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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2019 reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons. These reports are permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1040)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 1277*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Drouin
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Fergus
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Graham	Hajdu
Hardie	Hébert
Hehr	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau

Points of Order

Morrissey
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Murray
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peterson
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodríguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Sheehan
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid— 158

Strahl
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Viersen
Warkentin
Wong
Zimmer— 115

Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Vecchio
Wagantall
Waugh
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the second time in two days, unfortunately, the Liberals have prevented us from getting to the emergency debate item under routine proceedings.

Canadian canola producers are counting on Parliament to talk about this crisis so that we can hear what they have to say and talk about the real issues facing Canadian canola producers.

[*English*]

Parliament must send a message to the government that this crisis must be a top priority and cannot be put off any longer. I request the unanimous consent of the House to return to requests for emergency debates right now.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was supposed to introduce an important bill today to protect children and create a youth commissioner position, but the government cut short routine proceedings. The bill would ensure that vulnerable children are protected.

I seek unanimous consent of the House to revert back to the introduction of private members' bills so that I can introduce this important bill for Canada.

● (1045)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît have the unanimous consent of the House to revert back to that item?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

15TH REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to clarify an administrative issue related to the tabling on Monday, January 28, 2019, of the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Allison
Angus
Aubin
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Boulerice
Brosseau
Caron
Choquette
Cooper
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeschen
Dusseault
Falk (Provencher)
Fortin
Garrison
Genius
Godin
Harder
Hughes
Johns
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Kwan
Leitch
Lloyd
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Masse (Windsor West)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Plamondon
Quach
Reid
Richards
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Ste-Marie

Albas
Alleslev
Anderson
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Berthold
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brassard
Cannings
Carrie
Clarke
Davidson
Diotte
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Gourde
Hoback
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Laverdière
Liepert
Lobb
MacGregor
Martel
Mathysen
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nantel
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Rays
Rempel
Sansoucy
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski

The Budget

In accordance with Standing Order 109, the committee agreed to a motion to request a government response to the report within 120 days. The committee agreed to the motion as it was reported in the minutes of proceedings of meeting 124 on Tuesday, December 11, 2018, which is cited in the report. However, this request does not appear in the text of the report itself. This was an administrative oversight.

I rise today to confirm that the committee does indeed wish to receive a government response within 120 days. I have signed a new copy of the report to that effect.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the members that we need to hear the motion before we can decide whether or not it is in order. I thank the hon. member for his intervention, and I am directing the Clerk of the House to take the appropriate administrative measures to address the situation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for that very rousing welcome, both for the way it lifted my spirits and also for the way it permitted me to finish writing my speech. I promise to stop procrastinating, but just not yet.

Today I rise on a very important issue, which is of course the cover-up budget. I will quickly recap how we got to where we are and then discuss how we can get where we need to go.

Let us start with what happened a year ago today. The Prime Minister introduced a budget that amended the Criminal Code in an omnibus bill of over 500 pages, bringing into effect something called deferred prosecution agreements. These agreements allow corporations accused of serious crime to sign special deals to avoid trial and conviction.

Nowhere was this discussed in the budget book, but it was slipped into the back end of the budget bill. Members of the finance committee, including Liberals, were astonished when they discovered it there at around 10 p.m. in a late-night committee hearing, when the government was rushing to get the bill passed.

A year later, we would learn why the government was so determined to introduce this special deal for corporate criminals. It came in the form of a Globe and Mail story revealing that the Prime Minister had inappropriately pressured his then attorney general to extend such a deal to SNC-Lavalin, a large, Liberal-linked corporation with a history of donating roughly \$100,000 to the Liberal Party illegally. That company is charged with fraud and bribery.

The charges are that it bribed the leaders of Libya in order to steal from the people of Libya. This is not a victimless crime. The leaders of the Gadhafi family were treated to a cornucopia of gifts from this company. Some might say that is trivial and irrelevant, but the consequence was that some of the poorest people in the world were robbed of \$130 million, according to these allegations. These are not victimless crimes. This is not simply how things are done over there.

We later learned from the former attorney general's testimony at the justice committee that the allegations were true. She said that over a four-month period, she experienced consistent and sustained interference and that she was hounded and bullied and experienced veiled threats. She was ultimately removed from her job because she refused to interrupt the criminal proceedings and let SNC escape prosecution.

Many called her a liar and said she was not telling the truth. They said she was simply doing it all for publicity or out of some strange vengeance. Then, of course, she released documented evidence and audio recordings proving that everything she said was true.

Members of the government, despite having a massive apparatus of researchers and spin doctors, have not been able to contradict a single, solitary fact that she presented before the committee or that she stated anywhere else.

Against this backdrop, we have a government that has provided nothing but a cavalcade of contradictions and changing stories.

In the last three weeks, the Prime Minister has killed two parliamentary investigations into this matter and has refused to call a public inquiry. This morning, the justice committee met to decide whether it would resume its earlier investigation. A quick glance at the justice committee's website appears to suggest that under the direction of the Prime Minister, the committee has decided not to proceed with its investigation.

Where do we go from here? To see forward, we have to look backward. Such has been the method of all great advancement. If we look back at the great advancements in history, we can see they were made by people who understood history.

• (1050)

Think, for example, of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address. We all remember that it ends with "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth", but that is just the ending of the speech. The beginning starts with history.

It states:

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure.

"Fourscore and seven years ago" refers to the passage of 87 years of time. Lincoln was saying to his country that for it to go forward in freedom, a freedom that would involve the Emancipation Proclamation, it needed to look back to 1776, master its history and live up to the words of its forebears. Therefore, here today, as we discuss the ancient principle of judicial independence, we too must look backward at our history to understand where these principles originate. To go forward, we have to be able to look backward.

The Budget

Winston Churchill understood this. He was probably the most prescient statesman ever to live. His incredible clairvoyance is unmatched.

We all know the famous example: Early in the thirties, he predicted the comprehensive evil of Adolf Hitler, even when many others saw him as harmless. He called for a robust national defence to prepare for what he foresaw years in advance as Hitler's forthcoming aggression in pursuit of world domination. How did he see forward? He looked backward. He understood history.

We all know that at in 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, he predicted the beginning of the Cold War. He spoke of an iron curtain descending over Europe in 1946, well before the rest of the world was even thinking about a conflict with Stalin, who had been a so-called ally in World War II. How did he see forward? He was able to look backward.

He was able to look backward because he was the author of 58 volumes of Nobel Prize-winning literature, almost all of it on history. But for one or two that he admitted were failed attempts to write novels, he wrote almost exclusively about history. When instructing young people at a commencement ceremony on what they must do to succeed in life, he gave them three pieces of advice: study history, history and history.

The predictions that he made were not limited to the political realm. A lot of people do not know that in a 1931 Maclean's magazine essay, he predicted the iPad. He said that in future years, men and women would be able to hold in their hands a device, and then he predicted Skype. He said they would be able to speak to someone on the other side of the world instantaneously, as though they were sticking their head out the window and speaking to a neighbour. He said these devices would be connected by a central device in a household, which we call routers or modems today. This was in 1931. He predicted that humanity would one day unleash the extraordinary power of the atom for good and for evil. Again, this was over a decade before Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

● (1055)

He predicted the forthcoming conflict between free nations and socialist nations, which, of course, both manifested themselves in the Second World War, where we fought national socialism in Germany and Italy, and in the Cold War, where we fought Marxist socialism. However, he predicted this in 1931, decades before any of these events would actually come to pass.

What else did he do in that essay? He explained his methodology for seeing the future. He actually gave kind of an IKEA instruction manual on how one could become a fortune teller. He said there were two ways to see ahead, and both of them involved looking backwards. One is the cyclical methodology, which is used when we see events in the present that have existed in the past. We look at where they ended up in the past and then we can predict where they will again end in the future.

An hon. member: Gomery.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Someone said "Gomery", pointing to the Liberal sponsorship scandal. Quite rightly as that history is now repeating itself with the SNC-Lavalin scandal.

However, he said there was another methodology for seeing the future. It was the trajectory model. It is used when we are trying to anticipate something that has never existed before. I believe this is how he was able to foretell all of the technological advancements contained in that incredible essay. This methodology involves seeing where things were, where things are and therefore projecting where they will be.

Both of these methods, where we use a circular view of history repeating itself or a trajectory to judge where things have been and where they are to imagine where they will be involve looking backwards. This methodology makes sense with what we know about neurology. The human mind creates images for its imagination out of fragmented memories of the past. In other words, the things that we imagine in the future are the things that we have stored away in our memory from the past. Thus he was capable of taking that 58 volumes of literature he had written, the millions of words he had read and the countless historic events of which he had been a part and was able to take that knowledge and project it forward deep into the future, seeing far beyond what anyone else could see.

I say all of this as a justification for delving deep into our own history in order to judge how we might proceed with this present day controversy. Some members might be tempted to jump up on points of order, as I look back at where our democracy came from, ask about the relevance and ask the Speaker that I no longer be permitted to speak about our past because the past, according to some, no longer matters. Of course, I make these earlier remarks to tell members how very much our past matters and how much it can tell us about our future.

This is a lesson that the current Prime Minister should learn. In his speech before the House of Commons sometime ago, marking a great anniversary of the Parliament of Canada, he basically omitted the entire history of the Westminster system and spoke of Parliament as though freedom and democracy were just invented by his dad in 1982. Of course, we know that kind of thinking is dangerous. We today stand on the shoulders of giants. We here inherit something great from those who came before us.

We must always remember, especially in the debate about the interference of political actors in our judicial system, that while our parliamentary civilization may be 800 years long, it is only one or two generations deep. In other words, if one or two generations decide to dispense with its hard and fast rules and replace them with some new modern invention rooted in nothing but symbolism, selfies and sobbing speeches, then we very much will be living in a house resting on sand.

● (1100)

Speaking of sand and sandstone, I see a lot of it all around us today. We are inside the courtyard of the former West Block building, a building whose exterior has always been clad with sandstone. Sandstone tends to be more resistant to the weathering effects of our brutal Canadian climate.

That being said, we used to meet in another place called Centre Block. When we are inside Centre Block, we bear witness to a different stone, limestone.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Manitoba limestone.

The Budget

Hon. Pierre Poilievre Limestone from Manitoba, someone very patriotically yells out from across the way. He should take great pride in that limestone. It is literally part of Canada. It is exhumed from the ground and builds up the democratic institutions we now enjoy in Canada's parliamentary system.

While we walk around that old Centre Block building, we might see a number of different substances. We might have seen, before we moved, the solid white oak desks we have here.

We might go into the Library and see the beautifully ornate and well-carved pine, polished brilliantly, resplendent before the eyes of every astonished visitor. We might look up at the gilded dome and see gold looking back down at us. We might look down at the ground and see the cherry, oak and walnut wood on which our feet walk. All of those elements are beautiful. However, for me, what matters most is the stone, the limestone.

The limestone takes us back in time. If we walk into the basement in the Centre Block building, we will walk millions of years into history. Inside those stones are skeletal fragments of marine life compressed and piled millions of times under unimaginable, nearly infinite pressure to create this stone. We can literally witness seashells in the walls staring right back at us. Those seashells would have been sliced in half by a stone mason in the 19th century or perhaps in the early 20th century, as Parliament was rebuilt following the World War I era fire. Either way, in those stones is the story of time and there are two parts to that story.

The first part is that limestone is solid and to our eyes unmoving, a perfect symbol of the institution the stone is used to build up, and it should be so. Also in that same stone is evidence that all nature, including geological nature, including the rocks and stones we see as indestructible, is always in transformation. They always risk erosion, that one object today was a different object long ago. We must always work every day to preserve what we have so that stone may never erode, that these oak desks may never be nibbled away by termites and that the institutions that took so long for us to build up shall never be allowed to disintegrate piece by piece. That is why this debate is so important.

• (1105)

The disintegration of great civilizations does not just happen with a sudden bang. They say Rome was not built in a day, and that is true. However, it was not destroyed in a day either. It took almost half a millennia from the time Julius Caesar converted the Roman Republic into an empire, and himself from consul into an emperor, until the Roman Empire disintegrated and was sacked and defeated. An early decision can slowly eat away and wear down the once mighty and apparently indestructible institutions that give rise to the people in the first place. Thus, we must be so vigilant and on guard whenever they come under attack.

The former attorney general has said that our core institutions faced such an attack from the Prime Minister of Canada. She testified that he personally and politically tried to interfere with a criminal prosecution. Our institutional history is one that separates court from Parliament, judge from Prime Minister, and deliberately so. We understand that as soon as the politicians start to mess with the courtroom, we will go from the rule of law to the law of rulers.

This history is encapsulated in stone. I have here a beautiful book, which I am not allowed to hold up because of parliamentary rules, by Eleanor Milne, *Captured in Stone: Carving Canada's Past*. If we walk through the old Centre Block building, we will find beautiful carvings chiselled in the wall that tell us where we came from. The book outlines, "East Wall, Set 1, "The First Inhabitants of the North American Continent" "Centre Stone", "In the Bluefish Caves of northern Yukon, archaeologists have found evidence of the use of stone tools between 25,000 and 12,000 year ago." The images of that life are carved in the wall with Inuit people carrying out their hunting traditions.

We can go forward, and there are the native people who greeted the Vikings in the year 900 and 1000. We have images in the centre stone of John Cabot holding up a scroll in his left hand and a tiller in his right. Elsewhere, we have the first merchant ships to navigate the St. Lawrence River on the centre stone. We have Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Quebec City, when he encountered an aboriginal guide willing to lead him inland.

We turn forward and we see, on the left panel, the first colonies of 1763, and on the centre stone, a family of European settlers establishing a homestead. We see also carved in the wall, the great surveyor, David Thompson, interacting with indigenous people.

Finally, on the North Wall, Set 3, "The Long Road to Freedom and Justice" is engraved there. All Canadians who have not seen it should make haste to do so when the Centre Block reopens.

There is described, as I quote from this great book, "A strong figure is breaking chains, freeing doves. This speaks a symbolic language stating that those who come to this land to begin anew must leave all rage and bias behind."

Why do so many people come to this land and why are they so successful when they get here? Why do so many people of the world live in such squalor over there and yet when they come here, the very same people, enjoy such prosperity? We cannot say that it is anything unique about our makeup as a species. We are just the same as the rest of the world. In fact, we are the peoples of the world, literally.

• (1110)

We are a reflection of the world because of our long-standing and successful tradition of high levels of immigration. That long history that brings us to this moment tells us why so many people from so many far off lands make the journey here and why it is that they are so successful here when their lives were so much poorer elsewhere.

What is it that makes life so different here than it was over there? Is there something in the water? Is the air different? Why are we, as a nation, so prosperous, when so many others suffer so greatly?

The Budget

I look to the great Wilfrid Laurier for the answer. He was once asked to comment on Canada's nationality, and even then it was a seemingly impossible task. If he were in France, he would say French. If he were in England, he would say English. If he were in Scotland, he would say Scottish. Of course, here in Canada, in his time, at the beginning of the 20th century, we were all those things and much more. He could not define us by ethnicity, by language or by religion. In fact, he himself, though a French Catholic, read the King James Bible and therefore was not properly or even able to make his own identity known based on religion. How is it that he identified the Canadian nationality? He did so in these simple words: "Canada is free and freedom is its nationality."

From whence did that freedom come, though? That was the next question he needed to answer. He was a proud French Canadian who mixed very easily with people of other backgrounds. He said, famously, about his time at school, that he had schoolyard fights with the Scottish boys and made schoolboy love with the Scottish girls. In other words, he grew up with Scottish kids, even though he was French through and through.

His identity of Canadian freedom was actually British, even though his lineage was French. He said of French Canadians, which I will never forget, that France gave us life, and Britain gave us liberty.

I say that to explain that the inheritance of British parliamentary democracy, of the House of Commons, of common law and of so many other principles of British history are the inheritance of all people who live in this land, not just those who have an ethnic lineage back to Britain. In other words, we all inherit it. Even though I am not English, I inherit these English liberties, just the way Laurier said he did.

What are these English liberties and how did they originate? They started with the Magna Carta. In May 1215, the angry barons gathered in the fields of Runnymede. They were taxed to the max after years of crusading kings pillaging and plundering. They were tired of the Crown's tyranny, and they were determined to reverse it. They forced King John, against his will, to sign the great charter, or the Magna Carta, as it is called.

Looking through the Magna Carta and its roughly 60 clauses, one might find them a bit arcane. There is talk of scutage and fishing weirs and other arcana that might not seem relevant in the present, but there is a whole lot more that is.

Let me read some excerpts from that great document.

• (1115)

No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

What does that mean? It means no arrest without charge and no conviction without trial. That is relevant today, isn't it? Let me try another one:

He shall do this without destruction or damage to men or property. If we have given the guardianship of the land to a sheriff, or to any person answerable to us for the revenues, and he commits destruction or damage, we will exact compensation from him....

There are many important things here. One is, "If we have given the guardianship of the land to a sheriff". In other words, only a civil authority approved by a democratic mandate must have the ability to arrest or do damage to property. In that case, there must be compensation if such damage or such arrest was not justified.

No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

That, of course, speaks not only to arrest but to property rights. To this day, we state clearly that the Crown may not dispossess someone of his or her belongings, absent compensation for doing so, without the lawful judgment of equals or the law of the land. In other words, arbitrary expropriation is forbidden.

Let me pull another incredible invention out of that same statement: "except by the lawful judgment of his equals". In other words, jury trials have their origins right here in this sacred text. Do not tell me that these old parchments are a relic of the past and we should forget about them and that Canada was invented in 1982. These are ancient English liberties that are our inheritance, and no one can take them away.

Here is one that is particularly relevant to this debate. I hope the Prime Minister is listening to this:

To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

I look first at that starting clause, "To no one will we sell". It does not matter how many billions are in SNC-Lavalin coffers, how many lobbyists it can send scurrying about Parliament Hill, how many illegal donations it can make to political parties and how many prospective job offers it can throw around. No matter how much it flexes its financial muscle, we will not sell them justice. Justice is not for sale.

It goes on:

To any man whom we have deprived or dispossessed of lands, castles, liberties, or rights, without the lawful judgment of his equals, we will at once restore these.

In other words, the Crown must compensate for what the Crown has taken away.

All these customs and liberties that we have granted shall be observed in our kingdom in so far as concerns our own relations with our subjects. Let all men of our kingdom, whether clergy or laymen, observe them similarly in their relations with their own men.

In other words, clergy and laymen alike, Crown or subject, all must follow the law.

I bring your attention, of course, to the most important of all:

To all free men of our kingdom we have also granted, for us and our heirs for ever, all the liberties written out below, to have and to keep for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs

We are those heirs. We have inherited this. These are our liberties. They belong to us. The people of our country, the common people, have delegated us to this chamber to protect those liberties.

The Budget

• (1120)

Thus there is the ferocious response of the Canadian people, which has surprised so many political observers, to the scandal that currently rages inside the government. A lot of people have asked why people are so upset. It is a debate about text messages and emails, he said and she said and prosecutorial independence. How often do we hear that discussed at the water coolers of the workplace in Canada?

Why is it that Canadians have resounded so strongly to this particular scandal? It is because this scandal is not that complicated. It is actually quite simple. It is based on one simple rule that everyone understands from childhood in Canada: we are all equal before the law. This too had its imperfect origins in the Magna Carta. The moment King John signed that parchment, he conceded, for the first time in the known history of our system, that he, as the king, was no longer above the law. At that moment, the Crown became subject to the law, and no one, not even a king, was above the law.

Everyone understands that we are all equal before the law and that if a homeless man is charged with stealing a loaf of bread, he cannot simply knock on the Prime Minister's door and ask him to please make the prosecutor go light on him. He faces a trial, either by a judge or a jury, and a verdict is rendered based on the facts, precedence and the law. If it must be so for a homeless man charged with taking a loaf of bread, it sure as hell must be so for a powerful international corporation charged with corruption.

People understand that money already has too much influence in most western democracies. We do not need it to have more influence in the judicial system. We do not want two legal systems, one for the people and another for the powerful. We do not want justice to be for sale. We do not want politicians to tell the judges or the prosecutors what they can and should do. That is a basic principle dating back.

In the British North America Act, I notice that there is none of the soaring language witnessed in the Declaration of Independence or even in the U.S. Constitution. There was no Thomas Jefferson who sat down with a feather and drafted up words that we all remember, etch or repeat, other than "Peace, order and good government." Why is that? The answer, of course, is that our founding fathers understood that they did not need to write out all our freedoms at that moment in time, because it was accepted that we would inherit those that came from the mother parliament and the Magna Carta.

It has been a positive development that we have since written them out in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but that charter was merely a continuation of a then seven-and-a-half-century tradition that came before it. It was a continuation of the Canadian Bill of Rights, brought before Parliament by John Diefenbaker, but it was a continuation of everything that began in that field at Runnymede so long ago.

• (1125)

We are a nation not of revolution but of evolution. Where our friends south of the border spilled much blood to achieve their independence, we as a country almost had to be gently pushed out the door by the mother country. Of course, back in the early 1930s, with the Statute of Westminster, we were given full judicial independence, and yet for decades we would continue to go back

to the British Privy Council as our supreme court. In other words, the British were offering Canada more independence than we were prepared to accept.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt my colleague. I just want to make a point of order.

A bit earlier, we had the chair of the agriculture committee in here, and he talked about a correction to a report that he wanted to make. If he had really been doing his job, he would have come here on a different issue, which is to bring forward and support the proposal that one of our colleagues has now made twice, that we have an emergency debate on the canola issue. This is an incredibly important issue for Canadians. I want to challenge the chair of the agriculture committee to come back and take up that cause.

There are 43,000 canola farmers across Canada. This has been one of the most prominent success stories in agriculture across Canada in the last decades. From the 1970s, we have seen an industry develop, basically out of nothing, that now accounts for around \$27 billion of economic activity in this country every year, and so—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, it is not a point of order. What the member did previously is something that is normal to do when members want to bring forward corrections. What the hon. member is doing right now is a point of debate, and therefore unless he is putting forward a motion as part of his point of order, I am going back to the hon. member for Carleton.

I just want to make sure that the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands did not have a motion.

• (1130)

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I do not at this point, but I certainly reserve the opportunity to do that a bit later. I would like to hear my colleague's point of order on the other side. It perhaps pertains to this, because it is incredibly important that we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is fine. I will go to the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, just so that members across the way are aware, the reality is that we are under a budget debate, which provides members the opportunity to stand up and address the budget. The canola issue is of critical importance. I myself am from the Prairies. There are many lost opportunities that result from the tactic the Conservatives have adopted on the issue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): What the hon. member is bringing forward is debate as well. I would hope he would wait until the opportunity for questions and comments comes along, as I am sure it will at some point, to be able to speak to that.

I do want to remind the member for Carleton that we are speaking to the budget and although there is a lot of latitude there, I am assuming that he will ensure that his speech will relate to the issue that is before the House at this point.

The Budget

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I will first say that the point of order raised by my friend from Saskatchewan illustrates the entire thesis of my speech, that we here are a house of common people. We speak on behalf of the commoners, and the first commoners met in fields. That is why this place is green. Therefore, we should always remember the plight of our farmers in this place, especially now, when they are facing an unprecedented attack by a foreign tariff regime against our canola producers. We should remember the thousands and thousands of them who generate billions of dollars of wealth to pay for our schools and hospitals and for the livelihoods of the people who work in them.

When a member from Saskatchewan rises in the House of Commons, it reminds me why we have Parliament in the first place. It is precisely so that such grievances can be raised. I thank him for his point of order, and I do not resent one iota his interruption of my remarks to make it.

Returning to the point of my speech, now that I have laid the historical foundations for our entire system, for all the prosperity we enjoy and for the great country in which we live and by which we have been blessed, allow me to settle today's controversy on that foundation.

We have before us serious allegations against the Prime Minister. These allegations are that he attempted to politicize a criminal court proceeding. This is not just any criminal court proceeding. This is a case involving formal police allegations of fraud and bribery in amounts that exceed \$130 million. It is alleged by the police that this corporation gave millions of dollars of bribes to the Gadhafi family and stole hundreds of millions of dollars from the Libyan people.

To quickly recount the allegations made against the company, it is alleged that SNC-Lavalin created a shell company through which it funnelled gifts such as yachts and prostitutes to the Gadhafi family, and that those gifts were used to leverage contracts that SNC would not otherwise have won. It is further alleged that public agencies were defrauded by SNC-Lavalin to the tune of \$130 million. Again I say that this is not a victimless crime.

Many people have said not to worry, and that that is just how things are done over there. It is frankly an appalling and racist mentality to suggest that it is acceptable for corporations to get rich by stealing from the world's poor, and I mean stealing, not doing business with but stealing, from the world's poor. It is an appalling suggestion.

Many of these countries find people in squalor. Why is that, when they have the same talents and work ethic as we do? Why are they so poor? They are poor because of corrupt leadership: parasitical corruption that daily drains away the wealth of the nation, that takes from the mouth of labour the bread it has earned and puts it in the hands of those who are more powerful and capable of trampling on the rights of others.

We have signed international conventions to ensure that Canadian corporations never engage in such corruption. The importance of those conventions is this. For the longest time, businesses thought they could pillage countries like Libya and then leave before any of the local authorities, if there were any honest ones, could prosecute. They would return to their wealthy western country and their

wealthy western lives and partake of the fruits of their crimes with impunity.

• (1135)

We signed on to international conventions that banned companies from doing that and made sure they got prosecuted at home. Well, Canada is SNC's home, so that prosecution must happen here.

When news that the Prime Minister had attempted to interfere politically with his attorney general to shelve the criminal prosecution reached the OECD, officials with that body took the nearly unprecedented step of putting out a statement of concern. The OECD understood that if member nations are going to start to exempt their corporations from justice in cases of corruption, then we will return to the old days when it was seen as and believed to be, wrongly, acceptable for companies to rob the poor. The only way to stop the hideous practice is to make sure all countries of the OECD have an independent prosecution of those crimes.

It is true that some other countries around the world have deferred prosecution agreements, like the one the government instituted in a budget bill. However, those agreements are to be negotiated and potentially arrived at by independent prosecutors and approved by a judge, not directed by a political authority. In other words, it is the job of the director of public prosecutions, an independent prosecutor created by Stephen Harper's Federal Accountability Act, to examine the deferred prosecution rules in the Criminal Code and determine if a company qualifies.

Now, what are the criteria they are supposed to take into consideration in this determination? One, is it a severe offence? Let us ask, was this a severe offence, or was it a small hiccup? As I have already said, the allegation is of over \$130 million of fraud. That is severe. In other words, the company does not qualify for a deferred prosecution agreement on the basis that the offence was not severe; it was severe.

Two, was it an isolated incident? Let us just recount the track record. This is a company that has been implicated in, and in some cases its employees found guilty of, bribery in the bid on the Jacques Cartier Bridge in Montreal. It is a company whose CEO was found guilty of participating in bribery in the McGill health centre contract. It is a company that helped smuggle members of the Gadhafi family out of Mexico in order to avoid justice. It is a company whose members have been charged in places as diverse as Panama, Switzerland, Libya, Mexico and now Canada.

That is just a list of the charges. There have been convictions and many guilty pleas by members of the company, right up to the top and including former CEO Pierre Duhaime, who actually pleaded guilty to fraud.

In fact, this company engaged in a kickback scheme designed to pump \$100,000 of illegal donations into the Liberal Party. The commissioner of Canada elections, in an extreme act of leniency, allowed the company to avoid charges in exchange for signing a compliance agreement in this case. In that compliance agreement, the company admits that executives urged employees to produce phony expenses and invoices, gave phony bonuses to those same employees, and then instructed those employees—

The Budget

• (1140)

Mr. Todd Doherty: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, the member is still not in his seat. That is the second time I have let him know that in order to raise a point of order, he has to be in his seat.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, then the company executives told the company employees that they should take these phony bonuses and expense refunds and give them to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would suggest we have lost quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the member for Carleton to sit down for a second. We are going to check.

We do have quorum in the House at this point.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, just as I was saying the Liberal Party had received these illegal donations from SNC-Lavalin, all of these members came scurrying in. They heard the word “donation” and, all of a sudden, they were very excited and the House went from completely empty to chock full. I am sorry to dangle that carrot in front of my Liberal friends. They can resist everything except temptation.

Just last week, the Prime Minister was at a glitzy Liberal fundraiser where some first nations protesters rose to raise the concern of mercury poisoning. He chuckled at their plight and had them thrown out aggressively by security. However, he was kind enough to thank them for their donation as they went out the door to the great roars of laughter from the \$1,500 Liberal donors and glitterati who looked on in the audience.

