



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 4, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 4, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019, and other measures.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Amendments to the Convention Placing the International Poplar Commission Within the Framework of FAO”.

[English]

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)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 1280)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Breton	Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKenna

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Mendicino
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 Ng
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 O'Regan
 Peschisolido
 Petipas Taylor
 Poissant
 Ratansi
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PAIRED

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LeBlanc

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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government's responses to eight petitions and to Order Paper Questions Nos. 2242 to 2245.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, it has been four days now that Conservatives have tried to put forward a motion for an emergency debate on canola. The Liberal government refuses to hear that motion. The government continues to play games with some 43,000 producers in western Canada who need to make decisions on planting now. When will it take this issue seriously?

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that I am subject to the rules of the House that require us to go on with orders of the day. It sounds like debate, but I thank him for raising his point.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît on a point of order.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, for four days now, the government has been preventing us from introducing a private member's bill.

I therefore seek unanimous consent to introduce my bill, which would create a federal youth commissioner and help lift thousands of young people across the country out of poverty and vulnerability.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to introduce her bill?

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that the entire SNC-Lavalin affair that has engulfed the government began with alleged bribes to the Gadhafi family and that now the government, which has become embroiled in that scandal by trying to protect the company from criminal prosecution and interfering in prosecutorial independence, is now so cynical and so sinister that it believes it can bribe Canadians with \$41 billion of their own money in this budget.

Unfortunately for the government, Canadians are too smart and too moral to be distracted with billions of dollars of their own money. They understand that the Prime Minister is attempting to bury his unethical behaviour under that \$41 billion of irresponsible spending, but they are not buying it.

The Budget

We have new developments in this scandal just in the last 24 hours and let me begin by highlighting perhaps the most important of those developments. The Prime Minister stood before Canadians, 37 million of his own citizens, in a press conference on February 15 designed to distract from the scandal and there he said, “If anyone, including the former attorney general, had issues with anything they might have experienced in this government or didn't feel that we were living up to the high standards we set for itself, it was her responsibility to come forward. It was their responsibility to come forward, and no one did.”

He said that to 37 million Canadians, that no one came forward to raise any concerns. However, the former attorney general testified before the justice committee:

My response—and I vividly remember this as well—was to ask the Prime Minister a direct question, while looking him in the eye. I asked, “Are you politically interfering with my role/my decision as the Attorney General? I would strongly advise against it.”

That sounds to me like somebody came forward to him personally. In fairness, prior to yesterday, we did not have independent confirmation that she had said those words to the Prime Minister. We had her word, which I had accepted, but beyond her word we did not have documented proof or audio recordings of that exchange.

Yesterday, I rose in the House of Commons and said:

Mr. Speaker, at that September meeting, the former attorney general reports that she looked the Prime Minister in the eye and said, “Are you politically interfering with my role...as the Attorney General? I would strongly advise against it.”

Does the Prime Minister remember her saying any such thing?

The Prime Minister rose and replied, “Mr. Speaker, once she said that, I responded 'No'". The first clause in his response is the most important one. It is an admission and I am going to quote him again. He said, “once she said that”. In other words, he confirms that she looked him in the eye and said, “Are you politically interfering with my role/my decision as the Attorney General? I would strongly advise against it.” The fact that he admits that she raised his political interference to his face in September proves he was stating a blatant falsehood when, in February, he said that no one came forward.

The one final defence on which the Prime Minister could justify his February 15 statement would be that he did not remember when his former attorney general looked him in the eye and asked him if he was politically interfering in her role. However, his admission yesterday that he did remember it proves the memory loss defence is invalid.

• (1045)

Yesterday the Prime Minister remembered it. Therefore, we can conclude that on February 15 he remembered it. We can finally conclude that when he was looking Canadians in the eyes and claiming no one had come forward, he was stating something he knew was false. There is a word for that, a word that would require I violate the Standing Orders to utter. Therefore, I will not do that in this place. However, I will be ever careful and ever cautious that a growing and longer nose from across the floor does not swing around and poke me in the eye as I give these remarks.

That intervention proves that the Prime Minister has not been telling the truth to Canadians. While he was simultaneously sending out the hounds to tear apart his two former cabinet ministers,

whistle-blowers who had spoken against him, he was also prepared to state patent falsehoods about them.

