so is maybe a once in history event in Canada, and that is the source of this massive scandal.

• (1230)

I will conclude now by saying that the Conservatives will use every tool in the parliamentary tool kit to find out why the Prime Minister interfered and whether such interference may have been a criminal offence.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member opposite's statement just now and as well listened to his questions in question period. I just want to clear this up for my own understanding.

Is the article on the interview with the head of SNC-Lavalin that the member keeps referring to the article published on March 19, headlined "SNC Chief Says Job Losses Possible Amid Canadian Scandal"? Is that the same article that says that while he never threatened to move the company, and spoke to the Prime Minister about it, what he did say in it was this:

"This is where we want to be, in terms of our base." But the chief executive also signalled the company could pivot its focus elsewhere.

Is that the same article that says that job losses are in fact possible, that there used to be 21,000 jobs in Quebec and Canada in 2012 but that since then they have been reduced to 9,000, and more job losses are possible as a result of the ongoing situation?

Is that the article he keeps quoting as saying that the head of SNC-Lavalin never threatened job losses, although he does, in the title of the article and in the body of the text, and that he never talked about moving the headquarters, although he does reference the board meeting that happened in December 2018? Is that the article the member keeps referencing, or is there another article where he contradicts himself?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. I am referring to an interview the SNC-Lavalin CEO did. In the interview, he does not say that job losses will result. What he actually said was that in the absolute worst-case scenario, Canadian workers at SNC-Lavalin may ultimately just get jobs with other Canadian construction companies in Canada and that those jobs would be in Canada, because the construction projects are in Canada.

Let me explain something to the member about infrastructure. When they are doing infrastructure jobs, their workers have to be there. SNC is building the north-south transit project in Ottawa. They cannot build a 14-kilometre transit line in Beijing or London and drop it out of a helicopter in the nation's capital. The work would actually have to be done here. Not only is it wrong to claim that there would be job losses in the event of prosecution, it is physically impossible.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague opposite introduced the concept of jobs, etc., and my colleague has now explained it, I am curious. I am listening to this debate and thinking that at the heart of the SNC-Lavalin scandal is the fact that the company stands accused of bribing a Gadhafi with a yacht and buying Canadian prostitutes for Moammar Gadhafi's son, hundreds of millions of dollars in bribery, I believe.

I just wonder why the Prime Minister is going through hell and high water to protect a company that has clearly gone to such great lengths to bribe a company to get contracts, when he should be perhaps focusing on things like the energy sector or maybe the agriculture sector, where we have a catastrophic failure today on behalf of the government, and, relating it to the motion at hand, why travel and Canadian voices are so important, especially given the

Privilege

culture of silence this Prime Minister and the current government have undertaken this week.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for the very good points she makes.

The Liberal member across the way continues to revive from the dead this 9,000-jobs claim. The CEO of the company has correctly pointed out that 9,000 jobs are not at stake. He said that in the worst-case scenario, a criminal conviction might cause some of those employees to work for other Canadian companies in Canada.

I will tell members why they would have to work in Canada. SNC-Lavalin has the five biggest construction jobs in all of the country right now. They are worth \$52 billion. Because they are construction jobs, they have to be done on construction sites. In other words, the employees working on those jobs would have to do them in Canada. Unless the Liberal government is going to allow foreign workers to come into Canada and displace those construction jobs in our country, it would be impossible for those jobs to be lost.

In other words, the whole jobs excuse has been a patent lie, which raises two questions. One, is it appropriate to have a Prime Minister who looked 37 million Canadians in the eyes at a press conference a couple of weeks ago and stated a patent falsehood that is disprovable with a brief look at the facts and a brief listening to the company's CEO? Two, given that we now know that he was not protecting jobs, who was he protecting, and why?

* * *

● (1235)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PROCESS USED TO DETERMINE LIBERAL CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to address a question of privilege that was raised earlier in the House.

I wish to table a statement that was made by the member for Whitby. There have been conversations with my good friend and I have been granted permission to table this statement. Her statement to the member of Perth—Wellington was, "What in your right mind made you decide that you were allowed to speak for me? Everything in this ridiculous point of order is false and you have no right to speak on my behalf. I am perfectly capable. Quit grandstanding and please correct this."

I would like to thank the member for Whitby, who is a very good friend of mine. I thank her for sitting in the House late into the night as we went through the marathon votes, voting with the government each and every step of the way. I respect her decision to sit as an independent. I know why she did that. It is for her to say why she did that, and for the members opposite to read body language as a way of reading fact into the record has now quite clearly been dismissed by the member for Whitby. I wish they would respect her words, rather than put words in her mouth.