However, I have digressed and go back to the subject at hand. Was SNC's alleged fraud in Libya an isolated incident? No, it was not. It was part of a long-standing pattern of proven corruption that has been upheld by judges and has resulted in convictions going back 20 years to the present, with convictions being issued as recently as one and a half years ago.

This is a company that had actually developed a coding system to account for bribery within it. It created its own accounting code so that it could go on bribing officials and account for it in a way that neither the tax authorities or anyone else would know what was going on. To do that, to have a special coding system, one has to be systematically focused on the objective of bribing and defrauding other people. In other words, this was not just a few bad apples that went off to Libya, did some inappropriate things and we ought to just let them take the fall and the company move on. This is systematic, rotten corruption that goes to the core of the company and has been prevalent in the heart of that enterprise for many years. In other words, the company does not qualify for a deferred prosecution agreement on the grounds that it was an isolated incident, far from it. It seems to be its *modus operandi*.

The director of public prosecutions carefully analyzed the facts the company put forward and determined through those facts that the

deferred prosecution agreement provided for in law was not appropriate in this case. That is the end of the story, right?

Wrong. It is not end of the story. For the Prime Minister, it was the beginning of the story. The story is a very ugly and sordid tale, but one we have started to hear over the last two months. At that point in time, September 4, 2018, the director of public prosecutions accurately and properly concludes that SNC-Lavalin should go to trial and face the music for its alleged \$130 million of bribery and corruption and says so in a letter to the executives, a letter that the company will not go on to reveal for more than a month, during which time its shareholders were kept in the dark. It sounds like a lot has changed over there.

However, the company did not take no for an answer. Lobbyists swarmed to Parliament Hill. The lobbyist registry shows meetings between SNC officials and top-level personnel in the Prime Minister's Office and in the finance minister's office. In fact, the finance minister himself met with the company approximately 10 days after the director of public prosecutions rendered her decision to ensure the trial would go ahead.

• (1145)

After that extraordinary act of lobbying and those 10 days that followed the prosecutor's decision, the political heat started to rise. The former attorney general started to face veiled threats, hounding, pressure and interference. By the way, all of those words I just used were quoted from her mouth. She experienced a September 18 meeting with the Prime Minister where he attempted to strong-arm her into granting a deferred prosecution agreement and shelving the charges. She said she looked him in the eye and asked if he was interfering with her job as the Attorney General, because she would “strongly advise against it.”

So much for his subsequent claim that she never once raised a concern about his personal political interference, but that meeting would only be the beginning. A cavalcade of pressure would come marching through her office again and again.

The chief of staff to the finance minister would reach out in emails and text messages. Other senior staff in the Prime Minister's Office, including the senior adviser, the principal secretary and the chief of staff would all go and meet personally with top-level staff members of the former attorney general, constantly twisting their arms. They said things such as “we don't want to debate legalities anymore” and “there is no solution here that does not involve some interference.” I am not paraphrasing. This is what they said. It is in the notes. Those notes were transmitted by text message to the former attorney general and have since been tabled with the justice committee and made available for all eyes to see.

The Budget

Then we had that incredible meeting by phone between the former attorney general and the Clerk of the Privy Council in which the clerk said he wanted to talk to her about the SNC-Lavalin issue. That conversation went on for 17 minutes, during which, more than a dozen times, the Clerk of the Privy Council attempted to change the former attorney general's mind. He used terms like the Prime Minister is very "firm". He used the word "firm" four times. The Clerk of the Privy Council indicated that the Prime Minister was in one of those moods. He said that the Prime Minister would "find a way to get it done, one way or another".

The only way he could get it done, the only way he could get such an agreement imposed on the prosecutor, was if he removed his Attorney General. More ominously, the clerk said he was worried. "Worried about what?" asked the former attorney general. He replied he was worried because it is never good for the Attorney General and the Prime Minister to be at loggerheads. He warned of a "collision" between the Attorney General and her boss, the Prime Minister.

If someone warns us that we are about to have a collision with our boss if we do not do what we are told, what does that mean? What would we later interpret it to mean if that same boss moved us out of our job only weeks later? Would we think that collision and that removal from the job were two totally unrelated events? Or would we conclude, as the former attorney general did, and most of the rest of the country has, that the Prime Minister removed her because she refused to do his bidding and stop the trial for SNC-Lavalin.

• (1150)

What is interesting about the former attorney general's account is that it has never changed. She came before a committee and testified at great length. She faced aggressive questioning from Liberal members on the committee. An aggressive group of the Prime Minister's supporters in the press have attempted to discredit her. They have tried to poke holes in everything she said, but they cannot find anything.

She did an unprecedented thing on Friday. She handed over 40 pages of text messages, personal notes and diary entries, and of course audio recordings. What did the Liberals say in response? They said there was nothing new there and they are right. There was nothing there. Why? It is because her story had not changed. It upheld every claim she had made. There was not a single solitary contradiction the Liberals could find.

For judges in courtrooms and police officers conducting investigations, when they have to choose between the credibility of two competing individuals, they always gravitate toward the person whose story does not change. In this case, that person is the former attorney general. By contrast, the Prime Minister's story changes faster than his colourful socks. He always has a new story.

Let me note one twist and turn in this drama. The Prime Minister said that if anyone, including the former attorney general, had issues with anything they might have experienced in the government or didn't feel that they were living up to the high standards the government set for itself, it was their responsibility to come forward, and no one did.

However, we have that incredible recording, which was made two months before the Prime Minister made the statement that no one

came forward. In it, the former attorney general says to the Prime Minister's clerk:

So we are treading on dangerous ground here—and I am going to issue my stern warning—um—because I cannot act in a manner and the prosecution cannot act in a manner that is not objective, that isn't independent. I cannot act in a partisan way and I cannot be politically motivated. All of this screams of that.

So much for the notion that no one came forward.

That was one of seven times in that 17-minute conversation that she made similar comments. She said that it was "inappropriate", that she felt "uncomfortable", that she was waiting for "the other shoe to drop", and that it reminded her of the "Saturday night massacre", a reference to Richard Nixon's firing of justice department officials to cover up Watergate. Nevertheless, we are to believe that no one raised any concerns.

Since then, the Prime Minister's story has been that the conversation did happen but no one told him about it. He said he left on vacation right after the call was made, so no one had a chance to tell him as he was gone. The only problem with that story is that he did not leave on vacation right after the call was made. After that story came out, a few intrepid journalists looked at the publicly available schedule of the Prime Minister and found that he did not leave on vacation for another two days. Two days is a heck of a long time, and it is very easy to brief someone on a 17-minute conversation in a two-hour period.

However, the Prime Minister would have us believe that he could not be briefed because he was busy packing for his vacation. He had to pack lots of socks in order to prepare for that vacation. For two days, he was hunkered down in his closet at home, in his government-owned mansion, preparing for that exhausting vacation ahead. He was packing his bags so that he could go off and surf in Tofino, never to be distracted by a pesky phone call from his top public servant about an issue that the Prime Minister had considered of intense importance only hours before the call happened.

• (1155)

Furthermore, we have the testimony from the clerk, who said, when he was admonishing the former attorney general for not reaching out to the Prime Minister personally, that he was available 24-7. If he was available 24-7, how is it possible that the Clerk of the Privy Council would have no opportunity between December 19 and February 15, a two-month period, to tell the Prime Minister about this exceptional and explosive phone call he had with the former attorney general on this issue of dramatic importance?

The Budget

That is just one contradiction of that particular claim. The other, of course, is that the former attorney general met with the Prime Minister on September 18 and told him of her concerns. She looked him in the eye at that time. Now we have one documented example of her raising her concerns with him personally. We have the second tape-recorded example of her raising her concerns with the Clerk of the Privy Council. Then we have a dramatic meeting between the former attorney general and the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Gerald Butts, the puppet master of the PMO, in which she raised concerns about the inappropriate interference of the Prime Minister's Office in the case. Still, somehow the Prime Minister expects us to believe that he knew absolutely nothing about her concerns or about her decision not to grant a special deal to this company.

That is simply not believable, but if it is truly the Prime Minister's position and he really believes he can defend it, then he can agree with our singular demand today, which is to reopen the justice committee investigation and invite roughly a dozen witnesses, including those accused of interfering with the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. If they have nothing to hide, if he has nothing to hide, he will let them all appear under oath, without restriction, to answer questions. If he walks into this place and offers to do that, I will end my speech now.

In all seriousness, if the Prime Minister were to stand in his place and make the commitment that the justice committee investigation will reopen, then he has my commitment to return to my chair and allow the debate to continue with other speakers so that Canadians can get to the truth. If he has nothing to hide, why would he not do it? What could be the harm in having questions?

He says that there is nothing to learn and that we have already learned everything there is to learn. Okay, then it will just be a redundant exercise. I suppose that would be the first time in the history of Parliament that anything redundant happened or that anyone repeated themselves. I think I have done it a few times in my speech, but no one noticed.

Really, if the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, what harm would it do to bring people before the committee, ask them questions about their role in the scandal and get the answers in a report from the committee before the election? If the Prime Minister truly has nothing to hide, then that is exactly what he will do.

It has been brought to my attention that the Prime Minister is not only going to shut down the justice committee and ethics committee investigations into this scandal but that he has now bailed on question period for today. I have not been able to independently confirm it, but I am understanding from a note just passed to me that the Prime Minister's newly released itinerary shows that he will not be present for a second time in a row.

- (1200)

Of course, Parliament was out last week, so he dodged question period during that time. Yesterday he was missing in action, and today we are told that at two o'clock, when the government stands to answer for its conduct in this scandal, he will once again hide behind other ministers and refuse to appear and defend himself. That tells an awful lot about his guilty state of mind. He knows that his story has

been riddled with contradictions. He does not want those contradictions queried before Canada's House of Commons.

Let us move on to the next part of the Prime Minister's story.

He claimed that the reason he was so anxious to interfere in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin is that if he did not, 9,000 jobs would vanish. It was an odd claim, and one I found suspect from the very beginning. I have to say that everything we have learned since then proves it was false.

When Gerry Butts came to the committee and was asked what evidence he had that 9,000 jobs would vanish, he said he had nothing specific. When Michael Wernick was asked if he had any documents or briefing notes he could share with the committee to show that these 9,000 jobs he kept talking about would be gone if the prosecution proceeded, he said no. The Prime Minister was then asked at a press conference if he had any evidence he could produce to show that 9,000 jobs would vanish. Again, he failed to be forthcoming with it.

Why would they have no such evidence? It is because the claim is false.

Let me walk through it piece by piece.

First of all, the Prime Minister's claim that the headquarters of the company would leave in the fall of 2018 if the attorney general did not immediately intervene to give the company a deferred prosecution agreement is easily disprovable by publicly available facts. We know the company signed a \$1.5-billion loan agreement with the Quebec pension plan that required the company's headquarters to remain in Montreal at least until the year 2024. We also know the company just signed a 20-year lease on its headquarters there and announced a multi-million-dollar renovation of that headquarters to accommodate its thousands of Montreal-area employees. Typically, companies that are renovating to accommodate their existing workforce do not get up and leave. It is kind of a waste of money. They do not sign 20-year leases and they do not sign \$1.5-billion loan deals that oblige them to stay put for six or seven years. Therefore, the claim the Prime Minister made on September 18 when he met with the former attorney general—the claim that she had mere days to signal negotiations for a special deal for SNC-Lavalin or the company would leave the country altogether—was completely, utterly and demonstrably false.

His broader claim about 9,000 jobs is equally false. The company has \$52 billion worth of construction projects located in Canada. It runs the five biggest construction projects in our country right now, and here is the thing about construction: Companies have to do a construction project where the project is located. It is a simple complication. They cannot build a road in Canada from far away in Beijing or in London, England. As an example, Ottawa just hired SNC for a transit project that will go from, roughly, downtown to the south end. The company cannot build 14 kilometres of rail transit in a foreign country and drop it out of the sky from a helicopter onto the nation's capital. The project is here. Therefore, the jobs are here and the jobs are not going anywhere.

Privilege

The jobs that SNC has moved were moved before the company found out that it would necessarily face trial. In fact, four-fifths of the company's workforce is already outside of Canada, and that was long before the government ever signalled that the company would be required to go to trial. In other words, the movement of SNC-Lavalin jobs out of Canada has nothing to do with the prosecution, and therefore that justification itself is flawed.

• (1205)

Finally, the government has been telling us that if the company is forced to face trial and is ultimately convicted, the consequence would be that it would lose the ability to bid on Canadian contracts.

I am going to read directly from a report on exactly that question that the Deputy Minister of Justice Canada, Nathalie Drouin, wrote to the Clerk of the Privy Council in the matter of SNC-Lavalin. It refers to the Canadian integrity regime. This is the regime that bans corrupt businesses from doing business with the Government of Canada. It says this:

The ability of a company/supplier to contract with the federal government is affected by the *Ineligibility and Suspension Policy* (Policy). The Policy ensures the government does business only with ethical companies/suppliers in Canada and abroad. Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) administers the Policy on behalf of the government.

The Policy sets out when and how a company or supplier may be declared ineligible or suspended from doing business with the government. It provides that a company/supplier is suspended when charged with, or admits guilt to one of a number of listed offences, such as fraud and bribery of foreign public officials. The suspension from being able to contract with the federal government is for a duration of 18 months. This suspension is subject to extension pending the final disposition of the charges.

The report goes on to discuss administrative agreements. It says:

The company/supplier can enter into an Administrative Agreement with the government to stay the suspension. An Administrative Agreement is an arrangement between the company/supplier and the government where the former must adopt certain compliance measures. It is used to mitigate the risk of contracting with a particular company/supplier. For example, the government and a company/supplier may wish to enter in Administrative—

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The member for Cariboo—Prince George is rising on a point of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CIRCULATION OF COMMITTEE DOCUMENT

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to comment very briefly on a question of privilege raised on March 19 by the deputy leader of the Official Opposition.

I first want to rebut the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In speaking about notices of motion being made public, he elided a critical distinction between a notice of motion and a motion moved without notice.

The parliamentary secretary referred to the practice where some publicized a notice of motion filed with a given committee clerk. It is important to understand that those motions could, in theory, be moved at a future in camera meeting, or a future public meeting or

they might actually never be moved. Every committee member goes into each meeting in possession of the same facts and the same opportunities to comment on the draft proposals.

To quote my hon. friend, the member for Milton, the motion of concern was “table dropped” at the meeting itself. It was moved without notice, which is a common practice at House committees for meetings convened to discuss “committee business”, such as the March 19 justice committee meeting had been. The problem is that the motion was moved at a private, in camera meeting of the committee, while government staffers, perhaps under PMO direction, were busy telling the world at large what was going on inside the room.

My second and final matter is to quote a few additional authorities for the benefit of the Chair. Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, citation 877(1), states:

No act done at any committee should be divulged before it has been reported to the House. Upon this principle the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, on April 21, 1937, resolved “That the evidence taken by any select committee of this House and the documents presented to such committee and which have not been reported to the House, ought not to be published by any member of such committee or by any other person”. The publication of proceedings of committees conducted with closed doors or of reports of committees before they are available to Members will, however, constitute a breach of privilege.

This principle traces back to Erskine May, the pre-eminent British authority. I would refer, for example, to page 153 of the 20th edition. In the United Kingdom's House of Commons, on May 28, 1968, Mr. Speaker King found, at column 1541 of the official report, a prima facie complaint in respect of the leak of committee evidence heard in private.

It is important to note in that case that no preliminary report was presented from the select committee on science and technology, which had originally taken the leaked evidence. Instead, the complaint was made directly to the House by the committee's chairman. The committee of privileges investigated the matter and recommended that the offending member, Tam Dalyell, be admonished in his place and the House concurred.

The subsequent words of Mr. Speaker King, at page 362 of the Journals for July 24, 1968, speak to the importance of maintaining confidentiality. It stated:

The Committee of Privileges itself, whose Report the House has adopted, has pointed out that Select Committees and indeed Parliament itself depend largely on mutual trust and confidence between members of Parliament and those who appear as witnesses before them and that this confidence would be greatly imperilled by any failure to observe the rules of the House by all those concerned in the work of the Committees. That you have broken such confidence is a matter of high concern to the House and to all who cherish it. I, therefore, as Speaker of the House, and upon its instructions, reprimand you as guilty of a breach of privilege and of a gross contempt of the House.

In another British incident, on October 14, 1975, at column 1134 of the Official Report, Mr. Speaker Lloyd found a prima facie case of privilege concerning an Economist article about a draft report prepared for future consideration by the Select Committee on a wealth tax.

The Budget

•(1215)

This complaint, too, was raised directly in the House of Commons without any preliminary report originating from the committee. In fact, I understand that it was raised by a member who did not even sit on that committee.

In closing, I support the arguments raised by our hon. colleague, the member for Milton. The precedents are clear that a leak of committee proceedings may be treated as a breach of privilege and that, in serious circumstances like these at hand, there are clear precedents which allow the Chair to make a prima facie finding in the absence of a report on the matter from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I understand the Speaker will be back with a ruling. I appreciate the input.

* * *

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was discussing the Prime Minister's claim that all of these jobs would up and vanish suddenly if the former attorney general did not immediately grant the company the ability to negotiate a special deal avoiding prosecution.

Before my hon. colleague rose on his question of privilege, I pointed out that the Prime Minister's claim that the headquarters of SNC-Lavalin would immediately leave if the company had to face a trial was an easily provable falsehood, one that the Prime Minister would have known, given the prodigious resources he has as the head of a G7 government.

Defenders of the Prime Minister's interference have likewise claimed that he needed to protect the company from trial because if it was convicted, it would lose the ability to bid on federal contracts, thus crippling its workforce and causing thousands of people to lose their jobs. That too is false.

I am reading a document that was written November 9, 2018, from the deputy minister of Justice and deputy attorney general of Canada, Nathalie Drouin, to the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Prime Minister's former top public servant. In that document, she says that there is something called a Canadian integrity regime. The document is designed to tell the government what would be the economic consequences of an SNC-Lavalin conviction. It says that the ability of a company or supplier to contract with the federal government is affected by the ineligibility and suspension policy. It says that the policy ensures the government does business only with ethical companies or suppliers in Canada and abroad. It goes on to say that Public Services and Procurement Canada administers the policy on behalf of the government, that the policy sets out when and how a company or supplier may be declared ineligible or suspended from doing business with the government, and that it provides that a company or supplier is suspended with or charged with, or admits guilt to, one of a number of listed offences such as fraud and bribery of foreign public officials.

That is exactly the charge with which SNC-Lavalin is accused of right now, the bribery and fraud of foreign public officials.

The letter continues on to say that the suspension from being able to contract with the government is for a duration of 18 months, that this suspension is subject to extension, pending a final disposition of the charges. It states that there is something called administrative agreements; that the company or supplier may enter into an administrative agreement with the government to stay the suspension; that the administrative agreement is an arrangement between the company or supplier and the government where the former adopts certain compliance measures; that it is used to mitigate the risk of contracting with a particular company or supplier, for example, the government and a company or a supplier may wish to enter into an administrative agreement to stay the suspension, instead of terminating an existing contract due to determination of ineligibility or suspension.

The public works department has only concluded one administrative agreement. On December 8, 2015, it announced an agreement with who? SNC-Lavalin Group Inc., staying a suspension. According to public works that stay means that the SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. is "allowed to continue doing business with the government pursuant to the regime."

In other words, even though the company had already been banned from doing business with the federal government because of the fraud and bribery charges it now faces, one of the first acts of the new Liberal government in late 2015 was to permit an administrative agreement exempting SNC-Lavalin from that ban. The ongoing concern is that if the company is convicted, a new band will apply. The letter goes on. The deputy attorney general addresses that too:

If convicted, pursuant to the current "interim" Policy, the convicted company/supplier would be ineligible to contract with the government. Depending on the offence for which there was a conviction, the period of ineligibility could be as long as 10 years.

This ineligibility status would remain for the entire period unless the government considered it possible and appropriate to invoke a public interest exception.

•(1220)

The reasons to invoke public interest exemptions are narrow: emergency, where delay could harm the public interest; company or supplier is the only person capable of performing the contract; the contract is essential to maintain sufficient emergency stocks; and not entering into the contract with a company or supplier would have a significant adverse impact on the health, national security, safety, public security or economic or financial well-being of Canadians.

This is important. The whole purpose, we are told, of granting this company a deferred prosecution agreement to avoid criminal trial is because the company would lose its ability to bid on federal projects and, therefore, its employees would suffer harm.

The Budget

I have just read an excerpt from the policy which says that the government currently has the power to exempt a company from said ban if it is necessary for the economic or financial well-being of Canadians. Let us just pause on this point for a moment.

We are continuously being told that the Prime Minister desperately wanted to save the company from a bidding ban and thus needed to cancel the trial altogether by imposing on the prosecutor the obligation to negotiate a deferred prosecution agreement.

We learn, in reading this policy, that if the Prime Minister's only goal in this was to protect the company's ability to continue bidding on federal work, it could have done so even after a trial and a conviction by simply invoking a public interest exemption. It says that right in the policy.

The government would have known that because it already granted a similar exemption to the very same company. Furthermore, if it was not clear enough already that the government had the ability to exempt a convicted SNC-Lavalin from a ban on federal bidding, the public works department was already working on a new policy that makes that even more clear. Public works had proposed to replace the ineligibility and suspension policy with a new policy. It undertook consultations on the revised ineligibility and suspension policy, which closed on November 13, 2018.

Under the new policy, the government would have the discretion to vary or even rescind the period of ineligibility of a convicted company or supplier. The period of ineligibility would be at the discretion of the department.

I know that sounds like a lot of administrative language, but it is extremely important. We keep being told that the company will lose its federal contracts if it is convicted; ergo, the Prime Minister has to take extraordinary steps to prevent that conviction from happening; ergo, he has to pressure his former attorney general to make possible a deferred prosecution agreement. That is what we keep being told.

However, we learn here that none of that was necessary, if the Prime Minister's only goal was to protect the company's ability to continue bidding on federal contracts. The proposed new policy, which the cabinet has the right to approve, without even bringing it before the House of Commons, will allow the Liberal government to exempt SNC-Lavalin from a ban on federal bidding even if a conviction goes ahead. This is more proof that this whole claim that the government was protecting jobs is a lie.

Let me read another story that will further shred the jobs' claim. It was written by the Ottawa correspondent, Abigail Bimman. It says that the Prime Minister "keeps naming this small...town as part of SNC-Lavalin defence, baffling locals."

● (1225)

The article reads:

Port Elgin, Ont., is a quiet beach town on the shores of Lake Huron, home to about 8,000 people. But in his defence during the SNC-Lavalin affair, the prime minister has named the town at least three times.

"When we're looking at potential job losses right across the country from Corner Brook to Port Elgin, Ont., to Saskatoon and Regina to Calgary, Edmonton and Grande Prairie, Alta., and Fort McMurray, we are seeing good jobs right across the country that could be at risk," [the Prime Minister] told reporters in Iqaluit on March 8.

Never mind that most of the people who work for SNC-Lavalin in the aforementioned cities do construction work there, work that can only be done in those localities and therefore the jobs could not be moved from those places. However, let us put that aside and go back to the text of the article.

The article goes on:

He named Port Elgin in a similar context in Montreal on Feb. 28 and Charlottetown on March 4.

Of all those communities, Port Elgin is the tiniest. So Global News headed to Port Elgin to see if they're worried about job losses—and as it turns out, the situation is just the opposite.

"I think Port Elgin's booming!" said resident Linda Barfoot.

"We're in a protected bubble here," said another resident who stopped to watch the Global News video of [the Prime Minister] mentioning her town again and again.

That bubble refers to Bruce Power. Twenty minutes down the road from Port Elgin in Tiverton, it supplies a third of the province's energy and employs 4,000 people full-time. It's also on the cusp of a \$13-billion refurbishment project to extend the life of six of the eight nuclear reactors.

"There aren't potential job losses at Bruce Power—in fact, there's a lot of job creation," said Elizabeth Arnold, who's lived in town for nearly 40 years. Her husband, she says, used to work for Bruce Power.

"There's a huge influx of workers for the next two or three years so I'm not sure what [the Prime Minister is] talking about when he says Port Elgin, except that it's a town in Ontario," said Arnold.

She seems like a wise local from the area. The story goes on:

Local politicians tell Global News the so-called boom means new subdivisions are being built, schools are filling up and the challenge is getting enough workers to fill positions.

"We're the fastest-growing community in our region here on Lake Huron and we've been ranked one of the best places to live in Canada," said Saugene Shores Mayor Luke Charbonneau.

But there is an SNC-Lavalin connection to Port Elgin. It's home to one of more than 130 offices across the country, adding up to about 9,000 employees total. SNC-Lavalin tells Global News it won't disclose how many people work in each place.

In Port Elgin, the office occupies a single unit in a small strip mall. On the Thursday afternoon when Global News stopped by, there were just a few cars in front.

And [the] Conservative MP [for Huron—Bruce]'s constituency office sits right across the street.

"The massive job losses the prime minister is predicting is right over my shoulder," said [the member]. "It's 10 or 12 people."

"I think he has it wrong. SNC-Lavalin's nuclear division is a tremendous business, they're adding jobs."

To start with, there are only 10 to 12 people who work there, and SNC is adding to it even though the company knows it is not getting a deferred prosecution agreement. The story goes on:

SNC Lavalin is part of the Major Component Replacement (MCR) project at Bruce Power. SNC has a 40 per cent stake in the Shoreline Power Group Consortium, along with AECOM and Aecon. Shoreline has a \$475-million contract for a key part of the MCR, scheduled to begin in January 2020.

The Budget

In other words, SNC-Lavalin's work there is really going to ramp up in another year. Far from leaving, it is actually going to be expanding, and it knows it will be doing this even though the trial, at this point, is going ahead.

The story goes on:

● (1230)

In a press release from June 2018, Bruce Power says the overall [project] will “create and sustain an average of 825 jobs annually” over the next 15 years.

Neither Bruce Power nor SNC-Lavalin would talk to Global News about whether there is any threat to the broader category of nuclear jobs. SNC would not give details about any employment numbers for specific projects and would not confirm whether previously released job numbers in news releases are still accurate today.

[The MP for Huron—Bruce] is confident that in a worst-case scenario for SNC, if they are forbidden to bid on government contracts for 10 years, nuclear jobs are protected because this isn't a government project.

“It's a business-to-business transaction between SNC Lavalin nuclear and Bruce Power, and regardless of the outcome, it will have no impact on their nuclear division,” said [the member].

The community's mayor, however, is less certain about SNC's future....

“I don't have a crystal ball and I don't know what's going to happen in the future with SNC-Lavalin, and obviously, that's a big national issue,” said Charbonneau.

“What we do know locally is that SNC-Lavalin is planning an expansion. They're looking at adding some additional floor space to the office they currently have, they're looking at going up to as many as 75 engineers here in Port Elgin.”

This story says that while the Prime Minister claims the company is going to be laying off all these employees in Port Elgin, it looks like the plan, even with the trial going ahead, is to expand the workforce from about 12 people to 75 people, in other words, by over 500%. This of course is in a town where the Prime Minister claims all kinds of jobs will be lost if he does not interrupt the criminal trial.

The article continues:

Mayor Luke Charbonneau tells Global News while he's concerned about potential job losses connected to the SNC Lavalin affair, he has a lot of confidence in Port Elgin's booming economy.

He goes on to say, “I feel good that our success is going to continue and that SNC can come along with that”.

The story goes on to state:

The Prime Minister's Office tells Global News [the Prime Minister] was simply mentioning places across the country where SNC-Lavalin has employees, and the comments were not related to nuclear industry.

Somebody should have told him that SNC-Lavalin does work with the nuclear industry there before he put the company's operations for Port Elgin in his speech. However, these are mere details.

This is another example of the jobs lie that the government has been telling, claiming that if the Prime Minister did not take the extraordinary step of interfering with a criminal prosecution, all of these jobs would up and vanish. Again, the evidence contradicts that claim.

Why is it so important for us to examine that falsehood? The answer is this. If the Prime Minister is not protecting jobs as he claims, who is he protecting? He has gone to such extraordinary lengths to get this company off the hook. He slipped an amendment into the Criminal Code, an amendment he executed through a budget omnibus bill. Once that bill became law, he became infuriated to learn that it had not, within days of getting royal assent and taking

effect, been used for SNC-Lavalin. He began an intense campaign that extended from September until January, when he shuffled his cabinet. I am not aware of a single—

● (1235)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe there is no quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We do not have a quorum. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We have quorum.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, moments ago I was referencing the Prime Minister's claim, which we now know to be false, that the company would lose an abundance of employees, that there would be job losses, if the prosecution in the fraud and bribery trial of SNC-Lavalin were to go ahead. We now know that this, in fact, is untrue. The specific examples the Prime Minister gave of jobs that would be lost will not be lost. In fact, in the specific work sites that he highlighted, we now know from the sources on the ground that even if the trial goes ahead, the jobs at those particular project sites will increase in number and not decline as he has wrongly claimed. Of course, I just finished relaying the example of Port Elgin, a town where the Prime Minister claims everyone will lose their jobs if this trial happens. It turns out that roughly 13 people reportedly work for SNC in the town, and this would actually grow to over 70 despite the criminal charges as they proceed.