The whole narrative he was trying to create in stating those falsehoods was that somehow the former attorney general had testified against him at the justice committee out of political opportunism. She had never raised any concern about this SNC-Lavalin affair and was completely fine with everything he was doing. When she was shuffled out of what Gerry Butts called her “dream job”, only then had she come up with this big story about how the Prime Minister was mucking around in a criminal trial. In order to sell that narrative, he had to state the falsehood that she had never once raised any concern. We now know not only that it was false, but that he knew it was false and said it anyway.

We further know that the Prime Minister stood by and watched as his best friend and principal secretary went before a parliamentary committee and testified that no one had come forward and raised any concerns. If what they were doing was so wrong, Gerald Butts said, then why were they not having that conversation in September, in October, in November, in December?

Why were they not having the conversation? We now have 41 pages of documentary evidence showing that conversation was seemingly never-ending in September, in October, in November, in December. Gerald Butts sat in that committee and looked members of this House in the eyes, as well as the millions of Canadians who were watching live, and stated a patent falsehood. It was a patent falsehood he knew was wrong because much of the documentary evidence shows that he participated in the very conversations he later claimed never happened.

That members of the government are prepared to go before parliamentary committees and state things they know are absolutely false sheds light on why Liberals at the justice committee did not want any of the witnesses to swear an oath before they began their testimony. It is clear that Gerald Butts did not want to swear an oath that he would tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He wanted to be able to tell things other than the truth.

That sentence about why they were not having that conversation during the four months, September to December, was one such example. He knew he wanted to say something that was totally false. Therefore, he had his Liberal members on the committee ensure that he would not have to swear an oath that might render him susceptible to allegations of contempt, though we are not ruling out the possibility that he may well have been in contempt for having stated such patent and now disproved falsehoods.

• (1050)

The first new development that we have had in less than 24 hours is that the Prime Minister has admitted that the former attorney general did come forward to him in September, months before, almost half a year before, the scandal became public. However, he said exactly the opposite in a press conference.

The second new development is actually a big one. I am not sure if people realize the enormity of it. A CBC article that was published yesterday, April 3, at 8 p.m., noted, “Weeks of tense negotiations preceded the PM's highly controversial decision to eject two high-profile MPs.”

The Budget

While the Prime Minister was trying to put a public face on this scandal, we now know that behind the scenes he was trying to transact a secret deal in order to keep the former attorney general and the former Treasury Board president from leaving caucus altogether. He was trying to make offers to them in order to have them stay so that he could grasp onto the last shreds of the phony feminist and idealistic self-image that he had worked so hard over so many years to create. He wanted to find a way to get them to replace their condemnations and whistle-blowing with yet more praise. Behind the scenes, the whole time the scandal was raging, he was sending emissaries to make offers to them in order to get them to do that.

According to the article, the former attorney general sought five different conditions in order to bring an end to the public controversy. I will note before going into them that as I examined the five conditions she allegedly sought in order to end this public controversy or at least to stop speaking about it, none of them involved any benefit to her. I am going to list them off.

First, she wanted to see the removal of Gerald Butts, the now-disgraced former principal secretary to the Prime Minister.

Second, she wanted to see the removal of the Clerk of the Privy Council, who we have now heard pressured her relentlessly in a 17-minute conversation in which he attempted to change her mind on the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin through veiled threats.

Third, she wanted to see the removal of Mathieu Bouchard, to whom we will return later and at length.

Fourth, she also wanted a commitment that the new Attorney General would not overrule the director of public prosecutions, Kathleen Roussel, and would not direct her to give SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement.

Fifth and finally, which should have been a no-brainer, she wanted the Prime Minister to admit publicly or to caucus alone, as the CBC article notes, “that his office acted inappropriately in its attempts to convince her to consider granting SNC-Lavalin a [deferred prosecution agreement].” In other words, the Prime Minister was asked to just own up to his own behaviour, take responsibility for it, admit it was wrong and commit to never doing it again.

It is not clear which of the remaining conditions were not met, but we do know which ones were. I will list them very quickly.