Routine Proceedings

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the next steps here, I thought perhaps from the initial comments by the parliamentary secretary that he was signalling that he wished to table a document he had with him. As a parliamentary secretary, this would not ordinarily be permitted without the unanimous consent of the House.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that in response to the tweet that was sent, I acknowledged to the member for Whitby that I would be rising to address that statement. I do want to do so.

The intention of my intervention this morning was focused on the Reform Act. It was not my intention to put words into the mouth of the member for Whitby. For that, I do apologize. I had already indicated that to the member over Twitter. I acknowledged that I would be returning to the House to do just that, which is what I have now done.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his response in that regard.

The hon. Minister of Justice is rising on a point of order.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am tabling the government's responses to Order Paper Questions Nos. 2192 to 2222 and a revised response to Question No. 1720.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to resume debate. However, I want to bring to members' attention that the issue of relevance was brought up in the last exchange. Members are reminded that we are in debate on a matter that was proposed by the member for Carleton in respect to the Standing Committee on Finance during its consideration of Bill S-6. This is just to remind hon. members with respect to the rule of relevance that these things do come up on a regular basis.

I am quoting from the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states:

Notwithstanding their importance, these rules remain difficult to define and enforce, not least because such enforcement must respect the freedom of debate enjoyed by all Members. The rule against repetition can be invoked by the Speaker to prevent the repetition of arguments already made.... The rule of relevance enables the Chair to counter any tendency to stray from the question before the House or committee. It is not always possible to judge the relevance...of a Member's remarks until he or she has spoken at some length or even completed his or her remarks....

The Speaker must exercise his or her discretion:

...if the rules are applied too rigidly, they have the potential for severely curtailing debate; if they are neglected, the resultant loss of debating time may prevent other Members from participating in debate. Particular circumstances, the mood of the House and the relative importance of the matter under debate will influence the strictness with which the Speaker interprets these rules.

I say that just as a reminder to hon. members, since the time of the House is limited when a matter is before it. This is why we encourage members, who have great liberties to phrase their arguments in the way they wish, to ensure at the very least that the arguments they make have relevance and can be tied to the question the House has been presented with.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Foothills.

● (1240)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your clarification on the debate today. I feel it is very important for me and my colleagues to get up and speak to Bill S-6, which is the Canada–Madagascar double taxation legislation.

Today we are talking specifically about allowing the Standing Committee on Finance to travel as part of that study. I feel that it is a very important element for this legislation.

I am not usually in support of committees travelling for unnecessary reasons. However, in this case, I believe it is absolutely vital that the Standing Committee on Finance have the ability to travel. The reason I say that is that it seems to me that on some of these issues we have faced over the last few months, we have seen a real lack of presence when it comes to some very important foreign affairs issues.

For example, right now we do not have an ambassador in China. That means that we do not have the right representation from Canada in China. We are already seeing the consequences of that. Late last night, as we were going through our 30th hour of debate, it broke that China has now refused to purchase any canola from Canadian producers. Initially it was from just one supplier, Richardson, but that has now been expanded to include canola from every Canadian producer.

It ties it back to Bill S-6 and the importance of having representation from the House of Commons and from parliamentarians reaching out to some of our trading partners around the world and some of our allies around the world, including Madagascar. Had we had that relationship with China, we may have been able to address this crisis before it started.

Not only was the announcement late last night about canola very disconcerting to the 45,000 canola producers across Canada, but this morning we also heard that it has been expanded to include peas, wheat and possibly other Canadian commodities.

I want to expand on the consequences of not having representation from Canada and Canadian parliamentarians with our trusted trading partners. Let us go back in time a little, when one of our number one importers of Canadian lentils and peas was India. Under our government, we expanded that market to more than \$5 billion in Canadian lentils and peas being exported to India.

Routine Proceedings

After our Prime Minister's ill-fated trip to India, India has refused to give us an exemption to their fumigation rules. It has also put extremely high tariffs, up to 50%, on some of our lentils and peas. As a result, our exports of these products to India have gone from \$5 billion, a high under a previous Conservative government, to as low as \$500 million now. That is a massive market for our pea and lentil producers we have lost because of the inept foreign affairs positions and strategies of the Liberal government.

Sometimes good can come out of bad. Because we lost that significant market in India, many of our producers were able to look to other markets. They had to. We cannot sell that much of that product here in Canada. Ninety per cent of the agricultural products we produce here in his country are exported.

Our producers were able to find other markets, including China. With this morning's announcement, we have now lost that secondary market. Within one calendar year, our pea and lentil producers have lost their first and now their second major markets in the world. A big part of that is because of the failures of the Liberal government when it comes to our foreign relations.