Let us examine the logic of the jobs argument. Even though the evidence is already thoroughly discredited, let me just look at the logic of it in the first place.

What legal advantage would be conferred upon SNC-Lavalin by shipping a bunch of jobs out of Canada? The company will still have to face the trial and conviction here. Any reputational damage that it faces from that conviction will happen right around the world regardless of whether the company's headquarters or employees are located in this country. Therefore, leaving the country, like felons who would vanish out of the country of their crimes, would not protect the company from prosecution or from penalty.

Furthermore, to whatever extent there is international reputational damage to the company resulting from the trial, the same reputational damage would result from a deferred prosecution agreement, because the company would have to confess guilt to the aforementioned crimes in order for that agreement to occur. In other words, worldwide, countries would still know that SNC-Lavalin is a fraudster and that it engages in bribery if the company signed a deferred prosecution agreement, because the company would have to confess that it committed those offences in order to get such an agreement.

The Budget

The difference that the Prime Minister was trying to cause by imposing this deferred prosecution agreement was really just to avoid the trial. The trial is the only thing that he would have salvaged the company from by pressuring his Attorney General to extend a deferred prosecution agreement. Therefore, I think we need to see this trial now more than ever. We need to know why there were some people in Ottawa with enormous power that were so desperate to prevent it from going ahead.

Given the evidence I have now demonstrated that it was not about jobs, there must be someone or some group of people who believe their interests are at serious risk by going into this trial for fraud and bribery. We can only speculate. Maybe we will learn that there are more bad apples that have yet to be ousted from the company. Maybe during testimony from witnesses, we will learn of additional offences. We do not know. However, we do know that the company and its friends in the Prime Minister's Office have gone to unprecedented lengths to prevent this trial from going ahead. We will one day, I hope, learn why they went to those lengths.

● (1245)

Yesterday I asked members of the House of Commons to feel free to heckle me and tell me another example of a prime minister who had personally interfered in a criminal prosecution. They could not think of a single example of a prime minister who had done that. Not one of them could list such an example, and that is because there are none. Prime ministers do not interfere in criminal prosecutions.

For example, desperate Liberals' and their strong supporters in some of the media outlets have tried to point to Brian Mulroney's supposed conversations with his then attorney general with regard to the David Milgaard case. Brian Mulroney became prime minister many years after David Milgaard's prosecution, so it was chronologically impossible for Brian Mulroney to have interfered in that prosecution.

I thank the creative member from Winnipeg for trying so desperately hard to come up with an example. I suggest that he look at his chronology book and compare the date of the prosecution and the date former prime minister Brian Mulroney took office. He would find that the two were separated by many years.

That is an example of how an empty wagon makes the most noise. Absent any evidence, we have someone screaming and hollering the random name of a former prime minister in a desperate attempt to draw an analogy with the unprecedented attack of the present Prime Minister against prosecutorial independence. I thank him for his valiant attempt, but I urge him to try harder next time, because in this case, we have a Prime Minister involved in a criminal prosecution. For the first time in memory, we see this, and I welcome anyone to find another example of when a prime minister has personally become involved in directing a prosecutor.

There might have been other examples during the sponsorship scandal, though. We do not know. Although the Liberal Party admitted to stealing \$1 million, and although \$40 million of cash went missing during the whole affair, and although there were charges against many individuals, for some strange reason, the Liberal Party did not face any charges itself, even though it admitted to stealing \$1 million. I have never heard of someone stealing \$1 million and then not being charged for the crime. We do not know

why it was not charged, but we do know that at that time, the prosecutor was embedded right in the office of the attorney general, who of course, was a minister in the Liberal government.

That is why Stephen Harper created the director of public prosecutions. It was to remove the prosecutorial function from political reach. The Federal Accountability Act, passed in the House in June 2006, which legislation I was honoured to carry through the House as the parliamentary secretary to then Treasury Board president John Baird, created this separate office. Very wisely, it required that any political direction from the attorney general to the director of public prosecutions must happen in writing, and then that writing must be published in the *Canada Gazette*, which is a document that comes out for all eyes to see. In other words, every single Canadian has the right to know when a politician issues any direction to a prosecutor.

That has never happened since the office of the director of public prosecutions was created in 2006 until the present. More than a decade later, there has not been a single, solitary case where a politician had the audacity to write a directive taking over a prosecution and forcing the prosecutor to do something that he, or in this case she, did not want to do. It would have been unprecedented.

● (1250)

According to a briefing the former attorney general received from her own department, it would have been unprecedented for her to override the decision of the prosecutor in this case. It would have been impossible for her to do it with a clean conscience, because it is clear that the director of public prosecutions had very studiously and carefully measured the case against the law and found that the company was not eligible for a deferred prosecution agreement. Therefore, what the Prime Minister was asking the former attorney general to do was to impose a political decision to break the criteria in the Criminal Code and to effectively cancel a trial that prosecutors had otherwise deemed should go ahead. This is without precedent in the Canadian system, and therefore, we are embroiled in this controversy today.

Those who wonder why such a storm has resulted need only appreciate how impossibly rare it is for politicians to even mention matters that are before the courts to either the judges or the prosecutors.

I will restate the history on this point. When a young Jean Charest was a minister in the Mulroney government, he very innocently, and with pure motives motivated by the public interest, called a judge about a trial. We know what happened to him. He resigned, just like that. There was not a prolonged period of debate. There was not an extended period of conversation. There was literally nothing to talk about. He was a minister. He called a judge. He resigned. It was simple.

The Budget

John Duncan, a very distinguished former aboriginal affairs minister in the Harper government, a man with an unblemished record of integrity and unimpeachable character, praised by members of all parties for his work, once was approached by a constituent who had a problem with a quasi-judicial body. As a good MP, he tried to help out. He picked up the phone and called the head of that quasi-judicial body, just to be helpful. He had no personal interest in it. Nobody alleged that he was in a conflict of any kind. He was just trying to help a constituent, as all of us do on any given day, but he was a minister and he called the head of a quasi-judicial body. What happened? He resigned, just like that. There was no debate, no nothing.

In fact, a lot of people probably look back at those quaint times, when ministers resigned over spending a few too many dollars on a glass of orange juice or accidentally helping a constituent in the wrong way, and they look at the present day, when we have a Prime Minister who has been convicted of breaking the ethics law in four different places, who took a quarter-million-dollar vacation from someone who met him to get a \$15-million grant, and who is accused by his former attorney general and his former Treasury Board president of inappropriately interfering in the criminal trial of a Liberal-linked corporation, and they say, "Oh God, give me those days back." When politicians were resigning because they spent \$17 on orange juice or because they were trying too hard to help a constituent with a case file, those were quaint times. They seem an awfully long time ago, do they not, Mr. Speaker?

However, here we are today. There is something circular about it all, though, is there not? The new Liberal Party looks an awful lot like the old Liberal Party. As I said earlier, the reason Harper created the director of public prosecutions was that we were all highly suspicious of the fact that no one in the Liberal Party was prosecuted, even though it admitted to stealing a million dollars. Therefore, we created the independent prosecutor to ensure that never again could politicians prevent, or encourage unjustifiably, a prosecution from going ahead.

It was precisely because we created that act and that independence that this scandal even came to be known. For once, when our Liberal friends blame Stephen Harper for all the problems and plagues of the world, they are right. It is Stephen Harper's fault. If he had not gone ahead and created prosecutorial independence with the DPP, the Liberals might not have been caught.

• (1255)

It is his fault that they did not get away scot-free with allowing their friends at SNC-Lavalin to avoid prosecution for \$130 million worth of fraud and bribery. It is all Stephen Harper's fault. I guess we should not blame the Liberal Party for going back to its old ways and doing again what it has always done before. It is the same old Liberal Party.

To quote Kipling:

That the dog returns to its Vomit and the Sow returns to her Mire,
And the burnt Fool's bandaged finger goes wabbling back to the Fire

It is the old story of the Liberal Party. It is right in its DNA. The Liberals are determined to avail themselves of all the splendour of

public life. They believe that public office is like a cornucopia of riches to be sprayed about upon oneself and one's friends.

To think that the Prime Minister had absolutely no compunction about vetoing the already approved northern gateway pipeline, killing tens of thousands of jobs in western Canada and billions of dollars of opportunity for first nations communities, 80% of whom supported the project. He had no compunction about vetoing that and killing those jobs, but then he had the audacity to claim that his attempts to protect the executives and senior shareholders of SNC-Lavalin had something to do with jobs. It had only to do with the Liberals' jobs and the jobs of the high-ranking executives who are well linked and tied into the Liberal Party of Canada, the same executives who pumped \$100,000 of illegal money into the Liberal Party, and admitted to doing so, through a whole series of despicable, but highly creative, fraudulent techniques. That is the Liberal Party.

The Liberals tell us that the reason they want to aggrandize government is always for some other benevolent purpose. Remember in the sponsorship scandal, it was to save Canada from separatists. They needed the sponsorship program. They had to fight separatists by pumping all this money into the pockets of their friends and into their own party coffers. Now we hear again these phony claims that they are protecting jobs by preventing a criminal trial from going ahead. This seems to be a congenital problem with the party.

Thank goodness we have a strong and abiding official opposition to protect the public interest against exactly these kinds of systematic Liberal abuses. We will continue to do so.

Some people have asked why do we not just relent and let up for God's sake. "Let us move on," say the Liberals. "Let us talk about something else, anything else." The problem is that the allegations with which they are faced do not come from Conservatives. They do not come from our friends in the NDP. They come from senior Liberals. Part of the Prime Minister's inner circle said that he engaged in veiled threats, bullying, hounding, interference, inappropriate pressure and a Saturday night massacre. Every term I just used came out of the mouth of a person who was in the Prime Minister's cabinet up until about 60 days ago. That is what his own party says about the Prime Minister.

We should not be surprised. It was not long ago, right before Christmas, that the Ethics Commissioner found the Prime Minister guilty of taking a free \$200,000 vacation from someone he was simultaneously meeting with about getting a government grant. The Aga Khan literally sat down with the Prime Minister in the same period of time as the Prime Minister vacationed on his island and asked the Prime Minister for a \$15-million grant.

• (1300)

It is an offence in the Criminal Code for any public office holder to accept a benefit from someone with whom he or she does government business, yet the Prime Minister accepted a vacation, the commercial value of which is about \$200,000, from someone who was seeking a \$15-million grant from him.

The Budget

That is not a big deal, right? If a junior procurement officer at Public Services and Procurement Canada had taken a weekend of skiing at Tremblant from someone to whom that public servant had issued a contract, that public servant would lose his or her job immediately and might even be charged with a crime. However, when it is the head of the entire government, I guess there is a different set of rules.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the Prime Minister thought the rules did not apply to his friends, because they do not really apply to him. Yes, he was found guilty of breaking the ethics law, but the RCMP did not enforce the Criminal Code on him. He got off scot-free, because he is really powerful.

That has been his life. Most kids grow up in families that face difficult financial choices: Their parents say they can have this or that, but not this and that. Their parents will say there is not enough money for something and tell them to get a summer job to save up for it.

These are not concerns that have ever preoccupied the Prime Minister. He inherited a multi-million-dollar family fortune, as he has called it, and he kept that family fortune in a tax-preferred trust fund, which ensured that income generated from it did not result in higher income tax obligations for him on his T4 slip. In other words, other people were paying higher taxes on much less money while he was enjoying the wealth that had been bequeathed to him by generations before him. This is the very definition of aristocracy.

I do not say that to denigrate his family in any way. The Prime Minister's grandfather ran a very successful business, mostly comprising gas stations. This is a completely honourable way to make a living and earn a life. I do not besmirch his grandfather's good reputation for having left an inheritance to his descendants. We should all aspire to do that.

However, the concern I do have is that because the Prime Minister has marinated in this family wealth his entire life, he finds it impossible to empathize with the concerns of everyday people who do not have family fortunes.

I once stood in the House of Commons and asked the Prime Minister about his tax increases, and he said those things only affected the rich. I pointed out that he took away the children's fitness tax credit and asked if only rich people put their kids in sports. I noted that he took away the transit tax credit and asked if only rich people take the bus. I also noted that he took away the student tax credit for textbooks and asked if all university students were rich. He said that none of those things help the poor, because the poor do not pay taxes.

How out of touch can a person be? This is coming from a guy who kept his money in a tax-preferred trust fund to avoid paying his full fair share on the resulting investment income. To accuse the working poor of not paying tax is insulting.

I would also add that it is factually wrong. Those who earn more than \$10,000 a year in Canada, who are not exactly rich, are eligible to pay income tax. They also pay gas tax, GST/HST, payroll taxes and now, as of yesterday, the carbon tax.

Yes, the working poor do pay taxes. They pay too much tax. They do not need to be told otherwise by someone who has inherited a massive family fortune and has done everything to minimize the amount of tax he pays on that fortune.

• (1305)

I will add, now that we are in the House of Commons, that when this Prime Minister was an opposition MP in 2014, he showed up in the House of Commons and voted against a budget by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper that got rid of the loophole for trust funds. How convenient. It was the same trust fund tax loophole that he had been using all of his adult life. He showed up to protect that loophole by voting against the Conservative attempt to close it.

This guy has done everything in his power during his entire career to stuff his pockets with as much money as humanly possible, as much as he can get away with, and to use public office for private enrichment.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I know this issue has been raised a number of times today. I did want to see if the House was willing at this point, through unanimous consent, to revert to Requests for Emergency Debates because of the canola crisis that our western Canadian farmers are facing. In the last two days in Routine Proceedings, this request has been denied by the government, thus not giving us an opportunity to move forward with our emergency debate request.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping you will seek the unanimous consent of the House to see if we could revert to Requests for Emergency Debates so that the important issue of the canola crisis and the inability of our farmers to ship grain to China can be considered.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the canola industry represents multi billions of dollars in this country. All the member for Chilliwack—Hope was asking for was a unanimous consent motion to debate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. What is the point of order that the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil is making, or was he just debating?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, the point of order I am making is to look for unanimous consent to have an emergency debate on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am afraid we just did that.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this is a Prime Minister who has, through his entire public life, attempted to convert public office into private riches.

The Budget

He did it when he accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in speaking fees from charities for speeches he should have been giving as part of his role as a member of Parliament. Many of those dollars also came from public school boards and unions. He was taking money from workers and school children for speaking fees for the kinds of speeches that all of us in this House of Commons give for free all the time because we know that we are already handsomely paid as MPs to do this job as it is. He did so while having one of the worst attendance records in the House of Commons as an MP. He was paid to be here working; meanwhile, he was charging school children, workers and charities for doing the job that all of us would otherwise do for free.

That is his history. Then he has the audacity to look the working poor in the eye and say, “You are not paying enough tax.” It is a kind of arrogance that can only come when someone has been marinated in privilege for their whole life.

We have seen that same kind of elite arrogance from the Prime Minister on display recently—

● (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to make reference to our rules, in particular with regard to unparliamentary language.

On page 623, it states that:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscene language or words are not in order. A direct charge or accusation against a Member may be made only by way of a substantive motion for which notice is required.

The Conservatives consistently have taken personal attacks, virtually from day one, for the last two years, and I think it is time for members to be held accountable. As the rules say, they are not allowed to personally assassinate character in this House.

I would ask that the member be called to order for his comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member brings up a very good point of order. It was a discussion that was taken among the Chair officers earlier. I would remind hon. members that when criticizing the other side, regardless of which side it is going to, they can criticize the party but not the individual.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, members will note that I was referring to the Prime Minister's then decision to vote against a 2014 budget that eliminated a tax loophole from which he had benefited during his entire adult life. That is very much related to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that they cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

I will let the hon. member for Carleton continue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, somebody should have told the Prime Minister that when he tried to directly pressure his attorney general. I hope that you pass that on to him, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the member wants to talk about personal attacks, I have here a letter from the Liberal member and former attorney general, the member for Vancouver Granville, that she has now submitted to

the Liberal caucus. If we are going to talk about personal attacks, then let us do that. I think this is very much apropos and I am very pleased that the member rose on that particular point of order at this moment.

She wrote this to the whole Liberal caucus:

Now, I know many of you are angry, hurt, and frustrated. And frankly so am I, and I can only speak for myself. I am angry, hurt, and frustrated because I feel and believe I was upholding the values that we all committed to. In giving the advice I did, and taking the steps I did, I was trying to help protect the Prime Minister and the government from a horrible mess. I am not the one who tried to interfere in sensitive proceedings, I am not the one who made it public, and I am not the one who publicly denied what happened. But I am not going to go over all of the details here again. Enough has been said.

Growing up as an Indigenous person in this country I learned long ago the lesson that people believing what they wish about you does not, and cannot ever, make it the truth—rather than letting authority be the truth, let the truth be the authority. Indeed, if I had succumbed to interpreting the beliefs of others to be the truth, I never would have been able to push forward in the face of the racism and misogyny that far too many Indigenous women, and others, still experience every day.

Ultimately the choice that is before you is about what kind of party you want to be part of, what values it will uphold, the vision that animates it, and indeed the type of people it will attract and make it up.

She of course is writing to the caucus about the ongoing Liberal deliberations whereby members of the Prime Minister's inner circle are trying to have her expelled from her own party.

Why? It is because she blew the whistle. She saw wrongdoing and she blew the whistle. That is apparently, we are now hearing from numerous media reports and comments from Liberal MPs who support the Prime Minister, an offence punishable with expulsion.

● (1315)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the member for Carleton has been referring to and reading from a letter I believe from the member for Vancouver Granville that apparently has been given to the Liberal caucus. Apparently the Liberal caucus members all have this letter; however, I am not sure if the rest of the House does. I feel that the member reading the letter and not tabling that document puts us at a disadvantage. I would ask if we need unanimous consent in order to table that letter so that all in the House could have a copy of it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton wants to comment on the point of order.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the House of Commons, I take this letter that was written to the caucus chair of the Liberal Party by the member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville and I offer to table it in the chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is remarkable that Liberal members would not consent to the tabling of a letter to Liberal members. This is a letter from a Liberal to other Liberals, and the Liberals want to ban it from being tabled in the House of Commons. It goes on and on.

The Budget

The member across the way talks about personal attacks. The former attorney general stood on the solid ground of truth. She first spoke truth to power, and when power would not listen to truth, she spoke truth to the people. When power contradicted truth, she provided evidence to prove truth. Now she is being punished for it.

If that party, the once great party of Wilfrid Laurier and St. Laurent and Mackenzie King, has descended to a point where someone is punished merely for telling the truth, what message is it sending to all Canadians? What message is it sending to young people who want to come and serve in this place? If they tell the truth, they will be called names and insulted, and their gender and ethnicity will be raised as points of contention. Finally, at the end of it all, they will be kicked right out of their party altogether.

That is not the message we should send to our young people. We should send them the message that this is a place full of truth-tellers; it is full of people who will say what they know to be true. More than that, it is a place full of leaders willing to accept the truth when they hear it.

That is not the kind of leader we have at the head of the government today. Rather, he has played a game of cover-up, denial, contradiction, evasion and, finally, shutting down debate altogether. We have two parliamentary committees that have closed their doors to this matter because the Prime Minister's majority voted to do so. The Prime Minister kept his members here all night long, for 30 hours straight, voting in the House of Commons rather than just accepting a very simple demand from the official opposition that the former attorney general be allowed to complete testimony before a committee.

Now the government refuses to end my speech by simply agreeing to my one simple demand, which is for a parliamentary committee, namely the justice committee, to convene all the witnesses involved in the political interference in the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal, question them under oath and without restriction, and issue a final report all Canadians can read before they vote in the next election. If the government announces right now that it will agree to that demand, I will terminate my speech immediately. Otherwise, I will continue to speak about this absolutely fundamental issue at the heart of our democratic system and the rule of law.

There is nothing members can do to silence members of the opposition on this. They might attempt to silence their own former ministers with threats, expulsion and denigrating comments in the media, but they will not silence members of the other side of the House. Ultimately, they will find they cannot silence Canadians either.

The people of Canada are too wise. They know that where there is smoke there is usually fire. In this case, there is a heck of a lot of smoke. We have a Prime Minister who is changing his story from one day to the next and making statements that are soon disproved by written evidence and audio recordings.

• (1320)

We have a Prime Minister shutting down an investigation at the justice committee and another investigation at the ethics committee. Here we have it: a justice committee with no justice and an ethics

committee with no ethics. That is what it has come to with this Liberal majority.

However, we should not worry, because Liberals have a political strategy to get around it. Their plan, as witnessed by the motion we are now debating, was the Liberal three-step: a massive scandal, step number one; massive deficit spending to distract from it, step number two; and a massive tax increase to pay for it all after the election, step number three.

I have already spent a lot of time talking about step number one, the scandal itself. Let us talk about step number two, the massive deficit spending. The Prime Minister famously promised in the lead-up to the last election that the budget would balance itself. He said it would happen in the year 2019. Well, that time has now arrived. Here we are debating a budget with a deficit of \$20 billion, not zero as the Prime Minister promised, but—

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, about a minute ago, a member delivered food to the member for Winnipeg North. He is consuming it at this moment. He has been consuming it for about the last 45 seconds or so. I know that is not allowed in the House of Commons, and I would like you to issue a directive on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Guilty, Mr. Speaker. Someone handed me a little candy. I ate it and I am sorry. I do not know if there is a way for me to bring it up to satisfy the member across the way. The reality is that I should not have eaten the little candy in the chamber, and I trust no one else eats candies in the chamber. I am sorry.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind hon. members that consumption of food is not allowed. Consumption of water or sparkling water is allowed.

I thank the hon. member for Brantford—Brant for bringing that up.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, my understanding is that inside the chamber members are allowed to drink water. I do not know what the member for Carleton has in his glass, but it does not look like it is just water. Are we allowed to have other things in our water while delivering a speech in the chamber?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): People are allowed to have water or sparkling water. If there is lime or something in the member's water, that is allowed.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member wants me to submit my glass of water to a chemist so that it can be studied. It is a glass of water, albeit a little cloudy. I will not blame it on the plumbing system in this 150-year-old building, but so far it has not killed me, so I am left to trust that it is, in fact, water.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton can continue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very substantive intervention on the matter at hand.

The Budget

As I was saying, there is the Liberal three-step: massive scandal, massive deficit to distract from that scandal, and of course massive tax increases to pay for it all after the election. We are now on step number two, the cover-up budget.

The Prime Minister believed he could extricate himself from this scandal by spraying \$41 billion of new cash spending at Canadians in this recent budget. There would be a chicken in every pot, he told us. The money certainly did flow. That spending, as I said, is \$41 billion on a cash basis, or \$23 billion if we use accrual accounting. Either way, it is a lot of money. He believed that if he could pile up that money on top of the scandal, no one would be able to peer through and see what was going on underneath it all. Canadians would be so grateful to see dollar signs flying at them in the lead-up to the election that they would forget all about his interference in a criminal prosecution and re-elect him to keep that money flowing.

However, the bad news for the Liberals is that Canadians know it is their own money. They know the Prime Minister has not generously bestowed upon them money of his own. He has taken it out of their pockets and out of their children's pockets by growing debt to pay for all that spending.

He promised the deficit would never exceed \$10 billion in any year. Multiple times it has been \$20 billion. He said the total debt he would add is no more than \$25 billion. We are already up to \$60 billion and headed to three times as much as he promised. He said the budget would be balanced in 2019, and yet here again we have a large deficit.

It is not just that he is breaking his word and spending excessively to little end and with few achievements. It is that he is putting us in this precarious situation of debt at a time when the world economy has done so well.

In the first years of the Prime Minister's governance, growth in the U.S. economy was among its highest in over two decades. Of course, one-fifth to two-fifths of our economy is dependent on the United States. We often go as it goes. Additionally, the government had huge amounts of cash pouring into its coffers as a result of the sugar high from booming housing markets in Vancouver and Toronto, unsustainable levels of housing speculation that led to tax revenues for the government, and of course recovery in natural resources prices from their historic lows the year before the Prime Minister took office.

In other words, everything went in his favour. He inherited much good fortune in his public life, just as in his private life, and he squandered all of it. Not only did he receive massive revenue windfalls, vastly exceeding what anyone had projected only years ago, and not only did he spend every penny of those windfalls; he then went \$20 billion deeper in deficit year after year after year.

Here is the problem. What happens when things go badly? We live in a country that is susceptible to the impacts of the global economy. We are a trading nation. In other words, problems abroad can very quickly arrive on our shores. We all remember when the U. S. financial crisis struck in 2008. It was a crisis that hit Canada from abroad, but one that affected us nevertheless.

Here is the good news. Governments, both Liberal and Conservative, paid off a phenomenal amount of debt in the roughly

10 years leading up to that crisis. To their credit, the Martin and Chrétien governments ran surpluses and paid down debt. They understood that they make hay when the sun shines.

Then, when Harper and Flaherty took office, they too paid off about \$40 billion in debt. Combined, well over \$100 billion had been wiped out from our national debt in just over a decade, and it had shrunk to the lowest level as a share of GDP of any country in the G7. This allowed us an enormous buffer, so when that crisis struck we were in a position to absorb the impact, to protect our citizens and to lower rather than raise taxes as countries around the world had done in order to recover their plummeting revenue.

● (1330)

We were able to lower the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%; to bring income taxes down, particularly on low-income people; erase a million people off the tax rolls; bring in a working income tax credit that effectively gives a pay bonus to the lowest-income workers; bring in tax credits for kids' sports, public transit, tradesmen's tools and numerous other targeted savings for individual Canadians. We were able to drop the small business tax rate and lower the corporate business rate from 22% to 15%. We did all of this to help our people and businesses plow through that terrible global recession almost, though not entirely, unscathed.

We went into the recession last and came out first. We had a million jobs coming out of that recession. We were among the first countries in the developed world to balance our budget. When it was all over, our debt as a share of GDP had actually remained the same. That was extraordinary at the time, given that the Americans and Europeans were stacking up massive debts in relation to the size of their economies.

UNICEF marvelled at how child poverty fell in Canada during the great global recession while children around the world were falling perilously into want.

That was due to good economic management at the time. However, if we are being fair, it was also due to the decisions of leaders of both parties in the late nineties through to the mid-2000s to pay off debt and prepare our country for troubled times ahead.

However, the current Prime Minister, who inherited good times by contrast, has squandered them completely and rendered us extraordinarily vulnerable for the trouble that may be ahead. We already see signs of that trouble. Canadian households are among the most indebted in the OECD. Their levels of household debt are about \$1.75 for every dollar of income, which is a massive increase over the last several years. This makes them vulnerable to increases in interest rates.

The Budget

Furthermore, if we add household, corporate and government debt together, we have a higher debt-to-GDP ratio than Greece by that measurement. Greece, of course, has much more government debt as a share of its economy, but we have much more household debt as a share of ours. We have one economy and it has to support all of that debt. All three categories, household, corporate and government, are all supported by the same \$2 trillion Canadian economy. The more we add to that debt, the more difficult it becomes for the economy to carry it around.

Therefore, what would be a wise course of action? The wise course of action would be to live within our means today and make adjustments now, before it is too late.

There is good news and bad news. The good news is that we are not broke yet. The bad news is that with another four years of the current Prime Minister, we will be. When that happens, life will get ugly. It will become unavoidable that difficult decisions, not pleasant ones, will have to occur if we do not make the modest adjustments now that can avoid those difficult times.

It is kind of like the situation of a family who sits around their kitchen table. They know they are not going bankrupt and are not on the edge of losing their house or car, but they notice that their debt is growing more and more every year. They realize that if they keep doing that, in about five, six or seven years, they will, as a family, be in a crisis. That family then realizes that they have two options. Option one is to say that it should enjoy the good times while they last, forget about the future and when the repo man knocks on the door in six years, they will cross that bridge when they get to it. Option two is that the family can make a few adjustments now that are not particularly painful, and maintain their existing quality of life without adding further to their debt and vulnerability. That option will ensure that in six years the family will be on solid ground, with savings built up and debt paid down, a house secured with a small mortgage, and enough financial freedom to make good decisions for the future.