The former attorney general's demands, according to the article, that Butts and Wernick be removed have been met. These two are gone. Of the five conditions, the disgraced principal secretary is out and the disgraced Clerk of the Privy Council is out.

Now we are down to three remaining conditions. They are that Mathieu Bouchard, the senior policy adviser to the Prime Minister be removed; that the new Attorney General prevent the—

• (1055)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sitting two rows behind the hon. member for Carleton and I cannot hear him because of what is coming from the other side.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I was about to stand on that and bring the House to order, because I am hearing it from both sides, not just from one side. There seems to be

a conversation going on across the floor and it is making it very difficult to hear the hon. member for Carleton, so I want to remind hon. members that if they are having a conversation, they should keep it to a whisper and not be so loud.

Thank you for that point of order. That was well done.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we have the five conditions that the former attorney general set.

There are two that have been met. One is that the disgraced principal secretary, Gerry Butts, has resigned. The other is that the disgraced Privy Council clerk, Michael Wernick, has resigned.

However, there remain three conditions that have not been met: one, senior adviser Mathieu Bouchard remains and has not left, which was one of the purported conditions; two, apparently she does not yet have any commitment from the Prime Minister that the new Attorney General will not interfere and provide a deferred prosecution agreement to SNC-Lavalin; and three, the Prime Minister has not taken responsibility for his actions in this affair.

Let us go through those conditions and analyze further what remains and why they remain conditions in the current government.

We will start with Mathieu Bouchard. His role in this has been little noticed, but it is one of great importance.

We are all aware that Gerry Butts inappropriately pressured the former attorney general. We all have the audio recordings of Michael Wernick doing the same. What we do not have and have not discussed here is the relentless drive of the Prime Minister's senior policy adviser, Mathieu Bouchard, to try to tamper with the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin.

Let me read from the former attorney general's testimony before the committee. She stated:

My chief of staff had a phone call with Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques from the Prime Minister's Office. They wanted to discuss SNC. They told her that SNC had made further submissions to the Crown and that “there is some softening, but not much”. They said that they understand that the individual Crown prosecutor wants to negotiate an agreement, but the director does not.

This is very important information. How is it that a senior policy adviser to the current Liberal Prime Minister would be aware of any disagreement between an individual Crown prosecutor and the director of public prosecutions? Under the Federal Accountability Act, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is made separate and self-contained. It is apolitical and out of reach of political interference by the Prime Minister and even the Attorney General. Its decisions are made in total isolation from the political process, with the sole exception that an attorney general may issue a written directive. However, that directive would have to be published for all eyes to see in the Canada Gazette, which is like a news magazine telling the Canadian people the regulatory and administrative decisions of the government. In other words, it would be absolutely inappropriate for the senior adviser to the Prime Minister to have intimate knowledge about the disagreements and conversations within the office of the director of public prosecutions.

The Budget

This is precisely why we need the senior adviser to come before the ethics committee when it begins its investigation into this matter next Tuesday. We have asked for him to appear. I have said very clearly that if this senior prime ministerial adviser, along with other witnesses alleged to have interfered in this criminal prosecution, are called before the committee, I will end my marathon speech immediately. I await a member of government rising to his or her feet to tell me that, at which point I will take the government's word and end my remarks so it can speak on other matters before this House.

She goes on in this intervention:

They also mention the Quebec election. They asked my chief if someone had suggested the outside advice idea to the PPSC and asked whether we are open to this suggestion. They wanted to know if my deputy could do it.

• (1100)

She went on to state:

In response, my chief of staff stressed to them prosecutorial independence and potential concerns about the interference in the independence of the prosecutorial functions. Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Marques

—two senior advisers to the Prime Minister—

kept telling her that they didn't want to cross any lines, but they asked my chief of staff to follow up with me directly on this matter.

She goes on to state:

Later that day, my chief of staff had a phone call with Elder Marques and Mathieu Bouchard from the Prime Minister's Office. They wanted an update on what was going on regarding the DPAs since “we don't have a ton of time”. She relayed my summary of the meeting with the Clerk and the Prime Minister.

Two senior prime ministerial advisers, Mathieu and Elder, also raised the idea of an informal outreach to the director of public prosecutions. Why not? Why not just have someone in the Attorney General's office or the PMO informally reach out to maybe have a beer and talk about how this criminal prosecution could be squashed? That is how our legal system is supposed to work—informal outreach, which in reality means backroom dealings.