That goes directly back to Bill S-6 and why I think it is so important for the Standing Committee on Finance to have the opportunity to travel as part of this study to rebuild some of those foreign relations we had with some of our trading partners.

I talked about canola at the beginning of my intervention. I want to stress the fact that it is clear that the Liberal government does not understand the urgency of this decision by the Chinese government to block Canadian canola imports. This is a \$26-billion market with economic impacts on Canada's economy. There are 250,000 jobs. These are decisions that are going to impact our producers, not in the fall, when they harvest next year's canola crop, but now. This is impacting the decisions they make right now.

● (1245)

The cost of a bushel of Canadian canola has gone down by more than a dollar a bushel. The value of the canola that farmers have in their bins from last year's harvest has reduced by more than half a billion dollars and is probably getting close to a billion. Every single day, the price a bushel—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, regarding the motion currently before the House, you will note that the English and French versions in today's Notice Paper are inconsistent. There are in fact several errors in the French version. It is rather difficult to follow. I would ask that you come up with a solution, since there are several errors.

For instance, the English version refers to the Standing Committee on Finance, which is correct, while the French version talks about the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. It goes on like that in the paragraphs that follow. This makes it somewhat hard to follow the debate.

● (1250)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît for her intervention concerning an error in the Notice Paper. With respect to notice of Motion No. 539, there appears to be a small concordance error between the English and French versions. We will try to determine what caused the error, but I suspect it is probably simply an administrative error. We will correct and clarify the translation of the motion in question.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the error in question is in my motion. As a solution, I could read the motion in the language of Molière, since it was already read out in the language of Shakespeare. I can also give my speech again in French, to make up for the error in the French version of the motion.

I am prepared to give my speech in French and to read the motion in French, out of respect for bilingualism and for francophone Canadians who have the right to hear our messages, our debates, our deliberations and our motions in both languages.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for his intervention.

I would like to add some clarification to this motion. It seems that the motion was moved in English and that the English version is correct, but that a number of words were added in the French version by mistake. It is an administrative error found in a number of other motions, including the mention of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. The Clerk of the House will immediately see to having the necessary corrections made.

Again, I thank the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît for pointing out this error. These things happen from time to time, but it is important that all motions are submitted correctly to the House.

The hon. member for Malpeque on a point of order.

● (1255)

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, and I am not good in the French language, but I agree with the remarks of the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I think you have to look at this motion and the source of the motion, which is the member for Carleton. As you stated, there are clearly errors in this, just as we heard in the speech earlier from the member for Carleton; there were factual errors in many areas of his remarks.

However, in terms of the motion itself, there is no question. I chair the finance committee. The member for Carleton is on that committee. The motion was drafted in great haste, and you will see several motions that are just changing the number of days that the committee would travel. This is coming from a member who represents a party which is constantly blocking travel by the finance committee, and this motion, being written in haste, is all about trying to delay the debate on the budget, which was tabled this week, so that Canadians cannot hear about all the good things that are in that budget for Canadians.

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The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member for Malpeque's addition to this discussion, and I see the member for Carleton is on his feet.

This is a matter that was brought to attention by the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît. I have given an explanation on the corrections that will take place for these motions that, I will say again, were properly entered and properly disposed of in the finance committee. It was just an error in the translation when that became reflected in the Order Paper.

I will accept the hon. member for Carleton on a brief intervention, and then we must get back to the debate at hand.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the chair of the finance committee is angry that Conservatives are questioning all the junketeering he wants to do at taxpayer expense. What I was hoping he was going to address in his intervention is why he slammed his gavel and shut down the finance committee to prevent his finance minister from answering as to why he and his chief of staff personally interfered with the former attorney general in order to shelve charges against a powerful Liberal-linked corporation. That chairman shut down the study.

The Deputy Speaker: We are into another area of debate, I believe, rather than points of order. We know these things do happen, but we do need to get back to the debate that is before the House.

We are going back to the member for Foothills for the continuation of his remarks.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, this goes to what I am speaking about regarding Bill S-6 and why it is important for this committee to travel.

We are talking about the value of canola and how it has dropped for Canadian producers by \$1 billion on the product they are trying to sell now. Where is our agriculture minister when all this is going on? She is travelling around Canada doing photo ops. She should be in China resolving this issue as quickly as possible.

Our Canadian producers can no longer be paying the price for the Liberals' failures on economic policy and certainly on foreign affairs. Over and over again, it is Canadian agriculture that is paying the price, whether it is the carbon tax, trade issues with India, durum wheat to Italy, and now China no longer taking our canola, wheat, peas and who knows what is next.

In fact, I am so frustrated with what has been going on with the Liberal government that I would like to move:

That the House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1300)

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 1, 2019, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:01 p.m.)

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