• (1335)

The other option, the one that the Prime Minister has our country following right now, is for the family to keep on spending until the repo man knocks on the door. That is not how Canadians run their household finances. Anyone who has not inherited a family fortune or a multi-million dollar trust fund knows what the Prime Minister has never understood, that budgets do not balance themselves, one cannot borrow one's way out of debt and one cannot make others pay for one's mistakes. Every Canadian family who has had to pay a bill or raise a child without inherited wealth knows that is the basic reality of life.

Unfortunately, families who are sitting around that kitchen table are finding life more and more difficult. Wages have been absolutely flat since the Prime Minister took office. He has raised taxes on middle-class families by \$800. That does not even include the carbon tax, which kicked in for Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick yesterday, or the increases to CPP premiums that he is imposing right across the country, outside of Quebec. Families are getting by with less and less. They are telling us that they are getting by, but they are not getting ahead.

The mission of our leader, the Conservative leader, is to open up a free enterprise, low-tax economy where people can get ahead through their own hard work. That has a little something to do with his life story. He is the son of a working-class family. He paid his way through university by working at a restaurant before he moved to Saskatchewan from Ottawa and met his wife, and worked in insurance before he was elected to Parliament. He did not have a famous last name, but he managed to win by working really hard and showing that he had the right values and experience for his Saskatchewan community. Then he won the support and respect of colleagues from across party lines in becoming the Speaker of the House of Commons, possibly the youngest in Canadian history.

What is most amazing about our Conservative leader's story is that most people who have a career trajectory like that would have relied on a family lineage, a well-connected family with a big name. This particular leader has had none of those things. He had a great family. They were rich in love, common sense and good values, but they were not rich in money. He took those working-class values to Parliament Hill. He wants to create a country where everyone else can get ahead the way that he did, by working hard, putting forward his best foot and trying his best to serve others. That is how he got ahead, and that is how other Canadians want to get ahead when they walk out the door in the morning to their jobs. They should have the right to get ahead through their hard work and their own enterprise, and we should create a free market economy where that is possible, where everyone gets ahead based on meritocracy rather than aristocracy.

That is the Canada that the Conservative leader is attempting to build with a platform that allows people to get ahead. He has already started to clarify exactly what that means, for example, cancelling the carbon tax to make life affordable and taking GST off home heat so that we do not punish Canadians for staying warm in Canada's record winters. He has decided that he would take taxes off EI maternity and parental benefits, so that it is more affordable for moms and dads to stay with their children in those precious six to nine months after a child is born. Those are the early announcements he has made that will be designed to allow Canadians to get ahead. Basically, the formula has three parts, which are that the government should live within its means, leave more in people's pockets and let them get ahead.

The Conservative platform of our leader will be based on those three pillars of the stool. They are the same pillars that he and his family lived by when he grew up in a working-class neighbourhood here in Ottawa. They did not have a car; he took the bus everywhere. I guess that is one thing that he and the Prime Minister have in common: They both had a driver. The difference is that the Prime Minister had a chauffeur and the Leader of the Opposition had a bus driver. However, they both had drivers.

• (1340)

The Conservative leader is fond of telling the story about how hard it was to get a date by asking a girl if she would meet him at a bus station. I guess that is one of the ways he was able to gain his skill of persuasion that he has brought to bear on his political life.

The Budget

That is ingenuity. People who come from modest means are able to become creative and inventive in making the most out of what they are given, and that is the great Canadian dynamism. The voyageurs who travelled across the country in canoes and our first people who survived in this wretched climate for so many thousands of years with nothing but their own courage, ingenuity and hard work are the people who set the example of how one can survive in this country of ours. Then, the pioneers came and broke in the land so that we could farm and create some of the most prodigious crops anywhere in the world, from the Prairies to the farm fields of central Canada and beyond, to the modern wineries in the beautiful Niagara or Okanagan regions.

These are all examples of Canadian ingenuity that go back thousands of years, when people very simply got by through their own hard work. That is what the Leader of the Opposition wants to be possible again. What frustrates him is that when he travels across the country, he sees how hard people are working, but they tell him that they feel they are on a treadmill that is getting faster and faster. They are running harder, but they are not moving forward. Every time that they put one foot in front of the other, the government keeps pulling them back.

Think of the number of taxes that people are hit with. I was talking with a young guy the other day on a doorstep, and he said that every time he takes a breath he pays a tax in this country. He earns income and pays income tax, and he has to pay payroll tax on the same income. With what is left after that, he makes a purchase, and he has to pay HST on that purchase, so another bite is taken out of that dollar. Now we have something called the carbon tax that hits him every time he drives to work, heats his home or buys something that is transported or made using energy. Then, God forbid, if he is tired of all the taxes and he decides he needs a beer, then he gets hit with another sin tax for the crime of drinking one, which has an escalator tax that rises automatically every single year without holding a vote in the House of Commons.

This is just one young person. On that one dollar he earns from his own hard work, he has many bites taken out of that dollar to pay for the growing cost of government. Government has grown in cost since this Prime Minister took office three and a half years ago by 25%. Do people believe that they are getting 25% better services or products from the Government of Canada? Look around at the roads that are in worse condition and the hospital wait times that continue. What extra service is there? Rural communities are not getting enough policing to protect against crime. They are all paying 25% more for the cost of government, and what are they getting in return?

When average people go to a grocery store and see that prices have gone up by 25% without anything extra for the additional cost, they shop at a different grocery store. That is the competitive system of the free market, and I believe they will go shopping for a better alternative in the next election. That alternative will be based on the sound principles that have allowed Canadians to advance throughout the ages, a system of free market where people voluntarily exchanged work for wages, investment for interest and product for payment, so that every participant was always better off.

● (1345)

If I have an apple and someone else has an orange and I want what he has and he wants what I have, we trade. We are both better off, even though between us we still have an apple and an orange. That is the genius of the free market system. People can sacrifice what they have for something they want more as long as they find others willing to do the inverse on the other side. In other words, every time a free market transaction occurs, the participants must believe they are better off than they were before they did that transaction.

For a young person like the Leader of the Opposition, when he got a job working at a restaurant, he believed sacrificing those four hours three or four times a week was worth it because the wage was worth more than his time. For the restaurant owner, his time was worth more than the wage he had to pay to get it. In other words, in that voluntary exchange, both worker and employer believed they gained from the exchange. We know that because they both voluntarily agreed to participate in it.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague talk about trade. Since 10 o'clock this morning, several of my colleagues have tried to bring the debate back to my motion asking the House to hold an emergency debate on the canola crisis. Unfortunately for my colleagues, because I was not here, the House could not revert to applications for emergency debates and resume the debate.

There is a massive canola crisis happening right now, and the House must debate the issue tonight and give every member a chance to speak. I therefore seek the unanimous consent of my colleagues to revert to applications for emergency debate so that we can discuss this. It was not granted this morning because I was not in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, despite my hon. colleague's interruption, I must say, I am pleased to see a member stand up in the House of Commons to defend our farmers.

Our canola farmers are really suffering right now as a result of trade action imposed by another country, China. The Conservative Party just wants to hold a debate so we can protect those farmers and help them continue to sell their top-quality product internationally.

The Budget

I am extremely surprised that the government does not want to take part in such a debate, and I think it is disgusting that this government is showing such disregard for a crisis of this magnitude. I realize that there are no Liberal members representing western Canadian farmers, but the Prime Minister is supposed to represent all Canadians, regardless of whether they voted for the Liberal Party.

This gives me an opportunity to point out just how divided our country is becoming. Three years ago, everyone was saying that there was no more Bloc Québécois and that nobody was talking about Quebec sovereignty any more. After 10 years under the Harper government, it is true that many Quebecers did not agree with all of the Conservative policies or with the Conservative Party. I will admit that, but I think that everyone can at least agree that the sovereigntist movement had practically disappeared. The Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois were no longer a political force. What a change compared to the Liberal years in which the sovereigntist movement was able to feed off the sponsorship scandal.

It was a huge success for the former Conservative government to see that, in 2015, the sovereigntist movement had all but died out across the country. I think that is because the Harper government, regardless of whether people agreed with its intentions or not, respected the autonomy of the provinces and their citizens. It reduced the power of politicians in Ottawa and gave more power to people in our communities. That helped everyone to be able to see themselves as part of a Canada that could meet their needs, even if they did not vote for the Conservative Party.

Today, after the government has been in power for three years, the Bloc Québécois's standing is up in the polls. Furthermore, in western Canada, polls show that almost half of Albertans are open to sovereignty. That is a tragedy.

I was born in Calgary and spent more than 20 years in southern Alberta. I never would have believed that westerners would be talking about sovereignty. It is true that there has always been some concern and complaints about the federal government's powers, but we never spoke about sovereignty in western Canada when I was growing up. Now, voices are being raised and we see a division, and that is exactly what we should avoid.

We need a prime minister who unites Canadians from coast to coast and creates a wonderful country that all Canadians can be extremely proud of.

•(1350)

I think that Albertans and all westerners believe in Canada. They love Canada and are very patriotic. However, when the Prime Minister constantly tries to attack them with his policies on pipelines, the carbon tax and others that target western Canada's economy, it is understandable that there is such frustration in the west.

In my view, a government formed by our Conservative leader would bring together Canadians in a respectful environment that ensures the maximum amount of freedom for all provinces and all Canadians. That is the story of our country, and prime ministers, such as Wilfrid Laurier, united Canadians by doing exactly that.

Sometimes we forget that, in the early 1900s, Wilfrid Laurier was the most popular leader in the west. At that time, the Liberal Party of

Canada was in favour of a free market, free trade and the power and autonomy of all provinces. Although hard to believe today, that is why the Liberal Party of Canada was popular in the Prairies.

However, the Liberals have moved away from economic openness in favour of having federal politicians control everything. This is an attempt to centralize all powers, but it ultimately ends up dividing all Canadians. This is why the Conservative Party of Canada will diminish the power of governments and increase the power of Canadians, which will, in turn, bring all Canadians together.

•(1355)

[English]

We have a team that is speaking about the Prime Minister's personal and political interference in the SNC-Lavalin scandal. It is speaking about the cover-up budget that is designed to make Canadians forget about that political interference. It is also shifting attention to the issues that the Prime Minister is incapable of managing, like the multi-billion dollar attack by the Chinese government on our canola producers.

The Prime Minister is incapable of responding to these kinds of international crises because he is absolutely consumed with scandal. He and his party are meeting right now to talk about how they can punish courageous whistle-blowers. They are not meeting with representatives of the People's Republic of China to get tariff penalties removed. They are too busy trying to cover up a scandal of the Prime Minister's own making.

It not just ethical deterioration that we see in this scandal; it is the distraction that it causes. Would people not like to know right now that the Prime Minister is at his desk busily working on a strategy to end the trade attack by China? He is not. He is busy, huddled with advisers, trying to find a way to punish whistle-blowers, courageous women in his own party, for daring to tell the truth about his conduct.

Would people not like to know that he is busily on his phone with his ambassador in Washington, discussing a plan to end Trump's tariffs on steel, aluminum and softwood, or to end Trump's buy America policy that discriminates against Canada? No, he is not doing that. Right now he is busy, huddled with a group of political advisers, trying to hatch a plan to cover up a scandal and punish the women who exposed it.

Would people not like to know that the Prime Minister is busy meeting with financial officials, urgently crafting a plan to phase out the deficit over the medium term and prepare us for troubled times that might be in our future? Well, we know that even if he were not distracted by scandal, the deficit would not be of the least bit of concern. We know that the Prime Minister thinks budgets balance themselves.

I will cede the floor to you, Mr. Speaker, for Standing Order 31, Statements by Members, by saying that we need a Prime Minister who is not capsizing in his own ship of corruption and scandal, but instead is working hard every day to serve the Canadian people and get the job done, so Canadians can get ahead.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

●(1400)

[English]

ALBERTA PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, there is an election in my home Province of Alberta, and yet again it appears that this provincial election will come down, by and large, to which way Calgary votes. Whoever wins Calgary, wins the election, or so it has been since 1948.

Let us talk about some of the issues facing my city and my province.

We have office vacancies downtown which are crippling our municipal tax coffers. We have an unemployment rate floating around 10% and that is double the national rate. We have Albertans and small businesses struggling to make ends meet. We have an oil price that continues to hamper and hinder our development.

Clearly, when it comes down to my constituents in Calgary, the economy is top of mind. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I must implore the government to do everything in its power to proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline as soon as possible.

* * *

DANIELLE MOORE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the memory of Danielle Moore, a Scarborough native, who lost her life in the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302. Just 24 years old, Danielle was a United Nations youth delegate on her way to the environment assembly in Kenya.

She travelled across Canada to support causes from climate change and digital literacy to food security and indigenous issues. She recently visited remote communities in northern Canada to teach youth how to code.

Danielle was on her way to Ottawa next, having been accepted into the education program at the University of Ottawa. Danielle was a young woman with so much to give to Canada and to the world. In her short time with us, she already touched many lives.

Her family has set up a fund in her name to support the causes she loved. My condolences to her parents, her siblings and all her family and friends.

* * *

WESTJET

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so often we hear about the airline industry not meeting the needs of costumers and its lack of compassion. Today, I would like to give 15 out of 10 to WestJet for going above and beyond.

A senior with mobility issues travelled to a WestJet destination. Unfortunately, the resort could not meet all his needs and the senior wanted to go back home the next day. Not only did WestJet refund the majority of the senior's money, it flew that senior back home, first class.

Statements by Members

This senior is a decorated veteran who served our country overseas with pride. To quote the veteran, "WestJet should be the official airline for veterans. They had my back."

I thank WestJet for being a leader in compassion and customer service. Once again, I thank WestJet and God bless.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of International Women's Day, I invited my constituents to nominate a woman who inspired them. I am pleased to recognize Phyllis Galbraith.

Phyllis was born in 1939. She started working when she was 14 years old to support her family. When women were rarely accepted in male dominated industries, Phyllis excelled in her career.

In 2008, her husband, Howard, passed away from lung cancer. Two years later, her son, Howard Junior, died of the same cancer.

After their tragic loss, Phyllis went on to raise \$1 million for the Palliative Patient Care Unit at Credit Valley Hospital where both her son and husband were treated. Phyllis has also raised money for the Interim Place, a shelter that supports abused women and their children.

Her leadership has made a difference in the lives of many. She is not only an inspiration to her children and grandchildren, she is an inspiration to all of us.

* * *

●(1405)

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sharks play a critical role in maintaining ocean health, but, shockingly, nearly a billion have been slaughtered since 2011.

Canadians expect us to be part of the solution to protect them, to ensure their survival. Bill S-238, important legislation, would do just that: prohibit the import and export of shark fins into and out of Canada.

The bill is similar to my 2013 private member's bill, which had the support of the Liberal caucus but was defeated by only five votes. If we fast forward to 2019, the Liberals have enough votes to ensure swift passage of this important bill. However, in typical say one thing and do another Liberal fashion, government members are dragging out debate and hinting the bill needs amendments. Shame on them. Those stall tactics will ensure that Bill S-238 will not pass before the House rises this June.

Statements by Members

Sharks and our ocean ecosystems that depend on them cannot wait another election. The government has an opportunity to do the right thing here. Let us pass this bill, end this destructive practice and move forward on restoring ocean health.

* * *

[Translation]

GEORGES ST-PIERRE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our region is known as a hotbed of activity for high-level athletes. One such athlete is Georges St-Pierre, who recently retired as Canada's most decorated mixed martial artist. GSP, as he is commonly known, is originally from Saint-Isidore.

Many consider him to be the best-known Canadian athlete worldwide, with a record of 26 wins and just 2 losses as a UFC fighter and nine consecutive welterweight titles.

After being bullied in elementary school, this Canadian icon certainly managed to find his rightful place. Châteauguay—Lacolle is a place where everyone can live up to their full potential. GSP has always been a noble ambassador for combat sports, fighting clean both in and out of the octagon.

Enjoy your retirement, GSP, and thank you for putting us on the world stage.

* * *

[English]

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to the newest centenarian in my riding, Jim Acheson. On April 22, Jim will be turning 100 years young.

Hailing from North Ireland, Jim saw service in the Second World War, with the 405 Pathfinder squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He served as a wireless radio mechanic on a man-made airstrip on a farm just outside of Surrey, Great Britain.

After the war, he started a successful piano business, which served the community for decades. His family then blossomed into three grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

I invite all members to join me in wishing Jim a happy birthday.

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GUELPH POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week as Ottawa hosts the annual Canadian Police Association Legislative Conference, I want to recognize outgoing Guelph police chief Jeff DeRuyter, who recently announced his retirement after 35 years of police service.

Jeff was committed to community engagement and attended many community events with his wife Connie, particularly in Guelph's many newcomer communities.

Guelph Police Service is a key partner in building a safer and more inclusive society. I want to thank Chief DeRuyter and the entire

Guelph Police Service, including Matt Jotham and Alexandria Johnston, who are here in Ottawa this week, for all they do to serve and protect.

I extend a warm welcome and congratulations to the new chief of police, Mr. Gordon Cobey, who will be sworn in this Thursday. I look forward to working with him.

I thank the Guelph Police Service for all it does for our community.

* * *

[Translation]

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to mark World Autism Awareness Day, because not many Canadians know about this cause.

It is more important than ever to raise awareness of autism, because the number of children being diagnosed is rising. The autism spectrum requires us to use a different approach with each person affected by this disability, but we need to do more to promote their inclusion as a group. Many children still face prejudice and encounter numerous barriers because of autism.

I want to thank the Société de l'autisme et des TED de Laval for all of its efforts to educate Canadians on the reality of autism.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a tax based on consumption, the new federal carbon tax is a regressive tax, hurting the people who can least afford more expenses.

Starting this year, Algonquin College, in the upper Ottawa valley, will be forced to raise student tuition, as the college will be paying \$380,000 in new carbon taxes by 2022. Province-wide, the carbon tax will cost students \$9.8 million more in tuition for increased heating costs, rising to \$24.7 million per year with the government's planned carbon tax increases in the next three years.

Raising taxes on college and university students will make higher education unaffordable for those students who do not have the benefit of a trust fund to pay for education, the way the Prime Minister and his one-percenter finance minister did. By never having to worry about the basic necessities, like food and shelter, the Liberal Party is totally out of touch with the needs of ordinary Canadians. Only the Conservative Party is committed to making life more affordable for people living in Ontario by fighting the Liberal carbon tax.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

[Translation]

LAVAL STATUS OF WOMEN ROUND TABLE

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by wishing my wife Rana a very happy birthday, with all my love.

Today I want to highlight the work of the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine, or TCLCF. Equality, engagement and fairness are the central values of the mission of the TCLCF, which works to improve the quality of life and living conditions of Laval women. It takes respect and solidarity to stand up for the rights and needs of women, and it is these qualities that have made the TCLCF such a beacon in the community.

I want to thank the TCLCF for its 30 years of fighting all forms of violence against women. I thank it for its 30 years of unfailing dedication to the women of Laval. I thank it for giving hope to the women of today and tomorrow. Happy 30th anniversary to the TCLCF.

* * *

[English]

2020 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year from now, the 2020 Arctic Winter Games will take place in Whitehorse. This will mark 50 years since the Arctic Winter Games began in 1970. The first year's games were opened by the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

We are proud and thrilled to once again have the opportunity to invite the circumpolar world to our capital city. This marks our seventh time hosting the event in Yukon. This international celebration of northern sports and culture will gather more than 2,000 athletes to compete against their peers, show discipline, set personal bests and practise their passion for their sport. There will be sport and cultural contingents from Alaska; Alberta north; Greenland; NWT; Nunavik, Quebec; Nunavut; Sapmi, in northern Scandinavia, and Yamal, in Russia, competing in 21 sports.

I encourage everyone to check out the host society's website and find out more about the opportunities to volunteer or attend the 2020 Arctic Winter Games.

Let the countdown begin.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the worst April Fool's prank in history, the Liberal government forced its carbon tax on Canadians.

Over the past number of weeks, I have spent time consulting with my constituents during my spring tour. They are worried about the increased cost of living caused by the Prime Minister's tax. Already we have seen gas prices increase by five cents per litre. By 2022, it will be 12 cents. These higher prices disproportionately and unfairly impact rural Canadians and farmers, who cannot catch a bus to their fields.

My constituents know that the cost of the carbon tax does not stop at the pump. The Prime Minister's tax will raise the cost of living, of feeding their families and heating their homes.

The carbon tax is not an environmental plan. It is a cash grab, and my constituents see right through it. The people of Saskatchewan are clear. They want the carbon tax repealed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

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[Translation]

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about World Autism Awareness Day.

Autism spectrum disorder affects a significant number of children. In the Laurentians, it affects one in 60 children, and 90% of those affected are boys. We probably all know someone—a family member, a friend, a child or an acquaintance—whose life is affected by autism. Autism affects everyone.

This issue is near and dear to me. I would like to thank the Fondation autisme Laurentides for working so hard to help children with autism and their families. Today being World Autism Awareness Day, I believe it is important to create space for an ongoing conversation about what we can do to help and support people with autism and their families. I would like to thank those of my colleagues who are proudly wearing blue as a sign that they want to talk about this and raise awareness among those around us.

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●(1415)

QUEBEC'S FEDERATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, I participated in the 37th annual convention of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec. The FRAQ represents over 12,000 members and 13 associations across Quebec. It brings together youth who are passionate about agriculture and defends their interests, advocates for the profession and prepares the next generation of farmers.

Physical labour, long hours, labour shortages, isolation and trade agreements that often jeopardize the survival of farms take their toll on a farmer's emotional health.

The organization auctioned off a basket of local products and the associations in attendance raised over \$17,000, which they gave to Au cœur des familles agricoles, an organization that helps farmers in distress.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the associations, as well as the federation president, Julie Bissonnette, and the vice-president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, Martin Caron, who contributed \$1,000 each. I commend them all. They are incredible.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals' carbon tax took effect, and immediately, gas prices at the pump went up by four cents per litre. The Prime Minister makes the false claim that it is an environmental plan, but Canadians can see past that. If it is truly an environmental plan, why is he allowing the largest emitters to be exempt while he punishes soccer moms and construction workers who need to get to and from work?

British Columbia has the longest-standing carbon tax in the country. Its greenhouse gas emissions are actually going up, not down. The carbon tax will not reduce pollution, we know that, but it will cost Canadians a whole lot of money.

Under the Liberal government, gas prices have already gone up, electricity costs have gone up and mortgage payments have gone up. Basically, everything in life has gone up under the government, and nearly half of all Canadians report that they are having a hard time making ends meet at the end of every month. They are falling further and further behind. People are rightly worried.

While the Liberals are focused on making life more expensive, we, on this side of the House, under our Conservative leader, are committed to helping Canadians get ahead.

* * *

ORGAN DONATION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a bus crash on a remote prairie highway moved our nation, yet from the Humboldt Broncos tragedy emerged hope.

Logan Boulet had a heartfelt conversation with his dad, saying that he wished to be an organ donor should anything happen to him. Though he tragically died in the crash, Logan's donation helped save no fewer than six lives. Over the next month, the Logan Boulet effect saw more than 100,000 Canadians register to become organ donors. One year on, Logan's family continues to share his story.

This week is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, and Sunday is the first annual Green Shirt Day honouring Logan's legacy.

Our government recognizes the importance of organ donations and transplants, with over \$35 million in budget 2019 to ensure that those needing a transplant can be matched with a donor.

The Boulets are here today. I thank them with all my heart. Their son is a hero who has helped so many get the most precious gift of all: life.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's version of events has changed several times since February 7, as he tries to explain his way out of this corruption scandal.

First he said the allegations were false. Then his current Attorney General said that neither the Prime Minister nor his office exerted any pressure on the former attorney general. We know that is completely false.

When will the Prime Minister stop misleading Canadians?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know, the Prime Minister realizes that all Canadians should have an opportunity to hear the facts for themselves, and that is exactly why he waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

The members who sit on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights asked to hear from witnesses and witnesses appeared. All the facts are now public, and Canadians can hear them for themselves.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should never forget that the Prime Minister's first response to these allegations was simply that they were false, that he never put pressure on the former attorney general. In fact, the current Attorney General, the replacement for the former attorney general, who refused to go along with the political interference, said, "Neither the Prime Minister nor his office put my predecessor or me under pressure". We now know that was not true. Why does the Prime Minister say things that are just not true?

● (1420)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canadians be able to hear for themselves. That is exactly why the justice committee meetings took place in public. Justice committee members sat down together and set parameters for a discussion. For the entire period of these allegations, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence so that Canadians could hear for themselves.

Something we heard at committee was that the rule of law in Canada is intact, that the rule of law was followed at all times. These were decisions for the former attorney general to take.

It is important that Canadians note that we will continue to raise the bar so that we can continue to improve our institutions.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Their defence, Mr. Speaker, is that everything is okay because they got caught. That is not going to cut it for Canadians. Nobody is buying the Prime Minister's excuse. The phone call between the former attorney general and Michael Wernick made it crystal clear. Michael Wernick says multiple times that the Prime Minister was firm. He says he was "determined, quite firm", that he was in a "firm mood about this", that "He's in a pretty firm frame of mind about this", and finally, "And I think he is going to find a way to get it done one way or another."

The former attorney general has implored her colleagues to let truth be the authority rather than authority be the truth. When will the Liberals finally start telling the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members who sit on the justice committee set parameters. There are members from all recognized parties who sit on the justice committee. For the period in which those allegations have been alleged, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence, because Canadians should be able to hear for themselves. That is exactly why those meetings took place in public. Within those meetings, witnesses appeared and gave their testimony. Additional documents were requested. Those documents have now been provided to the justice committee members. We know that they can make decisions for themselves. We have confidence in our institutions, and Canadians can have confidence as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said a lot of things that he knew were untrue. We know that Michael Wernick called on behalf of the Prime Minister. We know this because Wernick mentioned the Prime Minister 24 times during the call. The recording is the latest piece of evidence in this corruption case.

Why is the Prime Minister obstructing justice and preventing the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights from doing its job?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is important that Canadians be able to hear the facts for themselves. That is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. That is also why the witnesses came to provide their testimony. These meetings were public, so all the facts are now out in the open and Canadians can decide for themselves.

We know that the system works. We have confidence in our institutions and Canadians can also have confidence in them.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not have confidence in this Prime Minister and his government.

This is the list of people we wanted to hear from at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights: Katie Telford, Elder Marques, Mathieu Bouchard, Amy Archer, Ben Chin, Justin To and Jessica Prince. The Liberal members of the committee refused the opposition's request. They refused to hear from the real witnesses who have real things to say.

Why is the Prime Minister hiding the truth from Canadians?

Will he not allow the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to do its job?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians could hear it for themselves. That is exactly why the meetings were public. That is exactly why the witnesses came to provide their testimony. Despite that, the Conservatives do not want to listen to the facts. All the facts are now out in the open. Canadians can decide for themselves.

We know that we can do better. That is exactly why the Prime Minister took responsibility. That is exactly why he put in place additional measures so that we can continue to balance things for Canadians.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since yesterday, the Liberals have been going full steam ahead.

Rather than focusing on telling Canadians the truth, they are spending all their time criticizing and even attacking the former attorney general for recording a conversation in which she was asked 17 times in 17 minutes to change her decision. That is how the Liberals treat the women of integrity in their party.

How can the Prime Minister claim that he encourages women to go into politics when he does not stand up for them when it counts?

● (1425)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights decided among themselves to have their own conversation and to call witnesses. The witnesses appeared and gave their testimony.

All the facts are now public. It is important to have confidence in our institutions. The NDP is now siding with the Conservatives. They are playing political games instead of letting us do our very important work. We will continue to have confidence in our institutions, and we know that Canadians can have confidence in them as well.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with joking around with donors for laughs, but making fun at the expense of a protester who wants to fix the catastrophic situation at Grassy Narrows First Nation is utterly shameful, especially considering that the Prime Minister has still not kept his promises to deal with mercury contamination in their community. This is not a game, and it is not funny.

When will the Prime Minister go to Grassy Narrows to witness the magnitude of the problem for himself?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we support the needs of the people of Grassy Narrows. We remain steadfast in our commitment to build a health facility in that community. Officials are in regular contact with the community to advance plans for the design and the construction of that facility.

I look forward to meeting with Chief Turtle to determine how we continue moving on this critical path forward.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we would have to look very long and hard to find a joke so dissonant and disconnected as the Prime Minister's decision to ridicule the people of Grassy Narrows. I was speaking with Chief Rudy Turtle and he said that nobody from the Prime Minister's Office has even bothered to call to apologize. When a leader does something so snide and so smug to such a marginalized community, the decent thing to do is to pick up the phone and say sorry. That is leader to leader, nation to nation.

Will the Prime Minister make this right and commit in the House that he will personally call Chief Turtle and apologize?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Grassy Narrows have suffered for generations and we recognize the numerous health issues that the community faces to this day. We remain committed to building a facility that will meet the needs of community members.