The former attorney general goes on to state:

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, and offered a call with me directly.

These are the early interventions of Mr. Bouchard, senior PMO adviser, in mid-September.

She then goes on to state:

At this point, after September 20, there was an apparent pause in communicating with myself or my chief of staff on the SNC matter. 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.

Of course, that would not have been necessary, because the former attorney general had already made her decision clear: She was not going to intervene and overturn the decision of the prosecutor, regardless of some outside opinion the Prime Minister cooked up with a friendly lawyer. This call constituted further and unnecessary political interference.

The former attorney general went on to state:

...on October 26, 2018, when my chief of staff spoke to [PMO adviser] 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?

In other words, Mr. Bouchard, operating on behalf of the Prime Minister, suggested that the former attorney general slam the brakes on the trial itself by seeking a stay. A stay means that the Attorney General would go to the court and ask if the whole trial could be put on hold, that the PMO has hooked the AG up with a legal opinion from a Liberal legal mind who would offer an opinion shortly about whether the company should get a settlement instead of a criminal trial. In the meantime, the court would just hit the pause button and delay justice. That is absolutely inappropriate.

• (1105)

The former attorney general wrote further:

My chief of staff said that this would obviously be perceived as interference and her boss questioning the DPP's decision. Mathieu

—again, one of the top PMO advisers—

said that if six months from the election SNC announces they're moving their headquarters out of Canada, that is bad. He said, “We can have the best policy in the world but we need to get re-elected.”

That does not sound political at all, does it?

There are two things here that we need to address.

First, Monsieur Bouchard was stating a patent falsehood. He was saying here that SNC could move its office within six months. We know that is impossible. This intervention, by the way, was made in October. There was November, December, January, February, March and we are now in April, which is six months, and so far there is no announcement of the headquarters move, and we know why: SNC has already signed a \$1.5-billion loan agreement with the Quebec pension plan that requires its headquarters to stay in Canada. It has just signed a 20-year lease on its Montreal headquarters. It announced a multi-million-dollar renovation of that headquarters to accommodate its employees. All of this is publicly available if someone consults with Mr. Google.

Despite this publicly available evidence to the contrary, this senior PMO adviser was stating that the former attorney general had to immediately find a way to shelve the criminal prosecution of this company or the headquarters would move.

It is one thing to interfere in a criminal prosecution. It is another thing, and even more significant, to lie in order to shelve a criminal prosecution. Section 139 of the Criminal Code makes it an offence for anyone to attempt to defeat, pervert or obstruct the course of justice. If the course of justice was for SNC-Lavalin to face its fraud and bribery charges in court, then lying to interrupt that process would certainly have constituted an attempt to defeat, pervert or obstruct the course of justice. As a result, I hope the RCMP will investigate whether this lie constituted a criminal offence.

The Budget

The second part I will focus on is this. It is hard to believe that in one sentence we have two things that are so spectacularly inappropriate, the first being the aforementioned lie and the second being the overt politicization of the prosecutorial and criminal process in saying, “We can have the best policy in the world but we need to get re-elected.” Excuse me? Is this how the Prime Minister's Office treats criminal trials? We literally have a top adviser who is still on the payroll in the PMO who called up the attorney general's office, spoke to the chief of staff and said that she had to interfere in the criminal prosecution of a massive Liberal-linked corporation because they need—I am quoting—to get re-elected. This is astonishing. It is absolutely astonishing that this guy is still on the payroll.

The fact that the Prime Minister has had this information, as we all have now, for over a month since the former attorney general appeared and testified, and has not fired this man, is astonishing. What is worse—

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: It's over.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: I just heard a member across the way yell, “It's over.” The member for Kildonan—St. Paul is yelling, “It's over”.

Well, they hope it is over.

• (1110)

The Liberals hope that by punishing and attempting to humiliate and attack the two courageous women who were whistle-blowers in this scandal, they have managed to make this thing over. It is not over; it is just beginning.

I hear laughter across the way, laughter at the prospect that a senior PMO adviser would lie and would ask for electoral politics to play a role in the decision to pursue a criminal prosecution against a major company accused of fraud and bribery. That is what makes the Liberals laugh in this chamber.

I now will move on to further testimony by the former attorney general in October. She said:

...the PMO requested that I meet with Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques to discuss the matter, which I did on November 22. This meeting was quite long; I would say about an hour and a half. I was irritated by having to have this meeting, as I had already told the Prime Minister, etc., that a [deferred prosecution agreement]...on SNC was not going to happen, that I was not going to issue a directive. Mathieu, [the senior PMO adviser] in this meeting, did most of the talking. He was trying to tell me that there were options and that I needed to find a solution. I took them through the [director of public prosecutions]...Act, section 15 and section 10, and talked about the prosecutorial independence as a constitutional principle, and that they were interfering. I talked about the section 13 note, which they said they had never received, but I reminded them that we sent it to them in September [two months earlier]. [Senior PMO advisers] Mathieu and Elder continued to plead their case, talking about if I'm not sure in my decision, that we could hire an eminent person to advise me. They were kicking the tires. I said no. My mind had been made up and they needed to stop. This was enough.

I go on to the second part of my question:

...there were sustained efforts at communications, not only with me but with my office, from various members of the Prime Minister's Office, including Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques, both of whom are policy advisers and legal advisers to the Prime Minister, as well as Gerry Butts and Katie Telford. It would have been, in my view, not a secret that these were concerns that I had.

Now if this was not enough, in the question and answer portion of her testimony, one of the Liberal members asked, “I understand that you referred...that there was one discussion with Mr. Bouchard, and he asked you whether you would consider the option of seeking an external legal opinion.”

The response from the former attorney general was:

In the context of deferred prosecution agreements and SNC, yes. I had that conversation with [[PMO advisers]...Bouchard,...Marques and a number of other individuals.

At that time, all of those individuals knew that I was firm on my decision not to interfere with the discretion of the director of public prosecutions, and having conversations about hiring external legal counsels in that environment is entirely inappropriate.

Let us be clear on one thing here. Gerry Butts, in his very dishonest testimony, seemed to suggest that all he was asking for was that she get a second opinion, like if someone goes to a doctor and gets a prognosis that one is not sure about, one can just go and get a second opinion. We now know from text messages, which have been tabled in the House, that Gerald Butts believed that a second opinion was already determined in what the opinion would be. In other words, he knew what that second opinion would say before even asking for it.

• (1115)

The former attorney and her team questioned what would happen if the second opinion did not back up his desire for her to interfere and offer a DPA. In reply, Gerry Butts said that it would not say that. In other words, he knew exactly what the second opinion would say. It was rigged from the start and it was an attempt to manipulate the former attorney general and force her through a rigged second opinion to interfere and allow SNC-Lavalin to avoid a trial.

Let us put to rest once and for all the manipulative comments of Gerry Butts when he claimed that this was merely an attempt to get another legal scholar involved. It was nothing of the sort. It was attempt to rig the process and hand her an opinion for which the outcome was predetermined.

However, the former attorney general goes on in her testimony. She is speaking again about PMO adviser Mathieu Bouchard. She said:

I will say, with respect to the conversations you mentioned, and Mathieu Bouchard's remarks about an individual prosecutor's opinion being different from that of the director of public prosecutions, I can't help but wonder why he would bring that up. How would he know that? How had he garnered that information?

For context, what she is talking about is Mathieu Bouchard's, senior PMO adviser, claim to have direct knowledge of disagreements between the top prosecutor and the Crown attorney assigned to this particular trial. The fact that the Prime Minister's Office at the highest levels was knowledgeable about internal discussions within the office of the director of public prosecutions suggests something very ominous that we have not yet examined, and it is this.

We already know that the PMO, the finance minister and their staff interfered with the former attorney general. We already know, through 41 pages of text, journal entries and also audio recordings, that this happened. It is not even really disputed anymore. However, what we do not yet know is whether there was similar pressure from the Prime Minister's team directly to the office of the director of public prosecutions.

The Budget

In order to give viewers who might not understand the superstructure of this situation, we have the Prime Minister's Office, the Attorney General's Office and then on the other side we have the director of public prosecutions. That director is responsible for prosecuting all federal offences except for those that fall to provincial Crown attorneys. In other words, this director is responsible for prosecuting SNC-Lavalin on the charges of fraud and bribery.