As I have stated, we are in contact with the community and I am eager to meet with Chief Turtle to discuss this matter personally so we can move on this together.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why is the Prime Minister hiding on this? Why will he not do the decent thing? It is a question of his judgment, just like his handling of the SNC bribery case.

When we listen to the Michael Wernick tape it is impossible to think anything other than the fact that the Prime Minister was the driving force in trying to make the Attorney General fold, yet he said he was never briefed on the conversation. He took an early vacation and the first thing he did when he came back in January was to get rid of her. Just like he is trying to get rid of her today.

For damage control, the guy is a mess. Who is running the operation over there?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was elected by my constituents to make sure that I fight for them.

The member opposite chooses to talk about caucus politics but we respect that caucus will have tough conversations. We on this side know that we can have tough conversations, that it is good to have meaningful debate. It is important that we continue to advance work for Canadians as they are exactly who sent us here.

When it comes to our institutions, Canadians can have confidence in their institutions. When it comes to that call that the member is

referring to, it is important to note that the tools that were available were for the former attorney general to make a decision.

The Speaker: Order, please. I am having a hard time hearing the answer. I would ask the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon and others not to interrupt when someone else has the floor. They would not want to be interrupted when they have the floor, I am sure.

Order. My hon. friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I would also ask to restrain himself.

The hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a minute ago the House leader indicated that the opposition members were playing politics with this matter. That is interesting because that is exactly the theme of my question today.

On September 17, this is what was said in Jody Wilson-Raybould's testimony—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is an experienced member and knows of course that members cannot use members' personal names in the House. I would ask her to carry on without doing so.

• (1430)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but it is nice to see them defending her once in a while.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I will get the next question.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will once again remind Canadians that the justice committee looked at this matter, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating this matter and there is definitely an ongoing court case when it comes to this matter.

When it comes to the work that we are here to do, we will defend the best interests of Canada and the best interests of Canadians. Canadians sent us here to do important work on their behalf. We have confidence in our institutions. It was confirmed at the justice committee that the rule of law was followed, and we know that we can always improve and that is why the Prime Minister took responsibility. We will continue to work for Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House leader is completely incorrect. The justice committee did not make a finding that the rule of law was followed. She should withdraw that remark because that is misleading.

If they want to talk about playing politics, the former attorney general testified that on September 17:

...the Prime Minister jumped in, stressing that there is an election in Quebec and that "and I am an MP in Quebec—the member for Papineau".

On January 7, we learned this is how the Prime Minister concluded, that after an election, everything is fresh again.

Oral Questions

This is all about politics. How can the House leader answer all these questions—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Milton has just confirmed that rather than actually listening to the testimony that was provided by witnesses, the Conservatives have already drawn their conclusions. The fact remains that the Conservatives had drawn their conclusions well before the justice committee even started to meet. Canadians know because they were able to hear the public testimony that the former attorney general confirmed at committee within her testimony, which took place over four hours, that the rule of law in Canada was intact, that Canadians have confidence in their institutions and that the rule of law was followed. It is important that we listen to the testimony.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I thank members for their assistance.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, La Presse wants to get to the bottom of the infamous Liberal SNC-Lavalin scandal. The newspaper requested documents from the Privy Council. The department is supposed to provide that kind of information within 30 days of receiving the request, but in this case, it is going to take 240 days, which just happens to be four weeks after the election. Canadians will not have all the information they need to make their choice.

Why are the Liberals still hiding important information about the Liberal SNC-Lavalin scandal?

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 decided to discuss this case publicly. We know that the witnesses came and delivered their testimonies. We know that the hon. members of the committee asked for more information and that is exactly why the witnesses provided that information. We know that the system is working since the witnesses were able to provide that information.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was not really my question, but since she wants to talk about the committee, let's talk about it. This morning, at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, the members asked to invite 10 people to come testify, including the former attorney general and the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, once again, the Liberals, under the yoke of their leader, decided to prevent Liberals from talking. She is still a Liberal MP, as far as I know.

Will the government finally allow Canadians to have access to all the information?

Why does the Prime Minister keep hiding the truth from Canadians?

•(1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the

Conservatives, but I can say that the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, like Liberal members of other committees, make their own decisions. They can make up their own minds.

I know that the Conservatives like to take direction from their leader. We know that was the case for 10 years under Stephen Harper and it is still the case with their new leader. They chose a new leader, but their policy has not changed. Our MPs can make their own decisions.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals on the justice committee tried to kill the SNC-Lavalin investigation, saying that there is nothing left to hear, but of course that is not true.

Canadians are listening, and they heard the former clerk of the Privy Council pressuring the former attorney general to interfere in an ongoing investigation. They heard him say that he was acting on behalf of the Prime Minister. Nobody believes the Prime Minister's claims of innocence here. The investigation must be allowed to continue.

Why is the Prime Minister so afraid of the truth coming out? Why does he not just end the cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canadians be able to hear the truth and that is exactly why witnesses appeared at the justice committee, and that is exactly why all testimony was made in public. All of the facts are on the table.

To ensure that Canadians could hear for themselves, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence. This is an unprecedented measure. It is definitely not something we saw under the Conservatives, because, well, God forbid, people be able to speak.

On this side, we recognize that Canadians can make their own decisions and that is why we have confidence in our institutions. In that same recording, the Clerk of the Privy Council confirmed that it was a decision for the former attorney general to take.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it not convenient that the only six Canadians who think that this thing is over sit on the justice committee and are Liberal members of Parliament? The rest of Canada knows that there is much more to hear.

The disgraced former principal secretary to the Prime Minister has submitted new evidence. The former attorney general has submitted new evidence. Canadians must be able to get to the truth. The committee must resume the investigation.

Why does the Prime Minister not get out of the way, stop the cover-up and allow the full truth to be heard?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an ongoing court case on this matter. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating this matter. Justice committee members did study this matter. That member has just confirmed that the system is working, because witnesses were able to provide additional information to committee, just as committee members asked for.

That member has just confirmed that the system is working and that Canadians can have confidence in their institutions, and we should. We should have confidence in our institutions because they are functioning for Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian scientists are sounding the alarm. Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world and it is effectively irreversible. The report is scathing, but it is no surprise.

The government is defending Harper's climate targets. It is still subsidizing the oil industry to the tune of billions of dollars. It spent \$4.5 billion of our money to buy a pipeline.

Northerners want action. Young people are demanding it. The time for timid is over. We need big action. We need a green new deal. When will the government take bold action to take on catastrophic climate change?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree we need bold action and that is exactly what we are doing. We have a climate plan with over 50 measures.

Let us talk about what those measures are. First of all, as of yesterday, it is no longer free to pollute anywhere in Canada. We are also phasing out coal, investing in renewables and ensuring a just transition for workers. We are ensuring energy efficiency measures so we can support businesses, schools, hospitals and municipalities in saving money so they can also take action on climate change.

We are investing in clean solutions. We are taking action, but what—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. [Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the Liberals promised to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. Then it was inefficient subsidies, so already we were suspicious. Imagine our surprise this morning when we heard from the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development that they do not even have a definition for the term “inefficient”. Obviously, the Liberals are still subsidizing oil, knowing that they are going to miss all their targets in the fight against climate change.

Would the Prime Minister not agree that the best definition of the word “inefficient” can be summarized in two words: Liberal government?

• (1440)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I for one am very pleased to stand up and say that, as of yesterday, it is no longer free to pollute anywhere in Canada. We have an ambitious plan to tackle climate change.

Of course we need to eliminate inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. We are phasing out coal. We are investing in renewables, in public transit, in electric vehicles and in energy efficiency measures.

In the upcoming election, Canadians will have to decide between the Liberal Party, which has a climate change plan, and the Conservative Party, which—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep saying that the interference scandal involving the Prime Minister, his office and his inner circle is false and that the matter is closed. Since this morning, the government House leader has been repeating that all the information is now public.

If that is true, will she or the Prime Minister, if he decides to answer the question, agree to make all of Michael Wernick's documents available to all Canadians, as requested by the media and press, yes or no?

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 called witnesses. The witnesses appeared before the committee and gave their testimony. The members who sit on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights asked for additional documents. We now see that the documents were submitted so that the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights can read them. These documents were also made public so that Canadians could read them.

It is very nice to see that the Conservatives have some faith in the media. That was not the case for the 10 years Stephen Harper was in power.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the leader is listening to my questions. My question was simple. La Presse asked to see the documents on Wernick, the former top public servant.

The process should take 30 days at most, but the newspaper was told that the documents would be available in 240 days. This would be after the upcoming election.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, why does he not release all of the information to Canadians?

Oral Questions

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 decided to have their conversations and discussions out in the open, so that Canadians could hear all of the testimony. The Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. It is very important to have confidence in our institutions.

We know that these documents have been requested and we know that the newspaper will receive them.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the government House leader is hearing the question, so I will try again.

We have learned that the Prime Minister's Office is refusing to provide basic information to the Quebec paper *La Presse* on the SNC-Lavalin scandal until—get this—after the next election.

Now, by law, access to information requests are supposed to be responded to within 30 days, but the Prime Minister, in his desperation to cover up, seems to think he is above the law.

Why is the Prime Minister obstructing media access to information in order to cover up his deceitful behaviour?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the member that I am able to hear. I heard the question because some members choose to repeat the same question for the entirety of question period. This is not the first day that they have done this. They have done this for weeks on end, and when I answer, they like to shout and scream because they do not want to hear the answer.

What is clear is that the Prime Minister has waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence so that Canadians can actually listen for themselves. All of these discussions have taken place in public so that Canadians can actually hear for themselves. It is important that they be able to. That member has also confirmed that those documents will be received by—

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House Leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Gerald Butts, who is no longer in the Prime Minister's Office, seems to have unfettered and instant access to government texts, emails and documents as he continues his campaign to try to discredit the former attorney general, but when the media requests important information, it is nothing but refusals, obstructions and delays.

My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. It is clear that the Prime Minister is abusing his power in order to stop important information from being revealed. The Prime Minister is moving heaven and earth to cover up his obstruction and his deceitfulness. Why?

• (1445)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let the facts speak for themselves. The justice committee, which has members of all recognized parties—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It is shameful that I cannot hear the answer. Members need to behave in a way that Canadians can appreciate. Canadians do not appreciate this kind of behaviour of heckling, so let us not have any of it.

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, members from all recognized parties in the House sit on the justice committee. The justice committee met and set parameters when it comes to these allegations.

The Conservatives said that the justice committee would never meet. It met for over five weeks on this issue, which is longer than most pieces of legislation are even studied. It called witnesses, and to ensure that witnesses would be able to share with Canadians, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. All matters are public for Canadians to see.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report reveals that the Liberals are intentionally making Canadians pay more for their medications. It shows that the free trade agreement with the United States will cause prices to go up. Canadians will collectively be paying at least \$169 million more by 2029. Millions of people are already struggling to afford their prescription drugs, and this agreement will only make things worse. The government needs to lower prices for everyone.

Why do the Liberals keep signing trade deals that raise drug prices?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows how proud Canadians are of their public health care system. It is part of our identity as Canadians. We also know that access to drugs is an important issue for many Canadians. That is why budget 2019 contains bold, concrete measures to lay the groundwork for a national pharmacare system. Our government will always stand up for our public health care system.

* * *

[*English*]

PHARMACARE

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, health care in northern Saskatchewan is only getting harder. In Meadow Lake, six doctors and one nurse practitioner will be leaving the community by the end of the summer. With the closure of STC, more seniors will not have access to health care.

Prescriptions are getting more expensive because of this government, and seniors and elders are already forced to choose between their groceries and their medicine.

When will the Liberals make pharmacare universal so that all people across northern Saskatchewan can get the help they need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working to close the unacceptable gap in accessing quality health care that exists between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

To close that gap, I am proud to report that 52 new community-led mental wellness teams are now serving 344 communities. Over 214,000 health-related requests for first nations children have been approved under Jordan's principle.

We are working with indigenous partners in northern Saskatchewan and across the country to reach arrangements that support indigenous control of health care delivery for indigenous peoples.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Since its foundation on April 4, 1949, NATO has been a cornerstone of Canadian defence and security policy. As a founding member, we have contributed to every NATO operation over the past seven decades and remain a leader with the alliance.

On this anniversary, can the Minister of National Defence please update the House on our government's commitment to international peace and security and leadership in NATO?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Bay of Quinte for his incredible support of our Canadian Armed Forces.

Canada is a founding member of NATO. We have contributed to every NATO operation over the past seven decades and remain a leader within the alliance. We are leading a multinational battle group in Latvia and we are commanding the NATO training mission in Iraq. These contributions are a clear demonstration to the alliance on this milestone anniversary.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who serve us every single day.

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JUSTICE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the job of all members of Parliament to act in the best interest of Canada. That is exactly what the former attorney general was doing in protecting our rule of law from political interference, yet she and the former president of the Treasury Board have been smeared, intimidated and silenced for doing what Canadians expect of all of us.

Should acting on principle come with such a devastating cost? Why is the Prime Minister punishing these women for telling the truth about his corruption?

• (1450)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that Canadians should be able to hear and decide for themselves, and that is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as

cabinet confidence. This is something that has not been done, something unprecedented, because it is important that Canadians be able to hear.

Members who sit on the justice committee had meetings on this matter for over five weeks, and Canadians were able to hear for themselves. Members who sit on the committee actually asked for additional information, and they have received that additional information. Guess what? That information is public too.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the former attorney general stood up and spoke her truth, when she functioned with integrity, she was fired. The Prime Minister does not like it when strong and intelligent, capable women stand up to him. As Michael Wernick said, we know how he can get when he is in a mood.

The Prime Minister has done everything that he possibly can to try to berate and discredit the former attorney general, but every time he attacks her, she comes forward with more and more evidence to prove her point.

Why is the Prime Minister punishing strong women who stand up to him?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague's question has been addressed several times in this House.

Canadians want to know why it is that the Conservatives voted against proactive pay equity legislation. They want to know why they voted against child care, why they voted against funding to support single moms, why they voted against funding to support a housing strategy that puts a roof over women's heads so they do not have to stay in abusive relationships and why they voted against money for sexual assault centres.

Our record speaks for itself, and so does theirs.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Rather than letting authority be the truth, let the truth be the authority. If I had succumbed to interpreting the beliefs of others to be the truth, I never would have been able to push forward in the face of racism and misogyny".

Misogyny imposes social costs on women who do not conform and who speak truth to power. Is that why the Liberal Party is so hell-bent on smearing the former attorney general and turfing her from the party?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should get to hear, and once again, that is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. Let me share this quote from the former attorney general when she appeared at committee:

I really want to say this, and I'll be brief. I do not want members of this committee or Canadians to think that the integrity of our institutions has somehow evaporated. The integrity of our justice system, the integrity of the director of public prosecutions and prosecutors, is intact. So I don't want to create fear that this is not the case.

We have confidence in our institutions, and Canadians can as well.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are 338 women from across the country who are here as part of a program to encourage more women to run for office. Members of that party went to a cocktail reception with them, took pictures with them, tweeted about them, and then walked across the street and went into a caucus meeting after smearing the former attorney general because she spoke truth to power.

Why is the Liberal Party so hell-bent on punishing the former attorney general for speaking her truth?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we reject entirely the premise of that question. What I would like to know, and what those 338 young women want to know, is why the Conservatives voted against the funding to bring them here to Ottawa, why they voted against funding to support women entrepreneurs and why they voted against funding to ensure that Canadians across the country have opportunities to sit around decision-making tables through Bill C-25. Our record speaks for itself; so does theirs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies and others not to be yelling when someone else has the floor. I would ask members to come to order.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Fiat Chrysler is investing \$4.5 billion in Detroit, creating 6,500 jobs. I asked the minister to set up a task force to ensure that Canadian workers and Canadian companies could benefit from this next-generation investment. The minister has yet to respond.

Instead, he slapped workers in the face by leaving out the Canadian-made electric Chrysler Pacifica from the vehicle incentive program in the Liberals' budget. The minister was forced to reverse the government's blunder, but we still need a new product to protect the Windsor workers and 1,500 jobs are on the line.

What is the point of his \$2-billion fund if he never uses it? Is there finally going to be some investment?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. The \$2-billion fund that the member opposite is referring to is the strategic innovation fund, and absolutely the automotive sector has benefited from that fund. We have seen 40 projects move forward, resulting in six billion dollars' worth of new investments in the automotive sector since we formed government in 2015. We have seen thousands of jobs created.

At the same time, we recognize that the Fiat Chrysler third shift closure is very difficult for the workers and their families in the community of Windsor. We will continue to work with the union and the leadership to find a solution and get new mandates here in Canada.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada has yet again failed to meet its service standards in two-thirds of its programs. Some results were as low as 23%. That is not acceptable. Most programs had even worse results than in the previous year. The problem continues.

The Liberals have had plenty of time to fix things for veterans, and have failed to do so. It is an insult to every Canadian who has served this country. What will the government do to serve the people who served us so well?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to serve Canada's veterans and to provide them with the care and support they need.

We have invested over \$10 billion in additional funding for Canadian veterans and their families, particularly by launching the pension for life, creating an education and training benefit, and restoring access to critical support, access that the Conservatives had cut for 10 years. They made cuts to PTSD treatment centres and doctor positions. We have restored the confidence of veterans.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. The SNC-Lavalin scandal is about the Prime Minister's own corruption. The scandal is on him. When the story first broke, he said it was false and that there was nothing to see here. Then, when the evidence mounted, he changed his story again and again.

Why is the Prime Minister going to such great lengths to hide his unethical behaviour from Canadians? Why will he not just end the cover-up and tell Canadians the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians remember really well when the Conservatives said the justice committee would never meet. The Conservatives said witnesses would never appear. The Conservatives said the former attorney general would not be able to speak and share her story because the Prime Minister would not waive solicitor-client privilege and would not waive cabinet confidence, because Stephen Harper never would have.

However, the justice committee met and witnesses appeared to ensure that Canadians could hear the truth. The Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. All this took place in public, for Canadians to hear.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals shut down the justice committee. They shut down the ethics committee. They have refused a public inquiry. They have blocked key documents from the media. Through it all, the Prime Minister has repeatedly changed his story.

When will the Prime Minister end the charade, come clean, tell the truth and end the cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the same question deserves the same answer. The justice committee has met. It asked for witnesses to appear to ensure that Canadians could hear for themselves. The Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. All information is public.

It was also confirmed at committee that the rule of law in Canada is intact and that the rule of law was followed. Canadians can have confidence in their institutions. We know we can always improve our institutions and the way we work here. That is why the Prime Minister has taken responsibility and put measures in place to ensure we strengthen our institutions.

An hon. member: Every day is a sunny day.

• (1500)

The Speaker: I know the hon. member for Prince Albert is looking forward to improving on it, but I would rather hear about it when he has the floor.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like a bunch of fake transparency to me.

The SNC-Lavalin scandal has once again exposed the Prime Minister's ethical bankruptcy. New evidence provided to the justice committee confirms this. The only reason the Liberals are upset about the recording submitted by the former attorney general is that Canadians heard it. That recording proves that the Prime Minister has not been honest about this corruption scandal. Canadians are owed better.

When will the Prime Minister tell the truth and end the cover-up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually just now understand that the member and the Conservatives do not understand why this information is public and why witnesses were able to appear and share information. It is because the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

The member seems not to understand why this information is now available for the public and for Canadians to see for themselves. It is because the Prime Minister recognizes that Canadians should be able to decide for themselves, and that is exactly why he waived cabinet confidence and solicitor-client privilege.

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INDIGENOUS SERVICES

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was pleased to support the first-ever Manitoba First Nations Youth Summit, which took place last October.

Youth from 51 first nations across Manitoba took part in this unprecedented summit, learning of the importance and impact of infrastructure projects and community planning, and about how to draft infrastructure project proposals.

In February, Indigenous Services received project proposals written by youth from eight participating communities. These projects include youth centres, outdoor ice rinks, rehab facilities and housing, the backbone of a healthy community.

Can the Minister of Indigenous Services—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Services.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for her question and for her strong advocacy on behalf of Manitoba first nations.

Last week, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, also a member from Manitoba, met with the youth upon their return to Winnipeg. He also announced that our government is investing \$4 million in projects in these communities.

It is tremendous to be able to support indigenous youth who are taking such a leading role in the development of solutions for issues facing their own communities. I would like to congratulate all those who were involved.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader seems to forget it was a member of her caucus that called the justice committee's work a witch hunt at the outset. Now, with the release of the recorded phone call between the former attorney general and Michael Wernick, we have received confirmation of the Prime Minister's coordinated, sustained, inappropriate campaign to interfere with the independence of the judicial system.

Section 139 of the Criminal Code says that everyone who "wilfully attempts in any manner to obstruct, pervert or defeat the course of justice in a judicial proceeding" is guilty of an offence.

Has the Prime Minister been contacted by the RCMP?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice committee looked at this matter and set its parameters. For the period about which the allegations were made, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence. The committee did its work.

There is currently an investigation with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. There are officers of Parliament who do important work, and those institutions are functioning.

When it comes to the rule of law in Canada, there is also an ongoing court case, and it was confirmed at committee that the rule of law in Canada was followed.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, invasive species threaten the health of our ecosystems and our local economies. In my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, we are very concerned about the threat of zebra mussels. Today, the environment commissioner's report confirmed that the Liberal government has no plan and completely inadequate enforcement measures to keep invasive species out of our lakes and rivers.

When will the Liberal government put in place a clear, science-based plan to protect our water from invasive species, with the resources to implement it?

• (1505)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly take the threat of aquatic invasive species in Canadian waters very seriously, and we accept the recommendations of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. We are already, in fact, addressing a number of the key gaps she notes in her report.

In budget 2017, we allocated approximately \$44 million to address issues associated with aquatic invasive species. That money is now in the process of being rolled out. We are working actively with the provinces, which also have jurisdiction in this area, to ensure that we have a comprehensive plan to address the issue of aquatic invasive species.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of neglect by the previous government, federal science and research infrastructure was at an all-time low. Our researchers were muzzled, our labs were shuttered and evidence-based decision-making was nowhere to be seen. It has taken three years of hard work by our government to return science to its rightful place.

Can the Minister of Science and Sport please tell this House how our government is repairing the 10 years of damage to our researchers and our research infrastructure?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, our government understands we must invest in our researchers and students. That is why, since coming to government, we have invested over \$10 billion in science and research to support our world-class researchers. That includes our recently announced \$763 million for the Canada Foundation for Innovation, as well as stable long-term funding.

Our government believes in and supports science, research and evidence-based decision-making.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now have confirmation that the Prime Minister and cabinet undermined the rule of law on November 5, 2015, by preventing Liberal MPs from complying with section 49 of the Parliament of Canada Act. Liberal members were to have voted in a

recorded division, just like in the House of Commons, on the secret ballot expulsion rule. By not voting, they acted illegally and broke the law.

Now that illegal act has come back to haunt it, will the government hold off on any caucus expulsions until it has complied with section 49, and will the Attorney General ensure that the government comes into compliance with section 49?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that matter has been addressed and a letter provided to the Speaker, as is required.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, my colleague from Repentigny asked the Liberals three times to commit to honouring the will of Quebecers and not challenge the Quebec law on secularism before the courts. Three times, the Minister of Justice refused to commit. He thinks that Quebec's desire for a secular state is discriminatory. I will try a fourth time.

Will the Minister of Justice commit to honour the will of Quebec and not challenge the law on secularism before the courts?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always defended the fundamental rights of each and every Canadian and it will continue to do so. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the rights of all citizens. We cannot choose which to protect and which to limit. Our position is clear. The state must not dictate what people can or cannot wear, regardless of their beliefs.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question.

The Liberals just do not get Quebec. This has nothing to do with discriminating against anyone. We want clear rules that apply to everyone. Rules that apply to everyone are not discriminatory; they are the opposite of discriminatory.

Will the minister pledge to respect what Quebecers want, or will the federal government once again deny Quebec the right to make its own choices?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a secular nation, and all our institutions reflect that. Government employees have the right to display their faith, and nobody should have to choose between a job and the right to wear religious symbols. We are all responsible for protecting fundamental rights. Any attempt to erode those rights is unacceptable. Canada is open, inclusive and enriched by its diversity.

Private Members' Business

• (1510)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, family reunification is extremely important to our immigration system. In 2014 we had a first-come, first-served application system that did not work. In 2016 we moved to a lottery system that was not working very well, and last year, we moved to another system, but I have had constituents come into my office time and time again to complain that the portal was only open for a few minutes.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please update this House to ensure that family reunification is fair and transparent for all Canadians?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot to make sure that we have reduced the processing times for parents and grandparents to be reunited, from seven years to under 20 months, making sure that we have increased the spaces available for Canadians to sponsor their parents and grandparents, from 5,000 spots under the Conservatives to more than 20,000 spots under our government. We will continue to be ambitious in that regard and listen to Canadians to further improve the process.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There were two different answers given with respect to whether the rule of law was discussed at the justice committee. In one response, the House leader indicated that it was a decision, that the justice committee “concluded”, on the rule of law. In the second answer, she indicated that it was “confirmed” at committee.

I just want to make sure that Hansard reflects the truth, and it is important because of this. The House is receiving information from the committee indicating what the result of the committee was. It is incorrect information if it is about what the committee concluded, because there are no motions and there are no reports to back up what the House leader has said. Therefore, I would suggest that we review Hansard and make sure that if she wishes to say “confirmed”, that is fine, but if she says “concluded”, it is erroneous and should not be in Hansard.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to respond to the member for Milton's point, it is first important to note that everything that is said in Hansard, members have the opportunity to review to ensure that Hansard is representative and reflective of exactly what was intended to be said.

It is also important that the member for Milton actually look at what the justice committee was studying. She will note that it was a study, and that is exactly what it did. My intention was always to confirm that witnesses who testified at the justice committee confirmed that the rule of law in Canada was intact and that the rule of law was followed.

The Speaker: I will examine the point of order raised by the hon. member for Milton and responded to by the hon. government House leader, whose comments I appreciate on both sides. If necessary, I will come back to the House on it.

The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, over the last two days, we have not had routine proceedings in this House, but I understand, if there is unanimous consent, that we could revert back to requests for an emergency debate to allow us to consider the request from my colleague to have an emergency debate about the canola crisis facing our farmers in western Canada. I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to revert back to requests for emergency debates so that we could consider that right now.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA ACT

(Bill S-1003. On the Order: Private Members' Business)

December 12, 2018 — Second reading and reference to a legislative committee of Bill S-1003, An Act to amend The United Church of Canada Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-1003, An Act to amend The United Church of Canada Act, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Budget

(Bill read a second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage and read a third time and passed)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)
[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform the House of Commons that I will be terminating my remarks, as soon as the Prime Minister comes in and announces that there will be a full-scale parliamentary investigation into his interference in SNC-Lavalin.

I guess I will not be terminating my remarks just yet. They will have to go on.

I am getting some heckles across the way from my colleagues. Someone yelled across the way that I have a crooked tie. It is better to have a crooked tie than a crooked leader.

The Speaker: I would ask hon. members, including the member for Carleton, to be careful in their choice of words and to not use characterizations of individual members. We should always avoid characterizing individual members as opposed to a government, a party, policies or decisions. That is another matter.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, there are new developments in the SNC-Lavalin scandal just breaking today, and I rise today to bring them to the House's attention.

As members will recall, the justice committee decided to convene an investigation into the Prime Minister's interference in the criminal prosecution of the company known as SNC-Lavalin. That investigation, unfortunately, was short-lived. As revelations about the Prime Minister and his team's 20 points of contact with the former attorney general, in which they made veiled threats, in which they interfered, in which they applied inappropriate pressure, came to light in committee, members on the Liberal side, who constitute a majority, voted to shut down the investigation altogether. I was present when that happened, and it was clear that the government had engaged in a cover-up.

That being said, we concluded at the time that there was still hope of getting to the truth, and that hope resided in the ethics committee. As such, numerous members of the House wrote the chairman of that committee, who would confirm that a motion to carry out an investigation into the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal was in order. Roughly a week later, members convened at the ethics committee, under the leadership of that chair, and debated whether the committee should proceed with an investigation.

One Liberal member on the committee had previously voted for a full-scale public inquiry, and thus it was expected that he might be

supportive of allowing the ethics committee to proceed in carrying out that investigation right within the parliamentary precinct. When presented with the opportunity to do so and vote in favour of the motion, allowing the investigation to go ahead, he began to speak and said that he was not ruling out a future investigation at committee, that perhaps at some future date an investigation could proceed, but doing so would be premature before the justice committee had received all its written submissions and before the justice committee had decided to conclude its own work.