We know the Prime Minister was interfering with his attorney general. We know he was trying to get her to interfere with the director of public prosecutions. What we do not know yet is whether the Prime Minister's Office might have actually gone around the former attorney general directly to the office of the director of public prosecutions. However, the fact that this senior adviser was knowledgeable about internal discussions in the office of the director suggests that may well have happened. If there is some other explanation, for example, that SNC-Lavalin was feeding information from its talks with the director over to the PMO, it would be equally problematic. At the very least, we should know the truth.

How did Mathieu Bouchard, a senior PMO adviser, come to know about the internal discussions and the alleged disagreements that were ongoing in the office of the director of public prosecutions?

An hon. member: Did they ask him at the justice committee?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: My hon. colleague from British Columbia asks if Mr. Bouchard was asked that question at the justice committee when he testified there. He did not testify there. Nor did he testify at ethics. Nor did the other nine alleged perpetrators, including the Prime Minister, who the former attorney general says interfered to shelve the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin.

• (1120)

Of the people the former attorney general alleges participated in the interference, we have actually only heard from two of them, which is hard to believe this,

If we are to believe the text messages, journal entries and audio recordings, there were probably 12 different officials: the Prime Minister himself in his September 17 meeting with the attorney general; the Finance Minister in a conversation on the floor of the House of Commons; the Finance Minister's chief of staff Ben Chin, who sent threatening text messages to senior staff of the attorney general; Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the PMO; Elder C. Marques, senior legal adviser to the Prime Minister; Katie Telford, who said "We do not want to debate legalities anymore. We just want a solution", in other words, a lawless deal to let SNC off. I could go on.

There are at least nine, maybe 10, who are alleged by the former Liberal attorney general to have intervened and who have not yet testified in addition to the two that have already appeared, and those two have been fired. If these others were to testify and their conduct known, they too would probably have to be removed.

Let me go back to Mathieu Bouchard. Why was he so involved in this? Why do we find his fingerprints everywhere on this scandal? It is a good thing we have the lobbyist registry, because all of this starts with the lobbyist registry.

The registry was created by Prime Minister Harper in that very inconvenient Accountability Act. Yes, it is Stephen Harper's fault. We now know most of, perhaps not all of, the lobbying interactions between SNC and senior public officeholders in the present Prime Minister's government. Did they meet with Mathieu Bouchard? The answer is not once, not twice, but close to a dozen times.

Let me recount the number of meetings that this senior PMO adviser had with SNC-Lavalin.

On February 16, 2018, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss infrastructure, budget, justice and law enforcement.

On March 16, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss international relations, industry, justice and law enforcement.

On May 16, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss international relations, justice and law enforcement.

On January 31, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss industry, international relations, justice and law enforcement.

On February 28, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss industry.

On April 12, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard, policy adviser to the Prime Minister, met to discuss justice and law enforcement with SNC-Lavalin.

On May 18, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement.

On June 21, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement.

On July 21, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement.

• (1125)

On August 30, 2017, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement. On September 11, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement.

They also talked about the budget. Members may remember that in the last Liberal budget, Liberals snuck in an amendment to the Criminal Code, making it possible for SNC-Lavalin to get out of a criminal trial—

• (1130)

Mr. Mark Strahl: To escape justice and law enforcement.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: —to escape justice and law enforcement.

The Budget

On July 5, 2018, Mathieu Bouchard, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement. They talked about the budget that day, too. On November 5, 2018, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement. November 19, 2018, Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to discuss justice and law enforcement.

Is SNC-Lavalin in the justice or law enforcement business? It is an engineering and construction firm. That is an awful lot of conversations about justice and law enforcement with a company that is, on those subjects, most known for violating justice and trying to evade law enforcement, yet this one PMO staffer, a senior adviser to the Prime Minister, met with this company over and over again.