A second Liberal MP, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, said, in a post-committee scrum with the media, “I believe that today we had a conversation on the fact that the Ethics Commissioner is currently studying, and that's why we are waiting for him to get back to us and report. Also, the justice committee is still working on it, as we know. [The member for Mount Royal], the chair, will receive more information, so it's premature for us to go forward.” I emphasize “premature for us to go forward”.

Two members of the Liberal delegation on the ethics committee expressed an openness to having a full-scale committee investigation into the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal but concluded that it would be premature to do so until such time as the committee received all its written submissions and heard all its testimony and concluded its own work on the file.

In fairness to those two Liberal members, while I disagree with them, it is a reasonable point of view. There is no need to have two committees doing the same thing at one time. In other words, why not wait to find out what the justice committee was going to do with all the testimony it had received and what it would eventually do with the then forthcoming written submissions of text messages that both the former attorney general and Gerald Butts were to provide.

• (1520)

The justice committee has done that now. It has completely terminated the investigation. It has received all the written submissions. Those submissions have now been published for all eyes to see. The justice committee's work is known. As of this morning, according to Liberal members who met in a secret in camera meeting, that committee will do no more work on this file.

The two Liberal members of the ethics committee, who were waiting on the justice committee to wrap up in order to get the final evidence that the committee report would provide, can no longer claim it is premature for the ethics committee to begin its work.

I report to the House of Commons today that next Tuesday would be the appropriate day for the ethics committee to consider whether to proceed with the investigation into the Prime Minister's SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal. I note that he has attempted to shut down two previous investigations, and that might cause pessimism among members of the House. However, I also note that there is reason for hope and optimism in that at least two Liberal members of the ethics committee have now said that their opposition to an investigation was time limited.

The Budget

In other words, because it was premature at the time the motion for such investigation came before the committee, they may now have changed their mind because all of the information that another committee had to provide has now been provided. The conversation now shifts over to the ethics committee where we will once again debate whether to open an investigation into this file.

The Prime Minister has tried to put this matter to rest by shutting it down. When I use the term “shut down”, I am quoting the Prime Minister's former Treasury Board president. This is not an allegation of an opposition MP; these are the words of a former member of the Prime Minister's inner circle, a doctor, a woman to whom the Prime Minister entrusted one of the most senior cabinet positions any prime minister could offer. She believes the government is trying to shut down the investigation into this scandal.

It is not working. The Prime Minister has been incapable of grabbing this scandal and forcing it underground. Every time he tries, the people of Canada, as well as conscientious members of his own caucus speak up against him.

I believe he will have to conclude, one week from today, that his only recourse is to open the entire matter up for all eyes to see. As he was fond of saying in the last election, “sunlight is the best disinfectant”. Let us lift the curtains at the ethics committee and let the sunshine pour in so everyone can see the truth. “Sunny ways my friends, sunny ways” as a prime minister we all know once said.

Mr. Speaker, I put you and the House on notice that next Tuesday, a week from today, we will all be watching carefully as Liberal members join with Conservative and NDP members to determine whether to end the cover-up and open up a full-scale investigation to get to the truth in this matter.

•(1525)

With that notice having been given, I now turn the attention of members to another important legal matter.

We are lawmakers; ergo we must not be lawbreakers. There is an important law, which was passed into effect in the previous Parliament, called the Reform Act. That bill came from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He has long been a student of Parliament and an advocate for its supremacy. The member came forward with this bill in the previous Parliament, with the intended purpose of limiting the executive branch's ability to commandeer the House of Commons at the expense of public interest. It was under the previous government that the bill was in fact passed.

The Reform Act did two principal things.

The first change the act made was it took away the legal authority of party leaders to ban candidates from running. It used to be in the Elections Act that one could not be a candidate for a political party unless one had a signature from the leader of that party. That created a bias within the act, in favour of the party leadership against the grassroots. The Reform Act, instead, allowed the party to assign any authority it chose to have the power to accept or reject candidates. In other words, the party could say that a local electoral district association president or some other trusted figure would have the authority to accept or reject candidacies. However, no longer would it be a given under law that such authority would reside exclusively in the hands of the leader. It is possible for a party to craft its own

constitution, as any free organization can, in an open, civil society to assign that power to its leader. That decision now rests with a party and not with the law. That was the first change.

The second change the Reform Act made is particularly relevant to today's conversation. It stated that at the first caucus meeting of every party, after an election occurred, there must be a vote on whether to apply a set of rules to determine the expulsion of members of that caucus. In other words, in the past, party leaders had been able to just banish people from the caucus arbitrarily. This law empowered caucuses to create a set of enforceable rules that would be embedded in legislation, whereby no one could be removed from a caucus without a vote of the caucus members.

At the very first Conservative caucus meeting after the last election, we decided to vote in favour of applying that rule to our caucus. The Conservative Party, as it stands now and in this Parliament, cannot remove members from caucus without holding a vote of caucus members. In other words, a party leader cannot simply wake up one day and say that Mr. Smith is no longer a member of the Conservative Party. Instead, caucus members need to vote on the future of Mr. Smith.

That brings us to today's debate. We are now hearing rumours of retaliation against two courageous whistle-blowers in the Liberal ranks. Both the former attorney general and the former treasury board president had the incredible audacity to tell the truth about the Prime Minister's conduct in the SNC-Lavalin affair.

•(1530)

A number of the Prime Minister's top supporters in caucus have gone to media outlets and suggested they should be banished from caucus altogether because they dared speak up and defend that truth. As the argument goes, they should be punished for allowing Canadians to learn that the Prime Minister interfered in a criminal prosecution.

Here is the legal hiccup. It turns out that the Liberal caucus failed to follow the law and hold a vote at its first caucus meeting to determine whether there would be rules for the expulsion of members. In other words, if the caucus decides to expel these members, that expulsion might be illegal.

I want to read members some background. This is a letter that the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills wrote to the current Attorney General. It states:

Dear Minister,

I would like to congratulate you on your new role as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada.

In a letter to the previous Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, dated February 29, 2016, I brought to the Minister's attention the possible non-compliance of Section 49.8 of the Parliament of Canada Act by members of the cabinet. I also sent a letter to the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, dated May 11, 2016, voicing the same concern. Both the Minister and Deputy Minister did not respond to me directly and as such, I have no idea of what action, if any, was taken. I am now bringing this matter directly to your attention for your consideration and action.

The Budget

As you are aware, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General is the chief law officer of the Crown, responsible for ensuring that the administration of public affairs is in accordance with the law, and responsible for upholding the rule of law. The Attorney General has a duty to provide objective legal advice in order to ensure that government action complies with the law. Given that the government is bound by the rule of law, as well as the Attorney General's advice on legal affairs, traditionally it must be accepted by Cabinet even if it is an unpopular policy.

As you are also aware, the *Reform Act* past in the House of Commons on February 25, 2015, passed in the Senate on June 22, 2015, received Royal Assent on June 23, 2015, and subsequently came into force on October 26, 2015. It amended the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

According to Section 49.8 of the *Parliament of Canada Act* (appended for ease of reference), at its first meeting following a general election, the caucus of every party in the House of Commons must conduct a separate recorded 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;
- (b) whether section 49.4 is to apply in respect of the caucus;
- (c) whether subsections 49.5(1) to (3) are to apply in respect of the caucus; and
- (d) whether subsection 49.5(4) and section 49.6 are to apply in respect of the caucus.

Furthermore, Section 49.8 stipulates that "as soon as feasible after the conduct of the votes, the chair of the caucus shall inform the Speaker of the House of Commons of the outcome of each vote."

It has been publicly reported by various news media (one report of which is appended for ease of reference) that the Liberal Members of Parliament, including Ministers, did not comply with Section 49.8 of the *Parliament of Canada Act*, instead deciding to "defer" the four votes. This appears to be in contravention...of the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General is responsible for upholding the rule of law, ensuring that Cabinet acts in accordance with the law, and is ultimately accountable to the House of Commons. I ask that you uphold your constitutional and statutory responsibility and take the necessary steps to ensure that the government complies with Section 49.8 of the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

While Section 49.8 concerns the conduct of not just Ministers but all Members of Parliament of a recognized party in the House of Commons, it is important to note that according to *Open and Accountable Government*, Ministers are to be held to the highest standards of conduct for all their actions, including those that are not directly related to their official functions. Ministers are therefore expected to adhere to these standards in circumstances, whether they are acting as a Minister, a member of the House of Commons or private citizen.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

● (1535)

In other words, the member was laying out very clearly that there are laws that determine how a caucus must conduct itself and that those laws determine how members can or cannot be expelled.

So far the Liberal Party is not in respect of those laws. All other caucuses held votes to ensure they were in compliance with the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

To simplify, this is what it means. Those sitting back home right now wondering whether their member of Parliament works for them or the party leader should ask themselves who can remove a member of Parliament from his or her caucus. If the answer is that the leader simply removes the caucus member, then apparently that caucus member works for the leader. If, on the other hand, as is the case in the Conservative Party, a member of Parliament works in a caucus that is bound by the *Parliament of Canada Act* to ensure that no one can be removed except by vote of a majority of MPs in that caucus, then that MP works for constituents. That is how simple it is.

It is not that the Liberal caucus decided to give its leader the power to remove members of caucus. It is that the Liberal Party broke the law requiring that the caucus set rules for the expulsion of

members. In so doing, the Liberal caucus is now in a legal twilight zone, as it is unable to tell anybody the legal procedure required for two of its senior members to be expelled from caucus.

It has been brought to my attention that Liberal caucus meetings have been going on all day and that Ontario Liberals have gathered to discuss the future of the former attorney general and former Treasury Board president. They are discussing whether those two distinguished parliamentarians should be punted from the Liberal caucus altogether. However, here is the problem. Liberals cannot do it legally until they have addressed the requirement in the *Parliament of Canada Act*, which stipulates that they must decide whether the leader or the caucus has the power to do that.

The Liberal Party very much risks finding itself in yet another legal crisis in the next day. Tomorrow its caucus will meet, and I understand that there may well be a decision to expel members of the caucus. However, we do not know how that decision will be made, because so far the Liberals are in violation of the *Parliament of Canada Act*, which stipulates how exactly that procedure is to be carried out.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Shameful.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: It is shameful that the Liberal Party has found a way to break the law even in circumstances that relate to its own caucus management.

I would add that while this sounds really complicated, it is actually quite simple. The act just says that after an election, a caucus should go into a room to hold a vote on the rules for the expulsion of members.

Conservatives did it and it took us about 10 minutes. As a group, we decided that caucus members could only be expelled through a vote of the full caucus. That stripped a future leader of the ability to remove anyone arbitrarily, and it empowered MPs, whether they are in the front, middle or back bench, to be equal in making that decision.

● (1540)

There are members of the NDP who I believe did exactly the same thing. They held the same vote, as they were required to under the act, and it is my understanding, though I was not there, that they did this. However, the Liberal Party refused to abide by this legal requirement and make that administrative decision on its first day and now it is caught in this strange situation where it wants to carry out retribution against courageous whistle-blowers in its own caucus. The Prime Minister is determined to have them kicked out and punished for speaking their minds, but nobody knows the legal status of an expulsion from the Liberal caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I bring this to your attention because it could land on your desk. You could find yourself as the arbiter of this messy situation that the government has created for itself by failing to follow the legal steps that are provided for in the *Parliament of Canada Act*.

The Budget

I have my opinions on whether the former Treasury Board president and former attorney general should or should not be allowed to remain. Absolutely they have the right to remain. In fact, they should be celebrated for their courage and honesty. However, I believe that whatever decision the Liberals make, which is theirs to make and not mine, should be done in accordance with the law. They need to follow the law.

The Prime Minister broke the law when he took a quarter-million-dollar free vacation from someone who was seeking a government grant. He has broken, at the very least, the spirit of the law by applying inappropriate pressure and interfering in the criminal prosecution of his corporate friends at SNC-Lavalin. For God's sake, let him not break the law as he carries out retribution against the courageous whistle-blowers who exposed him for that earlier misconduct.

The Prime Minister has some time to fix the legal problems within his caucus. He could potentially, with counsel from you, Mr. Speaker, and the law clerk, convene another caucus meeting to discuss the application of the Reform Act to his caucus. I believe that after he does that he would have to table in the House of Commons a full report on how he and his caucus have come into compliance with that act. However, failing that, he is operating lawlessly as he attempts to punish those who have spoken against him.

Speaking of the law, there is another law worth noting in this affair, which is the whistle-blower protection law that exists for public servants. I was proud to serve as the parliamentary secretary in the Harper government that passed into effect the Federal Accountability Act, which contained protections for whistle-blowers.

The House will recall that the impetus for this act was that a courageous whistle-blower, Allan Cutler, had spoken up against the sponsorship scandal. He witnessed that money was being funnelled out of the coffers of the government into the Liberal Party of Canada and to Liberal-linked ad agencies. He blew the whistle and he was fired. He was fired for speaking up and he suffered serious career damage as a result. Therefore, we passed a law to protect public sector whistle-blowers in the event that they witness wrongdoing. Under the law, they are allowed to make a formal complaint to seek an investigation with the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner who then carries out an investigation.

I acknowledge that the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner does not have jurisdiction over a party caucus or over cabinet ministers. It strictly applies to members of the public service. However, this is about the example we set as political leaders. If we have a law that protects public servants who blow the whistle against retaliation, how could the Prime Minister violate the principles of that law by punishing the whistle-blowers in his own cabinet? What message would he send to public servants about the propriety of standing up and speaking out when they see something wrong if he punishes the very people who have done just that?

• (1545)

What the Prime Minister should do is, first, apologize to both of these whistle-blowers, and second, thank them for standing in his way when he was trying to behave inappropriately.

The former attorney general may have done the Prime Minister an incredible service when she refused his personal and political interference in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. She may have been helping him in a strange way by stopping him from doing something very dangerous, both to himself and to our legal and justice systems. She warned him in the most emphatic way that he ought not push her any further.

Allow me, for a moment, to reflect on the chronology of those warnings. It started on September 18, 2018, when the Prime Minister and the Clerk of the Privy Council called in the former attorney general and pushed her to allow a settlement with SNC-Lavalin that would shelve criminal charges for fraud and bribery. She made it clear at that point that she was not interested in giving the company a special deal, as the company simply did not qualify for a settlement. He pushed some more. He made up stories about how the company headquarters would leave if she did not immediately intervene, stories we now know are patently false.

Still, she stood her ground so he pushed again. She said she looked the Prime Minister in the eye and asked him if he was interfering with her work as Attorney General, and that she strongly advised against it. One would think he would have gotten the message, but unfortunately that was just the beginning. Then, in the days that followed, his senior staff would continue the pressure campaign. The finance minister would jump in on the action as well. Strangely, he personally met with senior—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you take into consideration *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 625. It states:

Repetition and Relevance in Debate

The rules of relevance and repetition are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The requirement that speeches remain relevant to the question before the House flows from the latter's right to reach decisions without undue obstruction and to exclude from debate any discussion not conducive to that end. The rule against repetition helps to ensure the expeditious conduct of debate by prohibiting the repetition of arguments already made. To neglect either rule would seriously impair the ability of the House to manage its time efficiently.

If we think about the hours of discussion from the member across the way, we will find consistent duplication, repeating the same points after the same points, and we are actually talking about the 2019-20 budget. I just bring that to your attention so that maybe periodically we can get the member to go back to what the debate is about, and that is the budget.

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for raising the point. I am in complete familiarity with what he refers to. It is a topic that does come up from time to time. One of the limitations on that for chair occupants is, of course, that one has to actually hear what the member says before one can be enlightened as to whether a bridge has been crossed or a line has been crossed in terms of repetition and relevance. That is one of the difficulties in coming to that conclusion.

The Budget

I can assure the hon. parliamentary secretary that I will remain vigilant and listen carefully to what the hon. member has to say, and certainly, should it be necessary, to remind him, as with all hon. members when they are in the midst of debate, to avoid and in fact steer clear of the repetition of arguments that have already been presented to the House and to ensure that they are relevant to the question at hand.

A final point on that simply is that on budgetary matters, the degree of liberty that members have to make their arguments on budget matters is quite vast. With that in mind, we will listen carefully.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, while I appreciate that the hon. parliamentary secretary is here more or less all the time and as a consequence hears every single word that is spoken in this House, and while I am not here quite as frequently as a result of committee duty and so on, I want to observe that the reason I am still here is that the hon. member was making novel points that I was not yet familiar with, and I do not see, from my perspective, any repetition.

Mr. Pat Kelly: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the intervention from the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and I have risen myself on this Standing Order a number of times in this Parliament. I note that in response to members who have brought the rule of relevance to your attention, in this Parliament there has been a very broad application of this Standing Order. That has been the answer from the Chair in most instances—in fact, in almost every instance I can think of—when this issue was raised. I assume that will continue and that there will be broad latitude given on this Standing Order.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their interventions. As I say, this is an important Standing Order for the House, and we will be observant of it and pay close attention.

We will resume debate with the hon. member for Carleton

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I will note with interest that the Liberals now claim that the matter of deferred prosecution agreements has nothing to do with budget policy. That is ironic indeed, because those deferred prosecution agreements were created in the budget bill that the Liberals introduced here in the House of Commons. If they thought at the time that it was not a budget measure, why did they put it in the budget? If they thought it was completely irrelevant to the budget, why was it in the budget bill?

The answer, of course, is that it should never have been in the budget, but now that it has been put there, it is perfectly fair game during this budget debate to discuss it.

We learn every day of another form of deceit, another contradiction, just like this one. Less than a year ago, Liberals were claiming that this tool to allow corporations to avoid trial was a budget measure. They forced it through the finance committee, through the House of Commons, and then through the Senate finance committee, again and again claiming “This is a budget matter.”

Now we have a member who stands up and says that this has nothing to do with the budget and it is completely irrelevant. Is that not the whole story of this scandal? It is one flip-flop after another, one change after another in the versions of events and the stories that

Liberals tell. They will say anything at any time in order to justify their inappropriate conduct. The intervention by the colleague across the way is just the latest example.

I can point to other contradictions. On February 15, the Prime Minister came out and said to 37 million Canadians that if anyone, including the former attorney general, had issues with anything they might have experienced in the government or did not feel that we were living up to the high standards that the government set for itself, it was her responsibility to come forward and their responsibility to come forward, and no one did.

Of course, that is absolutely false. She did come forward, again and again. She went to the Prime Minister personally on September 18, and then to his clerk of the Privy Council, when she said in a recorded conversation, about which top Liberals cannot lie and which they cannot deny, because it is all caught on tape, “We are treading on dangerous ground here—and I am going to issue my stern warning—because I cannot act in a manner and the prosecution cannot act in a manner that is not objective, that isn’t independent... I can’t act in a partisan way and it can’t be politically motivated. All of this screams of that.”

If that is not a warning, I do not know what is.

Now the latest story from the Prime Minister is that he never heard about that conversation. After an attorney general had an explosive conversation of this nature with the top public servant about a priority file for the Prime Minister, in the two months that followed, the Prime Minister did not hear a word about it.

The story from the government was that he did not hear about it because he immediately left for vacation. It turns out that the public record shows that is false. He did not leave for vacation. He does take a lot of vacations, but unfortunately for his story, this was not one of the occasions when he did take such a vacation.

Even if he had, this is what the clerk himself said on the availability of the Prime Minister. He said:

There were multiple, multiple, multiple occasions where the minister could have expressed concern to the Prime Minister, and every single day could have picked up the phone and called.

He said as well:

The Prime Minister is available through the switchboard seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and is working seven days a week. The Prime Minister is interrupted all the time for calls with foreign leaders, security matters, heads-up.

Further, he said:

All ministers have the option of reaching the Prime Minister. Give or take a little bit of scheduling and where he might be in private time, and so on, every minister of the cabinet can reach the Prime Minister.

● (1555)

I presume that if that is true, then the Clerk of the Privy Council could have found time in the two months that followed this extraordinary conversation with the former attorney general to relay its contents to the Prime Minister, yet Liberals expect us to believe he never did and that as a result the Prime Minister did not know anything.

The Budget

His chief of staff was involved in the interference, but the Prime Minister did not know. His principal secretary and best friend was involved, but the Prime Minister did not know. His senior adviser, Mathieu Bouchard, was involved, but the Prime Minister did not know. The Prime Minister's top adviser, Elder Marques, was involved in the interference, but the Prime Minister did not know. The finance minister was involved in the interference, but the Prime Minister did not know. The finance minister's chief of staff, Ben Chin, was involved in the interference, but the Prime Minister did not know.

Everyone was involved in this, as we now know because of documented text message conversations, journal entries and even audio recordings, right up to the Clerk of the Privy Council, but we are expected to believe that the Prime Minister did not know a thing.

According to the Clerk of the Privy Council, he works 24-7 and is available at any time to be reached easily and brought up to date on all these matters, but somehow this one just slipped right by him.

Why is it that Canadians find that so hard to believe? The answer is that it is because it is not true.

That brings me to the matter of the ethics committee, which will convene on Tuesday, a week from today, to decide whether to carry out a full-scale investigation and hear from all of the key witnesses who are alleged to have interfered in the SNC-Lavalin scandal.

Conservatives will be calling on all members of the Liberal Party to vote in favour of this study, particularly the two members who said they were open to such an investigation but that it had been premature at the time it was brought before the committee the last time it met.

• (1600)

The Prime Minister needs to understand something that has become very difficult for him to appreciate. It is this. The House of Commons does not work for him. It is the other way around. He holds that office only as long as the majority of MPs in this place say that he holds that office. It is not an entitlement. It is not a family heirloom to be handed down from father to son. It is the property of the Canadian people, and through their delegation to us, it is our job to decide whether he is able to hold that office.

In the meantime, this chamber and its committees are one gigantic accountability machine, an accountability machine that demands answers for the government's conduct and, particularly, the Prime Minister's conduct. This is not the Prime Minister's personal self-esteem factory. We do not exist here to try to elevate his sense of ego and self-importance. It is not the job of parliamentarians to gush and heap praise on him and treat him with the adoration and respect he expects and demands. That is not what Parliament does.

Parliament is supposed to ask the difficult questions until such time as we get accurate and believable answers. So far, they have not been forthcoming. Thus, we march on and I continue speaking on behalf of my constituents. I think in this sense that I am carrying out the role that all MPs are supposed to do, which is to stand up, speak up and fight back when they see something wrong.

It is not only opposition MPs who do that. There are courageous members on the government side who have been willing to take a

principled position, for example, the former attorney general. She was prepared to put her principles ahead of her career ambitions. Then we have the former Treasury Board president who, likewise, said that she was not prepared to be part of the cover-up and that there is much more to this story that needs to be told. Therefore, let us tell it.

I am ready to end my speech now. All I need is for a member of the government to stand up and commit that the majority Liberal-controlled ethics committee will open a full-scale investigation into the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal. As soon as one member of the other side rises and purports to speak on behalf of the Prime Minister, I will terminate my remarks and allow the debate to go on otherwise.

Until that happens or until you stop me, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to speak up for accountability in the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal. I thank the members who are here with me, providing moral support for me to stand here on behalf of the Conservative caucus but also on behalf of my constituents.

• (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge rising but he is in a different location so I am not sure. I recall recognizing him from a different location. I will have to consult the seating chart to see whether, in fact, I was correct. Perhaps I was incorrect the last time.

I see that he is in a different spot now. I must have been correct.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge is rising on a point of order. I would ask the hon. member for Carleton to take a seat.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I had momentarily forgotten the requirement to be in one's proper chair when rising. My apologies to you. Thank you for my being able to catch your eye and rise to speak for a moment.

As it is not clear to me, I want to confirm and ensure, as we have had debate and points of order raised on the rule of relevance and repetition, that all of the facts and arguments have been made properly on that. Therefore, I want to bring to your attention page 632 of Bosc and Gagnon. It describes debates on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne and the budget.

It states:

The traditions and practices of the House allow for the rule of relevance to be relaxed during debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. During the days allotted to the debate on this motion, Private Members have the opportunity "to bring forward topics of their own choosing". Consequently, debate tends to be very wide-ranging and the Speaker usually makes no effort to apply the rule of relevance. This is not the case, however, when the House is debating the Budget. The remarks of Members must be relevant to the motion before the House. All the same, the terms of the motion (i.e., that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government) are sufficiently broad to permit Members great latitude in their remarks—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I thank the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for these additional points. I think they effectively repeat some of the comments that were just recently made by me and other hon. members.

The Budget

As I indicated at the time, I am quite cognizant of the scope of the issues around which relevance in particular are measured. As I say, I will continue to listen carefully to the hon. member for Carleton in that respect. Should it be necessary to interrupt him and bring that to his attention, I will do so. Other than that, I will consider the matter closed for the time being.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Drummond, Official Languages; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Natural Resources.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Carleton.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, where we last left off was on the importance of holding governments to account.

This is the House of the common people where we restrain the Crown and limit its powers to maximize the liberty of the people. In this instance, the allegation is that the Prime Minister personally and politically interfered with the criminal prosecution of a powerful corporation.

In other words, the judicial branch of government suffered, or almost suffered, a major act of interference by the head of the government in the person of the Prime Minister. As Parliament, we are the legislative branch but we have the accountability mechanism here in the form of question period, committees and the other tools at our disposal to bring the Prime Minister back in check when he abuses the other branches of government.

In other words, we do not as legislators dominate the judicial branch. We merely provide it with the laws it interprets, but we can act as its protector here in the House of Commons in instances where the executive has spilled over and invaded the territory of the judicial branch.

That is precisely what we are doing. Just as the judicial branch sometimes must constrain the executive, particularly when the executive infringes on the rights of the population, we as parliamentarians in the legislative branch can also restrain the executive when it attacks the sacred ground of the judicial branch. That appears to be what the Prime Minister attempted.

The decision to prosecute an enterprise charged with fraud and bribery is one left to independent prosecutors in the office of the director of public prosecutions. Interference in that prosecution by any member of the executive has the effect of contaminating the judicial branch with politics. We, as parliamentarians, are the decontamination team. We are here to decontaminate the corruption that spilled out of the executive and almost into the judicial branch, but for the courageous acts of the former attorney general, who closed the floodgates and prevented that contamination from spilling completely into this criminal trial.

Thank God, she was there. What a relief. Canadians should breathe a sigh of relief that we had such a woman of integrity doing that job at that moment. Do we think that things happen for a reason,

that people are in a certain place at a certain time because they are especially needed there?

In May of 1940, Europe was collapsing under the aggressive attacks of an evil and mendacious dictator. If it had not already, France was soon to surrender. Germany had already successfully attacked numerous of its neighbours and Chamberlain, who had signed a “peace for our time” treaty with Hitler, was on the verge of almost losing confidence in the British House of Commons. While he commanded a majority still, it was clear that he did not have enough support in the commons to carry out a war effort.

• (1610)

There is a story of a famous meeting where Churchill, Chamberlain and Lord Halifax gathered together in one room. Oh, to have been a fly on that wall. It was clear that Chamberlain was on his way out, and the obvious replacement was Lord Halifax. Most people would have assumed it would be Churchill.

Who was Lord Halifax, and what was his plan? He was a widely respected member of the aristocratic elite and a senior Conservative of the British Parliament. He had engaged in efforts already, in the early stages of the Second World War, to initiate negotiations for the surrender of all of mainland Europe to Hitler. He initiated those negotiations through Mussolini. In other words, he was going to ask Mussolini to be the mediator in negotiations between Great Britain and Hitler on the surrender of Europe. That was his plan.

The three of them went into this meeting expecting that Lord Halifax would come out as prime minister. As certain historical accounts relay the events, Chamberlain said that he believed that he was losing the confidence of his caucus and perhaps of the commons and that he could no longer be prosecuting this war and would resign. On the question of who would replace him, he said that he thought it should be Lord Halifax. As the story is told, Lord Halifax said no, that he thought it should be Winston Churchill. Of course, Winston Churchill said, “I agree”.

Thank goodness that happened, because days later, when Churchill would become prime minister, he fundamentally altered the policy of the British government. It was not just that he was giving these stirring addresses to rouse the nation. There are many of those examples, and we can get lost in the soaring and brilliant rhetoric of the time. However, we miss, sometimes, that he actually changed the policy of the British government from one of survival to one of victory. He said, “You ask, what is our aim?... It is victory, victory at all costs”. He prosecuted the war with that full intention in mind. It was not to delay and frustrate the enemy for a later date, when they could one day renegotiate a settlement. It was to totally obliterate Hitler's Third Reich, and that is exactly what he did.

However, imagine if Lord Halifax had come out of that room as prime minister. Imagine the different world we would live in today. He would have attempted to negotiate a settlement that would have surrendered all of western Europe to a monster, but instead, we had a courageous lion who was prepared to fight and win at any cost. We might live in a very different world today had Winston Churchill, who in the years leading up to that moment was a very controversial and often very isolated backbencher during his wilderness years of the 1930s, not emerged as the prime minister, an unlikely prime minister, but arguably the most consequential one in modern history.

The Budget

I relay this story merely to point out that sometimes certain people are in certain places at the right time. Although the stakes are nowhere as high today as they were then, as I think we will all admit, there is no doubt that there is something very important at stake in this particular controversy as well, and it is the independence of the prosecutorial arm of the government from politics. Had it been another attorney general, someone more malleable, someone whose convictions rested on sand rather than stone, we might have had a different outcome. That person might have said, "Sure. Clearly the Prime Minister wants this. It's illegal, but he gets what he wants. We know how he is. The clerk has made it clear that he is in a mood and he is going to get it done one way or another".

•(1615)

A less courageous and principled attorney general might have just folded like a cheap suit and allowed that to happen. However, it was not someone else. It was this attorney general, and she stood up again and again. They pushed and they pushed, and she would not back down. She finally said that she felt like she was about to witness the Saturday night massacre, which was a reference to Nixon's Watergate firings. She said to the Clerk of the Privy Council that she was waiting for "the other shoe to drop", and it did. Less than a month later, the Prime Minister would shuffle his cabinet and punt her from her position, making up a confusing and incredible, fantastic story about a game of musical chairs that resulted from the simple resignation of one Treasury Board president, who was completely unrelated to the situation at hand. She was then replaced with another Attorney General, who the Prime Minister thought would be more malleable.

This takes us to the future. What can Canadians expect of this case if the government is re-elected and the Prime Minister continues in office? They can expect that within weeks, he will direct his Attorney General, someone he believes will do his bidding, to sign a special deal with SNC-Lavalin. That is what he has done twice before. Once was on December 8, 2015, when his government immediately, upon taking office, granted an exemption to SNC-Lavalin, allowing it to continue bidding on federal contracts, even though it was charged with fraud and banned from bidding for being charged with fraud and bribery. The second time he attempted to provide a special deal for SNC-Lavalin was the controversy we are now discussing regarding his former attorney general.

Let there be no doubt that if the Prime Minister is re-elected, within days he will interrupt the criminal proceedings, the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, to protect the company from trial. He has noted, and so have his staff and former staff, that they can do this right up until the moment a verdict or a plea is rendered. In other words, he knows that he has time on his hands. He knows that if he is back in office, he can try this same game all over again. He has shown a relentless determination to allow this corporation to avoid criminal prosecution, and he will carry out that determination if he is given a chance after the next election.

That is yet another reason we cannot allow him to serve in this office one minute longer than necessary. We need to replace him with a prime minister who respects the independence of both the judiciary and the prosecution so that decisions on criminal charges are rendered by judges and juries, not by politicians. That key separation is essential for the successful functioning of any

democracy. That is precisely why we are holding him accountable for his already egregious interference, and it is further why we will argue to the Canadian people the need to replace him to make sure that this kind of odious, monstrous interference is never allowed to repeat itself.

•(1620)

I look around this chamber today, and the member from the Okanagan is here. He was among the very first to notice this strange amendment to the Criminal Code that popped into the omnibus budget bill. There we were, at 10 o'clock at night, turning 500 pages as we rushed to pass a bill the Prime Minister said needed to become law quickly. All of a sudden, there it was, right before us, an amendment to the Criminal Code right in the middle of a budget bill. It was the last thing we ever thought to find there. It was like finding fish in trees, so completely out of place it was.

There was only one witness to comment on it, and it was a public servant who simply gave the technical explanation of what it was. That was it. There were no anti-corruption crusaders, no corporate accountability experts and no law professors to come forward and explain to us what we were getting ourselves into. We were told that, by the way, we had to move quickly. We had to get this passed.

All of us were asking the same question: Who is asking for this? Who wants this?

We all go to church suppers or neighbourhood farms, or we knock on the doors of our communities in the suburbs of Canada, and nobody ever says, "Our laws are really cruel to corporate criminals. We really ought to find a way to let the crooks get off without a conviction. Maybe they could just pay a fine, fess up, promise not to do it again, and that would suffice." Nobody ever says, "Enough with all this business of trials and convictions. Enough with calling the executives before the court to testify under oath. That is too inhumane. We need to find a nicer way to do it." I do not remember hearing that from anyone in my constituency at the tens of thousands of doors I have knocked on since last summer, yet it was indeed a top budget priority of the Liberal government in mid-2018. Then, of course, it became the Prime Minister's top priority in relation to his attorney general in September, as soon as that Criminal Code amendment became law.

All of a sudden, there was panic. The attorney general had to be called on the carpet to answer to the clerk and the Prime Minister about why she had not moved with haste to direct the director of public prosecutions to extend this settlement offer to SNC-Lavalin.

The company was concerned. It was telling the Clerk of the Privy Council and others about a board meeting that was coming up on September 20, only days away, and it asked if the Liberals could not get it off the fraud and bribery charges within the next week. It had a board meeting, for God's sake. How was it supposed to do business?

The Budget

Of course, the right answer that a normal prime minister would give if a corporation made such a demand would be, "Get out of my office. Go to court. If you did nothing wrong, defend your case and get acquitted. I never want to see you here again." That would have been the right answer.

However, the Prime Minister kept inviting them back again and again. He said that they were doing everything they could for them, but there was one problem with the attorney general. She was getting in the way and mucking up their plans. The government set it up so that SNC could get off without a trial. It even amended the Criminal Code to make it possible for this one company, but this nuisance attorney general would just not play ball. She was told that she had a few months to get it done or they would move her out.

That is exactly what the Liberals did. They sent her packing, because she would not play ball. The old boys told her how things were going to work, and she said that where she comes from, they have the rule of law, and it does not work that way. They told her that she was no longer the attorney general, and they found someone perhaps more malleable.

The Prime Minister said the cabinet shuffle had nothing to do with the former attorney general's refusal to co-operate and give a deal to SNC-Lavalin, but here is what we know for sure.

● (1625)

When she was the attorney general, the answer to SNC-Lavalin's request for a settlement was a clear "no". She looked at the act, she looked at the decision of the prosecutor and said that it was not going to happen, period. Therefore, the status of that request was, no.

The new Attorney General comes in. What is his public position is on it? Maybe. Therefore, by moving the former attorney general out and moving a new one in, SNC-Lavalin has gone from "no" to "maybe". The Prime Minister would have us believe that his decision had nothing to do with that issue. Of course it did and it has had the consequence of reopening the possibility that this company, charged with stealing \$130 million from the poorest people in the world, might get off without a trial. That is the effect of the cabinet shuffle. The Prime Minister can deny that was his intention, but it is definitely the effect.

We really have to wonder why the government is so obsessed with helping this one company get around the rules and avoid consequences. There are thousands of trials in Canada every year. People are charged all the time with crimes. Why this particular company? Why this particular group of well-lobbied-for executives? Could it possibly have something to do with the \$100,000 of illegal donations that the company flowed to the Liberal Party of Canada? Those donations were funnelled through phony invoices, bonuses and expense claims, in a systematic fraud designed to move cash into Liberal Party coffers, and that has absolutely nothing to do with the decision?

I hear the deputy House leader of the Liberal Party blaming Stephen Harper, that it is Stephen Harper's fault that SNC-Lavalin gave illegal donations to the Liberal Party, that Stephen Harper must have somehow carried out mind control to force all of those executives to ask their employees to generate phony expense claims, bonuses and invoices so they could give the money to the

employees, who would then give those donations to the Liberal Party. Stephen Harper then must have exercised mind control over the Liberal Party officials who received all of those donations and thought nothing unusual of them. It must have been Stephen Harper's incredible power of mind control that he was able to do that. I have to give that member across the way some points for creativity. First it was Scott Brison's fault. Now it is Stephen Harper's fault.

I admit it was Stephen Harper's fault. Let me tell people why. The member got me on to another train of thought.

Back in the sponsorship scandal, the Liberal Party was never prosecuted, even though it admitted it received a million dollars of illegal money. It was funnelled in through what Judge Gomery called an "elaborate kickback scheme". Harper was always just a wee bit suspicious about why no one in the Liberal Party got prosecuted for it. He thought that maybe it was because the attorney general was a Liberal politician and controlled prosecutions, so maybe we should make the prosecutor independent from the political process.

That is why we created in the Accountability Act the director of public prosecutions, a completely separate office wherein decisions to pursue prosecutions of federal crimes would be made with no politics involved. So independent is this office that the director cannot even be removed by the executive without a vote in the House of Commons. Therefore, the process for removing a director is the same as for other officers of Parliament. Therefore, Stephen Harper created this office in the Accountability Act and he said that the only way an attorney general could direct the DPP to change course in any prosecution was in writing.

● (1630)

The attorney general has to write it down and publish that direction in the Canada Gazette so every Canadian has the ability to see what direction the politicians are trying to give to the prosecutor. There are no more backroom deals. It is because of that act that the Prime Minister could not secretly exert pressure on the prosecutor and allow that political interference to go ahead.

Therefore, yes, it is Stephen Harper's fault. He is the one who brought in the Federal Accountability Act, the very first act of his government. Because of that, the current Prime Minister got caught once again trying to help his friends in trying to violate the rule of law.

Therefore, we can blame Stephen Harper for something and be truthful about it. I know he is devastated to learn that the Liberals are blaming him for all of their political heartache right now, but as much as they would like him to be to blame, all of the misery is self-inflicted. Nobody forced the Prime Minister to help his corporate friends. Nobody forced him to interfere 20 times with the former attorney general to try to get to her shelve a criminal prosecution of a Liberal-linked corporation. Nobody forced him.

The Budget

Yes, the lobbyists were persuasive; yes, they were abundant; yes, they were crawling all over Parliament Hill pressuring Liberals around him, but the Prime Minister had a choice. He could have said no to the old Liberal way of doing things. He could have said no, but instead he did exactly what Liberals always do, which is to help friends in high places, the powerful insiders, the people behind the scenes who pull the strings. He made a decision to let them drive his agenda and he is now suffering the consequences for that decision right now. That is the core reality.

We hear the Liberal member on the other side heckling away about Stephen Harper. The problem the Liberals are having is that they refuse to take responsibility for their own conduct. If they were to do that, they might be able to heal the wound. However, by continually lashing out and blaming everybody under the sun for the Prime Minister's personal conduct, they only make their problems worse.

First Scott Brison was to blame, then the former attorney general was to blame and now we hear it is Stephen Harper. I am sure we will hear soon that the former Treasury Board president is to blame. Everyone is to blame except the Prime Minister for his own conduct. He is making others pay for his mistakes.

The Prime Minister should learn from the case before him, that people must be held responsible for their own conduct. That is the case for SNC-Lavalin as well. If he had recognized the principle of personal responsibility, he would have understood that this corporation should have to go to trial to own up for what it did and for the actions that it allegedly carried out in Libya, with fraud and bribery amounting to \$130 million. Would it not have made more sense for the Prime Minister to hold this company to the standard of law rather than to the instincts of politics? I think we all agree now that if the Prime Minister had thought in those terms, he would not find himself today in the state of disgrace in which he is currently.

Here we are at a fork in the road. There is a decision to be made by the members across the way. Will they allow the investigation to run its course so the truth can be known and the players can be held to account or will they continue with the cover-up?

• (1635)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My colleague from Carleton mentioned the actions of the Prime Minister regarding a specific company. I think everyone in the House knows I am the member of Parliament for Oshawa. As the Prime Minister has bent over backwards to do so many things to save jobs in one company, I see it as a bit hypocritical that the budget does nothing to address the job losses in the auto industry, especially in Oshawa. We heard this past week that 1,500 more jobs—

• (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: To this point, the hon. member has not really been clear on what his point of order is about. I would ask him to perhaps get to that straight away. If he has a point of order, that is great, but what he is speaking of is a matter of debate. We will continue on.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Oshawa raised an interesting point, and in my opinion it is in order for us to talk about jobs in Oshawa. It might not be a point of order, but it is a point. I felt that he delivered it in a manner that is orderly, so I will address it in my remarks as well.

This Prime Minister has claimed, wrongly, that he was trying to save jobs by interfering in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. I invite members to look back at my earlier remarks. In them I deposited conclusive evidence that there were not 9,000 jobs at stake in the SNC-Lavalin affair. That said, there are jobs at stake in other parts of the country for which the Prime Minister has done absolutely nothing to help mitigate the job losses.

Let us start with the auto sector.

The member for Oshawa is probably the greatest champion of the auto sector in the House of Commons. It is very hard to imagine anyone who has done more for that sector than that particular member. He has championed an end to regulatory red tape. He has fought for free trade. He has opposed excessive taxation. He has done all of this in order to make our auto makers as competitive as humanly possible so that our workers can earn a better living and our consumers can have access to even better products.

Now the Prime Minister stands by and witnesses as GM shuts down its operations and as Chrysler announces 1,500 additional job losses. While auto makers are adding jobs in other non-Canadian jurisdictions and the auto industry around the world is on the rise, here at home these companies are heading for the hills, and it is no surprise.

Let us go through the laundry list of all of the damaging policies that the current government has inflicted on our manufacturers.

The Liberals implemented a carbon tax that will make it more expensive for factories to operate here in Canada. It is a job-killing tax. They have added new red tape that contributes to the administrative cost of operating a manufacturing facility on this side of the border. They signed on to a trade agreement with Donald Trump that puts a cap on the future growth of Canada's auto exports to our biggest market—and by the way, they made that concession to Trump without getting anything in return that we did not already have. They have done all of these things, and then they have stood by and watched as these policies have led to their natural consequences: massive job losses in the automotive sector.

It is not just the automotive sector. It is also the energy sector, where tens of thousands of western oil and gas workers and thousands of additional refinery workers in the east have suffered for lack of a pipeline.

When the Prime Minister took office, three of the world's most respected pipeline companies were ready to put shovels in the ground and get building. Trans Canada had energy east, Enbridge had the northern gateway project, and of course Kinder Morgan had Trans Mountain. One by one, all three of those companies have now left. They are all gone. They were, up until the day the Prime Minister took office, ready to deploy billions of dollars in building pipelines with their own money, but not anymore.

The Budget

Trans Canada backed out after the Prime Minister changed the approval process for that pipeline, adding endless delays and changing the criteria by which the pipeline's approval would be judged to include what is called upstream and downstream emissions. In other words, the pipeline would not only be judged based on the emissions its own operations would cause but by the emissions caused by the production and later consumption of all the oil that would travel through it. No other pipeline in our competitor jurisdictions faces that same kind of test.

• (1645)

Furthermore, the Prime Minister imposes no similar requirement on Saudi, Algerian or Venezuelan oil. When the tankers from those countries arrive at our shores, he does not say, "Wait, you can't come in unless I do an examination of the upstream and downstream emissions of all this oil." No, he just says, "Come right in." That oil is converted into gasoline and pumped into Canadian cars and other manufacturing outlets for other uses, even though it has not been subjected to the same strict examination that the Prime Minister was going to impose on the energy east pipeline.

Therefore, that pipeline, which would have brought a million barrels of oil a day from western Canada to eastern refineries, was cancelled.

Then we have the northern gateway pipeline, a project that had the support of 80% of the four first nations communities along the path of the pipeline. They had signed onto partnership agreements that would have rendered them entitled to jobs, training, income for schools and hospitals, and an opportunity to escape poverty once and for all.

Even though those communities had signed those agreements, the Prime Minister was happy to violate that decision and veto the northern gateway pipeline. It is funny. He claims to believe in consultation with indigenous people. How many of the communities along the pathway of the northern gateway pipeline did he consult when he vetoed their right to build that pipeline?

Do we only believe in consultation if that consultation leads to the answer, "No"? It is apparently so. That is why numerous first nations groups are now taking the Liberal government to court for its refusal to properly consult them before killing their pipeline projects. There are great new consortiums of aboriginal business leaders now fighting, tooth and nail, to get these resource projects approved, but the Prime Minister is ignoring his constitutional duty to consult with those first nations, because he does not like what they have to say.

Then, of course, we have the Kinder Morgan pipeline, or Trans Mountain, as it is called. That pipeline should be without any controversy. It does not require any new right of way. It simply twins an existing pipeline to increase the capacity from 300,000 to 900,000 barrels a day, giving Alberta and Saskatchewan producers the ability to meet the Asian market of billions of people.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister added so many delays and was so weak in responding to environmental extremists and foreign interest groups that the company finally said that it had had enough, it was not prepared to do business in Canada anymore and it was leaving.

In order to win the votes of the majority of Canadians who want pipelines, the Prime Minister engaged in a very costly and confusing public relations exercise. He said, "I know, we'll buy the existing pipeline." It was \$4.5 billion for a \$2 billion, 60-year-old pipeline. Here is the thing: No one was looking for him to buy a pipeline. He did not need to buy the pipeline. We already had that pipeline. We want to build a pipeline.

Here is the difference between the Prime Minister's approach and ours. He bought a pipeline without building one. We will build one without buying it.

Just like we did in the Harper era where four major pipeline projects were built, including those that shipped oil to tidewater. Literally millions and millions of barrels of oil are currently shipped through pipelines built during the time when the Harper government was in office. We had also approved the northern gateway pipeline, which was about to begin construction when the Prime Minister took office and vetoed its construction altogether.

• (1650)

I want to go back to the Trans Mountain pipeline, a project for which the Prime Minister has now paid \$4.5 billion and there is not a single shovel in the ground; not a single inch of pipeline has been built. Here is the irony. We have gone from the Texas company planning to invest \$8 billion in Canada to build a pipeline here to the company taking 4.5 billion tax dollars out of Canada to build pipelines in Texas. I congratulate everyone. Our tax dollars are now being used to build pipelines in Texas.

TransCanada is moving more and more of its investment and operations to Texas. In fact, there are rumours it might take the word Canada out of its name altogether. All these companies are taking their operations, their dollars and their jobs and going to Texas. In other words, all our exes are in Texas, so the Prime Minister should hang his hat in Tennessee. I think he might enjoy Nashville.

Nevertheless, the fact is we need to defend our energy workers and their ability to ship their goods to market. They are not looking for welfare. They do not want a more generous government cheque in their mailbox. They do not want corporate welfare for the companies that employ them. They want the government to get out of the way and let them build pipelines. When the Conservative government takes office, it will clear the way for pipelines. The Conservative leader has laid out a very clear plan to make that happen.

First, the Conservatives will cancel Bill C-69, the "no new pipelines" bill. That bill extends further the hearing process to make it uneconomical and risky for proponents to put their money aside for projects in Canada. It requires that companies engage in ill-defined sociological debates about pipelines. For example, they would need to do a gender impact study. As far as I know, pipelines are genderless, but apparently the government believes that everything has to do with sociology and nothing has to do with economics. Liberals want a gender study on each natural resource project.

The Budget

Most people were scratching their heads to try to understand what this meant, until the Prime Minister explained it to them. He was in South America and he explained that male construction workers bring negative gender impacts to rural communities. In the period after he made these bizarre comments, rural women from across the country started to share the gender impacts they had experienced from having construction workers in their communities. They shared that they bring jobs and pay taxes to fund local schools and hospitals. They support families.

By the way, Mr. Prime Minister should know that not all energy workers are men. There are highly skilled female energy workers whose jobs he has killed by blocking the construction of these key projects.

If he reads a gender impact study of a pipeline, why does he not actually go out to a natural gas or oil development project in western Canada and talk to real people on the ground instead of grandstanding at some fancy international conference in South America, showing off his spectacularly colourful and radiant socks as he lectures the world on the negative gender impacts of construction workers? These workers do important work for our economy and our country. There is dignity in what they do and they deserve our respect.

• (1655)

They will get our respect when the Conservative government forms office.

First, we will scrap Bill C-69, the no new pipelines bill.

Second, our Conservative leader has announced that he will invoke subsection 92(10) of the British North America Act to declare pipeline projects to be to the general advantage of Canada.

This a power that our founding fathers created in our Constitution for the federal government in the case of any interprovincial construction project. For example, if a rail project or a pipeline or any other project travels over provincial boundaries, then all of the approvals for that project can be uploaded to the federal government under subsection 92(10) of the Constitution. In this way the prime minister and his executive branch can set up the approval process that prevents parochial, not-in-my-backyard local politicians from blocking the construction of pipelines.

We understand that in a federation, it is impossible to have the free flow of goods, services and people if individual municipal or provincial decision-makers are able to block those projects anywhere along the line.

Imagine if we allowed just any municipality to say that it was going to ban the passage of a railway through its community and would not allow railways there. Well, I guarantee that not a single railway would traverse our country. It would be impossible. That is why the federal government is exclusively responsible for railways.

It should be the same with pipelines. All it takes is a prime minister who has the courage to make it so by invoking subsection 92(10) of the Constitution that our founding fathers provided to us when they brought about Confederation over a century and a half ago.

Third, we will place strict time limits on the hearings so that we will not have endless processes that go nowhere. We will signal to businesses from around the world that they have a particular and confined time period during which they will get either a yes or a no. Once they have that answer, they can proceed. No business is going to tie up \$10 billion or \$15 billion for five, six or seven years when they can go to jurisdictions almost anywhere else on the planet and build their projects within less than two years, or at least start them. Therefore, the Conservative leader will bring in strict time limits on the hearings.

Fourth, the Conservative leader has announced that his plan for pipelines will ban foreign money and foreign interests from the hearings on these projects.

We know why these groups want to block the construction of pipelines. It is in their naked self-interest to keep ripping off Canadians by banning us from building pipelines and getting our product to market. It is clear why Saudi, Algerian, Venezuelan and other interests would want to ban us from getting western oil to eastern refineries. That guarantees that they can continue to corner the market for our very large refineries in the eastern part of the country.

Furthermore, it is clear why American oil companies would like to see us fail to build pipelines. After all, absent pipelines to tidewater, Canada is forced to export 99% of its oil to the United States of America at massive discounts, which have equalled, in some cases, more than 50% below world prices. We sell them the product for \$15, and they can resell it for \$55 or \$60. No wonder these American oil interests have funded phony environmental groups to obstruct and block the construction of Canadian pipelines here in Canada.

• (1700)

The Leader of the Opposition's plan is to ensure that only those who have either specific and unique expertise related to the project or who are resident on or near the project's construction itself will appear at hearings. People will not be able to just claim esoteric interest in pipelines and environmental policy and then burn up hours upon hours of hearing time before the National Energy Board under this proposed change. Instead, the studies will focus very specifically on the expertise of people who know what they are talking about with respect to the particular project and the people who live along the affected path. That is it.

All of this can and will be done while carrying out our moral and constitutional obligation to consult with first nations people, who are increasingly the most passionate proponents of resource development across the country. We will no longer allow the hard left in this country to stigmatize and stereotype first nations people as monolithically opposed to resource development.

In fact, the resources for which we propose to allow development are, in many cases, on the property of the first nations themselves. They are the owners, and therefore they should have the harvesting rights in many of these particular projects. That is why we will streamline the approval process to get resource projects built. In the process, we will lift thousands of first nations people out of desperate poverty and into great upward mobility with jobs, schools and hospitals paid for through revenues generated from their communities.

That is—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is rising on a point of order.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

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

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make some comments on the question of privilege that was raised from the question period answers on February 7 and 8. It is important that we do this now.

There is new information that has come forward, and certainly it is relevant, because in less than an hour the Liberal Party is going to be making some decisions that will impact the careers of a couple of its members. It is relevant that since the House last—

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands that with regard to additions to points of privilege that are under consideration and on which the Speaker has not yet provided a decision, normally these are brought up after question period, for example, at normal times of interruption in the course of the day.

I am mindful that certainly members have the opportunity to raise additional new points of information that are relevant to questions of privilege that have already been put to the House, and I remind the hon. member of that.

I will go ahead and recognize him and he can carry on. I will be interested to know what new information he wishes to add. As a reminder on this type of intervention, we are mindful that other members have the floor. We do not normally interrupt for questions of privilege in the midst of debate.

I will recognize the hon. member and ask him to be concise in his additional points of information on the questions of privilege that he is referencing.

• (1705)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this and I will be concise. I will stick as closely as I can to my notes and hopefully we will be able to get through that. I appreciate the opportunity to state this because it is relevant at this time.

On February 7 and 8, the Minister of Justice and his parliamentary secretary offered flat, bald denials of an article that appeared in *The Globe and Mail*. They referred to the allegations as false. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has referred to some of these so-called

Privilege

allegations and the subsequent justice committee evidence that confirmed them.

I want to speak to two of the allegations, just very quickly, particularly in light of the evidence that was posted late Friday afternoon on the justice committee's website, which adds to a further corroboration of the reporting of Robert Fife, Steven Chase and Sean Fine. The original newspaper article's sixth paragraph informed readers that:

Sources say [the hon. 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 four of the committee's February 27 evidence, the hon. member for Vancouver Granville said, "The Clerk then said that he spoke to my deputy and she said that I could speak to the director."

Later on page four, she recounted:

Mathieu and Elder also raised the idea of an "informal reach out" to the DPP. My chief of staff said that she knew I was not comfortable with that, as it looked like and probably did constitute political interference. They asked whether that was true if it wasn't the Attorney General herself, but if it was her staff or the deputy minister. My chief of staff said "yes", it would....

Meanwhile, on the morning of March 6, Gerry Butts, the Prime Minister's ex-principal secretary, tried to spin all of this heavy pressure, saying, on page 26 of the evidence:

We thought that the more thought and advice and process that could go into this and the more transparency we could bring into the decision-making process, the better off we all were going to be, going forward.

In the sensational audio recording filed with the justice committee last week, we heard from Michael Wernick, the Prime Minister's hand-picked Clerk of the Privy Council, in his words saying, "Is there anybody that can talk to Kathleen then about the context around this or to get her to explain why?"

Recall again that the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary called these allegations false. The evidence patently begs to differ. Again, these two government spokespersons misled the House or were themselves misled to that end.

The other allegation to address is the one at *The Globe and Mail* article's 23rd paragraph, where we read:

Sources said the justice minister was also encouraged to hire an outside legal expert to furnish an opinion on the suitability of a remediation agreement.

The allegation was also, as the Chair will remember, called false by the current justice minister and his parliamentary secretary. However, the former attorney general gave the following testimony to the justice committee on February 22, on page four of the evidence:

We did not hear from anyone again until October 18 when Mathieu Bouchard called my chief of staff and asked that we—I—look at the option of my seeking an external legal opinion on the DPP's decision not to extend an invitation to negotiate a DPA.

This would become a recurring theme for some time in messages from the PMO, that an external review should be done of the DPP's decision....

The Budget

However, on October 26, 2018, when my chief of staff spoke to Mathieu Bouchard and communicated to him that, given that SNC had now filed in Federal Court seeking to review the DPP's decision, surely we had moved past the idea of the Attorney General intervening or getting an opinion on the same question. Mathieu replied that he was still interested in an external legal opinion idea. Could she not get an external legal opinion on whether the DPP had exercised their discretion properly, and then on the application itself, the Attorney General could intervene and seek to stay the proceedings, given that she was awaiting a legal opinion?

The Prime Minister's former principal secretary, Gerald Butts, corroborated this repetitive series of exchanges when he appeared at the justice committee's March 6 morning meeting. On page two of the evidence, he is recorded as saying:

So what, exactly, was staff talking to the minister about? We had a view, which was informed by Department of Justice advice, that it would be appropriate for her to seek independent advice from an eminent Canadian jurist or panel of jurists. We believed that this was appropriate....

Later, on page three, he said:

When you boil it all down, all we ever asked the Attorney General to do was to consider a second opinion.

Then in that audio recording filed with the justice committee we heard Michael Wernick saying, "I think [the Prime Minister] is thinking about getting somebody else to give him some advice.... He just wants to understand more at this point of why the DPA route is not taken up...he is thinking of bringing in someone like Bev McLachlin to give him advice on this or to give you advice".

• (1710)

This blows a huge hole in the side of any claim that The Globe and Mail story on February 7 was false. It was just the opposite in fact.

Once again, the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary misled the House or were misled by someone who wanted to achieve that same result.

In conclusion, I want to turn to the possibility raised by the House leader of the Official Opposition in her preliminary remarks that the Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary were merely victims of a poor briefing from the Prime Minister or the Clerk of the Privy Council and were fed falsehoods to be spread in the House of Commons.

I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to consider the ruling of Mr. Speaker Jerome on December 6, 1978. The case is summarized at footnote 249 of page 116 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, where it says:

On November 3, 1978, Allan Lawrence... charged that he had been deliberately misled by a former Solicitor General. Acting on behalf of a constituent who suspected that his mail had been tampered with, Mr. Lawrence had written in 1973 to the then Solicitor General who assured him that as a matter of policy the RCMP did not intercept the private mail of anyone. However, on November 1, 1978, in testimony before the McDonald Commission (a royal commission created by the federal government in 1977 to look into the illegal activities of the RCMP, and headed by Justice David McDonald of the Supreme Court of Alberta), the former RCMP commissioner stated that they did indeed intercept mail on a very restricted basis and that the practice was not one which had been concealed from Ministers. Mr. Lawrence claimed that this statement clearly conflicted with the information he had received from the Solicitor General some years earlier...On December 6, Speaker Jerome dealt with a number of points raised in the presentations on the question of privilege and ruled the matter *prima facie*.

In considering the testimony heard at the McDonald Commission, Mr. Speaker Jerome said in his ruling at page—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I thank the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for these additional points. I think I have heard enough in this regard. The hon. member has made some additional points. I am not so sure some of it may have been on the record at an earlier time. He did note, however, in his conclusion that as it relates to more recent events his additional comments are in that regard. I assure him that these points will be taken under consideration.

Members will know that they have a right to be heard with respect to interventions for points of order and questions of privilege, but presiding officers have the ability to decide at which point enough has been put on the record to permit conclusions and deliberations on these matters. I thank the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for these additional comments.

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THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the same spirit as my colleague, I would like to point the attention of the House to a very important article written in the National Post just yesterday. The author is Kelly McParland. It is entitled, "Here's what Liberals are asking you to believe about the SNC-Lavalin saga." It states:

In order to believe [the Prime Minister's] version of his dispute with his former attorney general, you have to accept that an astonishing series of missteps, misunderstandings and lost opportunities were entirely innocent.

You have to believe that when [the former attorney general] told [the Prime Minister] in September that she had made up her mind and would not interfere with the decision to proceed with a prosecution against SNC-Lavalin, he either didn't grasp what she was saying, or didn't accept how serious she was.

You have to trust that none of the numerous complaints she made over the ensuing weeks, warning that the pressure being exerted was inappropriate and had to stop, made it through to [the Prime Minister].

You have to consider it wholly believable that Gerald Butts, the political whizz-kid and guru considered the brains behind the throne, likewise missed or misinterpreted the signals, and didn't alert his boss that they had a real problem.

You have to find nothing odd in the fact none of the supposedly highly-skilled and politically adept people surrounding [the Prime Minister] appreciated the severity of the warning [the former attorney general] was making: that if [the Prime Minister] used his office to muscle a subordinate to interfere in the independence of the public prosecutor, he was racing headlong towards a cliff and was taking his government with him.

Even though [the former attorney general] says she has "documented evidence" to the contrary, you have to believe that the Prime Minister's Office never received the formal explanation — known as a Section 13 — outlining the reasoning for going ahead with the Lavalin prosecution, and that, in all the months of back-and-forth among ministers, their staff and the PMO, no one took the time to acquaint [the Prime Minister] with the contents of that report.

If you want to agree with complaints that the whole affair has been overblown, you need to accept at face value the apparent inability of Michael Wernick, supposedly among the top minds in the civil service, to understand why [the former attorney general] refused to use the "tools" she had at her disposal to halt the prosecution of SNC, even after she made crystal clear in their 17-minute phone conversation that using those tools would inevitably explode in the face of the government. And you need to take seriously Wernick's claim that he didn't pass on the message to [the Prime Minister], despite specifically telling [the former attorney general] he had to "report back," because everyone left town the next day on a holiday.

The Budget

This is the same Wernick, remember, who opened the conversation by warning that time was of the essence, that [the Prime Minister] was eager to find a solution, and had earlier testified that if she had concerns, the minister could have contacted [the Prime Minister] any time, at any hour, because he was always available.

It's a lot to accept. But there's even more to digest. For instance, how is it that neither Butts nor [the Prime Minister] realized something was badly amiss when [the former Treasury Board president] told them [the former attorney general] might feel that shuffling her out of her job was punishment for refusing to cave to [the Prime Minister's] demands? And how could they be shocked when [the former attorney general] demurred from accepting a transfer to Indigenous Services, a post she'd made known she could never accept.

● (1715)

McParland goes on to ask, "Is it really feasible that no one in the Liberal hierarchy foresaw that imposing limits on [the former attorney general]'s ability to testify before the Justice committee would strike a negative chord with Canadians, or that letting Liberal MPs preemptorily shut down the committee in the wake of her testimony would only make things worse?"

McParland further writes:

There are Liberals out there who insist they can buy the whole package, that accept [the Prime Minister]'s bland assurances over the minister's detailed evidence. Somehow they can listen to the Wernick phone call and not see what's going on: a minister being strong-armed by a powerful messenger armed with warnings that the boss is "going to find a way to get it done, one way or another." They argue that [the Prime Minister] would never act in such a threatening manner, that it's out of character.

But the truth is, it's entirely in character, and the proof has been there all along, in multiple examples of [the Prime Minister]'s response to situations that try his patience. Such as when he elbowed his way across the Commons to berate a member of the opposition. Or the moment in Edmonton when he sarcastically suggested a woman use the term "peoplekind" rather than "mankind." Or his determination to block students from summer jobs unless organizations employing them signed a statement attesting to support Liberal values.

Or his snarky response just last week to an inconvenient intruder at a Liberal fundraiser who tried to draw attention to the ongoing health problems at Grassy Narrows, a First Nations community long troubled by mercury poisoning.

Over more than three years of working closely with [the Prime Minister], [the former attorney general] has had plenty of time to learn what lies beneath the pleasant image the prime minister works so hard to project. "I am not under any illusion how the prime minister...gets things that he wants," she tells Wernick in their recorded phone call.

"I am having...thoughts of the Saturday Night Massacre here, Michael," she confesses, alluding to Richard Nixon's desperate effort to save himself from Watergate by taking a buzz saw to his justice department. "I am waiting for the... other shoe to drop."

The shoe dropped a few weeks later, when she was ousted from her job, then resigned to make clear her differences with [the Prime Minister]. The prime minister's version of her departure is that it resulted from an "erosion of trust" of which he was entirely unaware, in spite of the events of the previous three months, the warnings she issued, the stark alert issued to Wernick and the concerns raised by [the former Treasury Board president].

Maybe it's possible that the prime minister really was caught off guard, that his aides and advisers failed to bring the danger to his attention. But if that's the case, you have to ask yourself whether a government that could make so many errors in judgment, could miss so many signs of trouble, could press ahead with a bad idea even when one of its senior members is waving her arms and shouting "stop!" — you have to ask yourself whether a government so clumsy, myopic and accident prone has any business running the country.

I was just quoting directly from the opinion piece of Mr. Kelly McParland, published April 1, 2019. All of the words in it are to be attributed to him. Though they are very well authored, I do not want to indirectly attempt to take ownership of his words.

● (1720)

Therefore, at the end, I will be seeking unanimous consent to table his op-ed so that the formal record will show that the words I just uttered were his and not mine, although I endorse them.

Having analyzed what Mr. McParland wrote, I believe he has captured very well the incredible story the Prime Minister is asking Canadians to digest, which is that all along, in this four-month campaign of relentless pressure, wherein members of the Prime Minister's inner circle, including the Prime Minister himself, interfered 20 times with the attorney general's role, it was all a big misunderstanding, that he just did not get the message, that she just was not clear enough, that he failed to communicate and that his only mistake was that he ought to have picked up the phone and called her a few more times.

The irony is that this is exactly the wrong answer. The problem was that he was calling her too much. He had asked his team to descend on her. It was relentlessly "hounding" her with "veiled threats", inappropriate "pressure" and "interference". These are all words from current members of the Liberal caucus. He wants us all to believe that this was just a big misunderstanding, that nothing inappropriate happened of which he was contemporaneously aware, and that this is just a learning experience, like a high school kid who forgot to study for a mid-term math exam or something and therefore got a bad mark.

We all accept that prime ministers of all colours will learn on the job. It is a very difficult one. However, the problem here was not one of inexperience. It was one of character, one driven by a Prime Minister determined to get whatever he wanted, no matter the price, even at the expense of our rule of law. It was a Prime Minister who progressed in doing these things even when his own attorney general, the top law officer of the Crown, had pleaded with him to please stop, in the name of God, and let her independently administer her portfolio. It was a Prime Minister who was acting in the narrow interests of a Liberal-linked corporation, with a mile-long rap sheet of corruption, including the conviction of its most senior executives. That is what the Prime Minister undertook between September and December of 2018, followed up by a great crescendo of a cabinet shuffle that would move a qualified attorney general out of her job and replace her with someone more malleable, someone willing to do the Prime Minister's bidding.

If members do not believe me, then let us ask the Prime Minister this one simple question. He wants us to digest this incredible story that these events were all a big misunderstanding. If that is true, will he invite all the players to come before the ethics committee as part of a full and open investigation so that Canadians can get to the truth? The justice committee has shut down its inquiry. All the evidence it will receive it has received. Now it is time for the ethics committee to do its work and complete the investigation.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1725)

A week from today, that committee will convene. Numerous members of that committee, including Liberal members, have indicated an openness to an investigation. Yes, they voted down an investigation once before, but they said the reason they did so was that it was “premature”. They said they needed to see the final submission of evidence and the file closed at the justice committee in order for the ethics committee to begin doing its work. Now that has been done, so the two Liberal members who used the term “premature” will be invited to follow their words with action and vote with members of the opposition a week from today to resume the investigation, call all the witnesses, hear all the testimony, gather all the evidence, scrutinize all the claims and report all the findings to the Canadian people.

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CRIMINAL CODE

BILL C-84—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-84, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to bestiality and animal fighting.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

AN ACT RESPECTING FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

BILL C-92—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-92, an act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

● (1730)

*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): While I have the floor, I would like to inform the House that Friday, April 5, will be an allotted day.

*[English]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to designate Wednesday, April 3, as the day appointed for the conclusion of the debate on the motion to concur in the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton has about 30 seconds left. I will let him finish, and then we will go from there.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to use that 30 seconds to make an announcement to the House.

As you know, I have been speaking non-stop for hours now. I will terminate that speech as soon as the government announces it will agree to co-operate with the ethics committee investigations so that all Canadians can get to the truth on the cover-up and bring justice to this scandal.

I have two more days for my speech. While I have been invited by numerous members to provide such speeches, I am prepared to put aside those words in the interest of having a full-scale investigation if the government announces it will agree to just that.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:30 p.m., the time provided for government orders has expired.

[English]

I should bring to the attention of hon. members that because of the special order made earlier today regarding Bill S-1003, there will be no Private Members' Business hour today.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am here today because several months ago, I asked an important question of the government about the sterilization of indigenous women. At that time, we knew that at least 60 indigenous women in this country had come forward, with the most recent case being as recent as 2017. The government response was this:

We are actively working with partners in provinces. We are working with faculties of medical education and health professionals to ensure that culturally safe care is available across the country.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am here today to receive an update from the government on its actions to date.

The reality is that the history of forced sterilization of indigenous women is a sad part of the history, and obviously the present, of this country. I have met some indigenous women who were sterilized. I have heard sad stories of young women who were in residential schools in British Columbia. They were sent to the hospital to get a procedure done. They did not know what it was for. When they were returned to their residential school, they were told that they were no longer able to have children in the future. These stories are a sad part of the history of Canada, and it is devastating that they are now part of what is happening in this day and age.

When we talk about reconciliation, when we talk about moving forward, these human rights violations should be a significant focus for the government.

Recently, in a news article, a woman explained how she tried to leave the room before being operated on, and the doctor wheeled her back in, asking the nurses if she had signed a consent form and ignoring her saying repeatedly, "I don't want this." That is shocking in this day and age in this country. It is something we should all be concerned about.

The Saskatoon Health Region has formally apologized for coercing women into sterilization. It did that in July 2017.

That is one step, but it does not address the big issue, which is why this is happening in our country. What is happening that we are not able to prevent it?

Over 100 women have come forward in two class action suits, one as recent as 2017 and the others from 1990 to the early 2000s. Further to that, allegations are now surfacing in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia and the territory of Nunavut. At this point, no one has been charged in Canada for coercing an indigenous woman into sterilization, and we should be seriously concerned about that.

I am here to make sure that the Liberal government knows that indigenous people and non-indigenous people across Canada are watching. They know that the UN called for a criminal probe on the topic in late December 2018. The NDP member for Vancouver Kingsway formally requested an RCMP criminal probe into the matter this past February.

Canadians are waiting. They want answers and they want them soon. This is a matter of human rights. This is a matter of the federal government standing up for reconciliation. This history has been a silent history. We need to bring it into the light, and we need to make sure that it does not happen again.

• (1735)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House share the outrage of Canadians about allegations of the coerced sterilization of indigenous women. Coerced and forced sterilization is a clear violation of both human rights and reproductive rights.

[*Translation*]

There is no question the practice is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated. This should never happen to any woman.

[*English*]

As made clear by the Minister of Indigenous Services, the health and safety of indigenous women and girls is one of our government's highest priorities. Action is being taken on multiple fronts to ensure that all indigenous women receive culturally appropriate and safe health services.

For instance, ISC is investing in services such as the maternal child health program to support healthy pregnancies and reproductive health and rights. For the first time, these investments include midwifery.

The department is also strengthening prenatal support and education programs, including changes to the prenatal escort policy. This means that the safety of indigenous women is being improved by ensuring that every mother knows she is entitled to an escort at the time of her child's birth.

[*Translation*]

The Minister of Indigenous Services has responded to recommendations made in February 2018 at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The minister is working with indigenous partners to produce information material for health care providers and patients on proper and informed consent and issue guidance on reproductive health options.

[*English*]

In addition, the department has established an advisory committee on indigenous women's well-being to inform ISC of current and emerging issues in health and across the social determinants of health, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The advisory committee held its inaugural meeting in mid-February, with representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, the AFN Women's Council, ITK, NWAC, Pauktuutit, Les Femmes Michif, the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The next meeting is scheduled for later this spring.

Given that health care is a multi-jurisdictional, indeed, a multi-sectoral responsibility, we must work with other partners to improve access to culturally safe health services and support indigenous-led approaches to health care delivery. Our government is working with provinces and territories to establish a working group on cultural safety and humility in Canada's health care system. The first formal meeting is expected to take place in April.

Adjournment Proceedings

We hope our provincial and territorial counterparts join us in redoubling our efforts to stop all violations of women's rights. Ensuring health care workers receive cultural competency training was also one of TRC's calls to action. In collaboration with national indigenous organizations, ISC is reaching out to professional bodies such as the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons to increase the cultural competency of health professionals.

It is also important to recognize that informed consent policies are administered at the local level within hospitals. This means that hospital administrators and area health authorities are needed in the effort. We all have a part to play in ensuring indigenous patients receive quality health care that is free of prejudice. As the work I have highlighted underscores, there can be no debate about this government's determination to do just that.

• (1740)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the member just mentioned shared outrage and the reality that there were a lot of challenges when working with multi-jurisdictional issues. However, that is not enough, in my opinion. When we talk about the needs of these women to be safe, we need to see a fierce approach to that. We need to see somebody standing up on these issues.

I appreciate that the member talked a lot about the services, how the government was improving things for indigenous people and looking at making things more inclusive. However, the reality is that women are being coerced into sterilization. In one example, a woman was told she would not be allowed to see her newborn child until she agreed to this procedure. That is outrageous. We need to take action that will actually impact these women's lives. It is not okay in this day and age that women are being forced into sterilization. Indigenous lives are important.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, the forced sterilization of indigenous women is a deplorable practice and a serious violation of women's human and reproductive rights. The Government of Canada profoundly believes that all indigenous women must receive culturally safe health services, with no exceptions.

We are working with all partners that have a role to play in improving the standard of health care services offered to indigenous people. We are actively working with provinces, which have jurisdiction over the delivery of health care services. We are working with faculties of medical education and health professionals and indigenous communities to raise understanding of reproductive health options and what culturally informed consent means.

Much work remains to be done and most women do not have access to midwifery care or to an indigenous midwife. We are determined to do our part and are committed to right the wrongs of the past in the spirit of reconciliation. However, ultimately, all Canadians have a responsibility to ensure these practices never happen again.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to follow up on a question I asked on November 19. Time flies. We were in the middle of a language crisis

that was gripping Franco-Ontarians. I was asking the Liberal government about the Ontario government's terrible decision to eliminate the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner and scrap plans to build a French-language university in Toronto.

That lack of vision is a direct attack on the Franco-Ontarian community and official languages. This situation affects all francophone communities across the country. Today we can and we must confirm that all francophones and francophiles from coast to coast stand in solidarity with Franco-Ontarians.

In November, I asked the Liberals what concrete action they were going to take to protect minority francophone communities across the country, particularly in response to the current language crisis in Ontario. I referred to two specific aspects, namely, the elimination of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner and the decision to shelve the creation of the French-language university. There are roughly 800,000 francophones in Ontario and there is no francophone university. That makes no sense.

Several prominent Franco-Ontarians have appeared on the Quebec TV show *Tout le monde en parle*, including Dyane Adam, the chair of the board of governors of the Université de l'Ontario français, and Ontario MPP Amanda Simard. They showed the Quebec nation the importance of solidarity. All francophones need to stand in solidarity with other francophones in Canada who are under attack. Their testimony struck a chord with us and showed us the importance of standing together.

In my own riding, Drummond, I received hundreds of emails, letters and calls telling me to keep going and expressing support for Franco-Ontarians. Those people said we need to protect francophones and French-language services in Ontario.

Speaking of the vitality and development of our francophone communities, French is more alive than ever in Drummond. On March 16, I attended the prize-giving ceremony for the awards for excellence in French and the prestigious Georges Dor award, which are given out each year by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du Centre-du-Québec. I just want to take a moment to congratulate the winners: Rosalie Ouellette, Ariane Poudrier, Juliette De Grandpré, Raphaëlle-Ambre Hamon and Jean-Guy Lachance. As a French teacher and the critic for official languages, I always want to recognize the contributions of people who promote the vitality of the beautiful French language. I commend the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du Centre-du-Québec.

What more will the government do to support Franco-Ontarians? What else will it offer the Université de l'Ontario français?

• (1745)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Drummond, for his question. It is still a highly relevant topic, given the Ontario government's decisions about Ontario's Francophonie.

Our country has built an identity that is based on diversity, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and linguistic duality. Today, our two official languages, French and English, are an asset and a source of pride.

[English]

Our government recognizes the crucial role played by Ontario's French language services commissioner, who ensures that the rights of Ontario citizens and the obligations of government and government agencies are respected according to the French Language Services Act, and has acted as a champion for Franco-Ontarians.

With the elimination of the French language services commission, Franco-Ontarians are losing a key support and our government is questioning how the rights of Franco-Ontarians will be respected and ensured with the elimination of this important watchdog role.

[Translation]

Our government is also disappointed in the decision to scrap the French-language university in Ontario. This university would have given young people and adults access to post-secondary studies in their language.

[English]

We have repeatedly heard of the need for French-speaking paramedics, nurses and teachers, but these people need to access high-quality French language university programs to develop the professional skills to serve francophone minority communities.

Our government is committed to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities across the country according to the Official Languages Act, and we firmly believe in defending those language rights in Canada.

[Translation]

We are proud to have announced the return of the federal government's court challenges program, which is now up and running.

Furthermore, our government has started reviewing the official languages regulations. The new regulations were introduced in Parliament on October 25, 2018. This review is part of our commitment to ensuring that Canadians have access to federal services in the official language of their choice.

[English]

Under part VII of the Official Languages Act, the government is committed to showing leadership in all matters pertaining to the vitality of our official languages, all while respecting the priorities of the provincial and territorial governments.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that Franco-Ontarians have gone through the latest budget with a fine-toothed comb.

I asked my colleague what more she had done for francophones. Franco-Ontarians asked us whether the budget explicitly said that the Liberal government was prepared to fund its fair share of the French-language university in Ontario. They wanted the budget to be clear on that.

The action plan for official languages sounds good, but we need to see a commitment from the Liberal government in the budget. This is what representatives of Ontario's francophone community are asking

Adjournment Proceedings

for. This is why the Liberal government should have made a gesture in the budget or shown some will—

• (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie.

[English]

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Mr. Speaker, on January 13, the minister wrote to ministers Mulroney and Fullerton to reiterate her commitment to provide support for the Université de l'Ontario français project, should the Government of Ontario submit a formal request.

Meanwhile our government announced \$1.9 million in funding to the project to ensure start-up costs are covered until January 2020.

[Translation]

In March 2018, our government announced an investment of \$2.7 billion over five years, including \$500 million in new funding through the action plan for official languages. It is the first substantial investment in official languages since 2003.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, on November 19 I noted that the price of western Canadian heavy oil had fallen to a record low, threatening employment in the sector as well as provincial government revenues. I noted that this was a major crisis facing our country and that the industry was considering a coordinated production cut in order to boost prices.

I asked the federal government to provide assurances that the federal Competition Bureau would not intervene to prevent such a production cut. Of course, what ended up happening is that on December 2, the Alberta premier announced that the provincial government would mandate a production cut of about 9%. Because this was required by the province and not just coordinated among companies, there was no role for federal competition policy.

I am pleased to report that the policy I raised in the House, which the Alberta government implemented, was quite successful in rapidly increasing the price of western Canadian select oil. The Alberta government also invested in railcars in order to help move its oil to market in the absence of sufficient pipeline capacity. That is also making a positive contribution to pricing.

These are a couple of very positive examples of what the Notley government has done to steward Alberta's oil industry, and I think all western Canadians appreciate those efforts.

I want to speak in a broader sense about federal competition policy. It is already the case that Canadian law does not try to sanction cartels or uncompetitive activity regarding things that are entirely for export, because of course Canadians benefit from being able to get the best possible price for commodities that we are exporting.

Adjournment Proceedings

That logic largely applies to oil, but of course we also consume oil right here in Canada. We have had a recent kerfuffle about the application of the federal carbon tax to gasoline. In the past few days, we have seen photos of Conservative politicians gassing up over the weekend, ahead of the federal carbon tax coming into effect.

It is worth noting that the carbon tax is about 4¢ or 5¢ per litre, whereas the price of gasoline has gone up by something like 20¢ per litre over the past month. At a minimum, this tells us that there are many factors other than carbon pricing that influence the cost of gasoline. However, it also suggests that if there is a role for federal competition policy, it should be focused on markets that actually affect Canadian consumers.

There is a role for the federal Competition Bureau to look at collusion regarding the retail pricing of gasoline, because as much as we want a high price for the oil that Canada tries to sell on world markets, we also want to make sure there is a fair price for consumers at the pump here in Canada. The way to do this is to ensure that the Competition Bureau focuses not so much on the oil production but on gasoline retailing.

• (1755)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for his question.

Our government stands with workers in our energy sector and always will.

After 10 years of inaction under Stephen Harper, 99% of our oil exports were still sold at a discount to the United States. While the Conservatives spent a decade failing our energy sector by failing to get our oil to new markets, we are working each day to fix their failures. Our government made this issue, and market access in general, an urgent priority.

In fact, our government purchased the proposed Trans Mountain expansion project and related assets. The Conservatives opposed this investment. On TMX, we are focused on following the guidance of the Federal Court of Appeal to move the process forward on TMX in the right way, through meaningful consultations. We also approved the Line 3 replacement project and have always supported Keystone XL.

While we worked to build new pipeline capacity and gain access to non-U.S. global markets, we continue to take action. In December, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of International Trade Diversification announced a \$1.6-billion package to support workers and boost competitiveness. This package includes \$1 billion in commercial financial support from Export Development Canada to invest in innovative technologies, address working capital needs, or explore new markets; a new \$500-million energy diversification commercial financing envelope over three years from the Business Development Bank of Canada; a \$50-million investment through Natural Resources Canada's Clean Growth program in oil and gas projects, projected to generate \$890 million in investments; and \$100

million through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's strategic innovation fund in energy and economic diversification-related projects.

While the Conservatives continue to put down our energy sector, in the last few weeks and months we have secured the single largest private sector investment in Canadian history with the LNG Canada project, creating 10,000 jobs at peak construction. As well, there was a final investment decision on a \$4.5-billion petrochemical facility in Sturgeon County, which will see 3,000 workers on the ground at peak construction. Inter Pipeline announced two new facilities, valued at \$3.5 billion, in the Industrial Heartland, creating over 2,000 full-time jobs at peak construction. Also, Nautical announced plans to develop a \$2-billion methanol plant just south of Grande Prairie, which will create 1,000 direct construction jobs.

These are real investments in our energy sector, in Canadians and in Alberta workers.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his remarks. I would also like to apologize to him and to you, Mr. Speaker, for keeping you away from what was undoubtedly a very interesting Liberal caucus meeting this evening, but perhaps I have done a bit of a favour in that sense. If you want to thank me as well, I would accept that.

I really have just one question for the parliamentary secretary. Given that the retail price of gasoline seems to have increased much more sharply than the price of oil or the carbon tax over the past month, would he support an inquiry by the federal Competition Bureau into possible collusion and anti-competitive behaviour in the retail pricing of gasoline in this country?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by once again confirming our government's support for this sector and, most importantly, the workers of this sector.

While our priority remains on building pipeline capacity and gaining access to new markets, we continue to support the sustainable development of our resources so that Canada can be the energy supplier of choice for the world. That is why we are investing \$72 million to fund three clean-tech projects in Alberta's oil and gas sector, which will leverage more than \$415 million in investments. We are investing \$49 million to support petrochemical innovation in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Through budget 2019, we are also providing \$100 million to support the work of the clean resource innovation network.

Our government, and all Canadians, stand with workers in our energy sector.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:59 p.m.)

The Environment		Mr. Wilkinson	26635
Ms. Ashton	26630		
Ms. McKenna	26630	Science and Technology	
Mr. Boulerice	26630	Ms. Dhillon	26635
Ms. McKenna	26630	Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	26635
Justice		Democratic Reform	
Mr. Rayes	26630	Mr. Chong	26635
Ms. Chagger	26630	Ms. Chagger	26635
Mr. Rayes	26630	Intergovernmental Relations	
Ms. Chagger	26631	Mrs. Gill	26635
Ms. Bergen	26631	Mr. Lametti	26635
Ms. Chagger	26631	Mrs. Gill	26635
Ms. Bergen	26631	Mr. Lametti	26635
Ms. Chagger	26631	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
International Trade		Mr. Grewal	26636
Ms. Trudel	26631	Mr. Hussen	26636
Ms. Freeland	26631	Points of Order	
Pharmacare		Oral Questions	
Ms. Jolibois	26631	Ms. Raitt	26636
Mr. O'Regan	26632	Ms. Chagger	26636
National Defence			
Mr. Ellis	26632		
Mr. Sajjan	26632		
Justice			
Ms. Alleslev	26632		
Ms. Chagger	26632		
Ms. Harder	26632		
Ms. Monsef	26632		
Ms. Rempel	26632		
Ms. Chagger	26632		
Ms. Rempel	26633		
Ms. Monsef	26633		
Automotive Industry			
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	26633		
Mr. Bains	26633		
Veterans Affairs			
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	26633		
Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	26633		
Justice			
Mr. Fast	26633		
Ms. Chagger	26633		
Mr. Cooper	26634		
Ms. Chagger	26634		
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	26634		
Ms. Chagger	26634		
Indigenous Services			
Ms. Mihychuk	26634		
Mr. O'Regan	26634		
Justice			
Mr. Barrett	26634		
Ms. Chagger	26634		
Fisheries and Oceans			
Mr. Cannings	26635		

		PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS	
		The United Church of Canada Act	
		(Bill S-1003. On the Order: Private Members' Business)	26636
		Mr. Lamoureux	26636
		Motion	26636
		(Bill read a second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in at report stage and read a third time and passed)	26637
		GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
		The Budget	
		Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
		Motion	26637
		Mr. Poilievre	26637
		Privilege	
		Statements by Minister of Justice and Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice	
		Mr. Anderson	26649
		The Budget	
		Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
		Motion	26650
		Mr. Poilievre	26650
		Criminal Code	
		Bill C-84—Notice of time allocation motion	
		Ms. Chagger	26652
		An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families	
		Bill C-92—Notice of time allocation motion	
		Ms. Chagger	26652
		Business of Supply	
		Ms. Chagger	26652
		Business of the House	
		Ms. Chagger	26652

The Budget

Financial Statement of Minister of Finance

Motion.....	26652
Mr. Poilievre.....	26652

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	26652
---	-------

Mr. Vandal.....	26653
-----------------	-------

Official Languages

Mr. Choquette.....	26654
Mrs. Lockhart.....	26654

Natural Resources

Mr. Weir.....	26655
Mr. Lefebvre.....	26656

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