If we look at the last six meetings, they almost entirely correspond with the time frame during which the former attorney general experienced what she called hounding, veiled threats and inappropriate pressure from the Prime Minister. No wonder the Prime Minister does not want Mathieu Bouchard to testify before the ethics committee.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I have been listening intently to the member for Carleton relaying the number of times senior adviser to the Prime Minister Mathieu Bouchard met with SNC-Lavalin to talk about justice and law enforcement, and I am wondering if he has a document he could table and if there would be unanimous consent—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That is not a point of order. If the hon. member for Carleton has anything to table, he can ask for unanimous consent. He is quite capable of asking on his own. It is very nice of the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope to ask on his behalf, but we will leave it to the hon. member for Carleton.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, in part because I was sharing the same concern that the member for Chilliwack—Hope raised with regard to repetition. I would ask that you look at page 625 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, where it deals with repetition and relevance of debate. It states:

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.

Speakers have been exceptionally generous in allowing the member to be off topic at times, like when he was talking about limestones and so forth, but the other part is the repetition—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I have enough information and thank the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is also rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, regarding the point of order raised by my colleague from British Columbia, I just want to say that it is essential for Canadians to have access to all the evidence presented here in the House.

I just heard my colleague from Winnipeg North say that the member keeps repeating the same thing over again. First of all, that is not true. Second, everything he is saying is entirely relevant to the topic under discussion. In order to have all the information—

• (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. That is not really a point of order. It sounds more like a matter of debate.

The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, obviously without getting into whether the member for Winnipeg North would ever be allowed to speak if repetition was a disqualification, page 632 of Bosc and Gagnon says very clearly that during debates on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne and the budget, the Chair relaxes the requirement for the rule of relevance because:

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.

I would argue, and had the member been here for the beginning of the remarks by the member for Carleton today, he would have clearly heard that this is exactly relevant to this budget, because this entire thing is a cover-up and he is exposing it hour after hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind the hon. member that we are not to refer to whether a member is present in the House or not. Those are the rules.

I will remind the hon. member for Carleton that we are debating the budget, and the budget has a very wide spectrum. I will let the hon. member for Carleton continue on his discourse.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have two things to say to my loquacious friend from Winnipeg. First, I am talking about budget policy according to his government. His government put the deferred prosecution agreements in budget implementation legislation and thereby determined that this entire conversation is budget related. That was the determination of the Liberals.

Does he want to rise now and announce that the deferred prosecution agreement ought never to have been in an omnibus budget bill? If so, we would all agree with unanimous consent to repeal it and remove it from the Criminal Code so it could be reintroduced as criminal legislation and put before the justice committee for consideration rather than snuck into a 550-page budget bill. Therefore, yes, it is relevant to the budget according to the government.

The Budget

Second, the member says that I am repetitious. I dispute that outrageous allegation. However, if he wants me to stop talking about this matter, I will on one condition. He can rise now and commit that the government will allow the ethics committee to bring before it everyone the former attorney general named as having participated in the interference in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. The second he does that, I will sit down and shut up. I will stop being, as he alleges I am, repetitious. I will stop speaking, period, for the rest of the week if he stands now and commits to a full investigation at the ethics committee.

Liberals like deals. They wanted a deal with SNC-Lavalin. This is a much easier deal to make. The Prime Minister claims he did nothing wrong. He has thus far refused to apologize for his conduct. If he truly believes he did nothing wrong, the Prime Minister will come right in and offer to have that matter investigated before the parliamentary committee so all Canadians can judge for themselves whether he did nothing wrong.

That brings me to the next of the conditions that, according to a CBC article released today, the former attorney general had suggested she was attempting to extract from the government in exchange for ending the controversy around SNC-Lavalin. According to the article:

But [the former attorney general]'s wishes went beyond a limited housecleaning in the PMO. Sources said she also sought assurances that her replacement as attorney general...would not overrule Director of Public Prosecutions Kathleen Roussel and direct her to give SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement.

This is very important. The Prime Minister claims that his decision to shuffle out his former attorney general and replace her with a new one had absolutely nothing to do with her resolute determination not to interfere in the SNC-Lavalin criminal prosecution. It was completely unrelated. The first story was that Scott Brison resigned, which caused a musical chairs game that required the former attorney general to move from her position to Veterans Affairs. It was not to replace Scott Brison at the Treasury Board, but for reasons I do not yet understand and no one has clearly explained. For some reason, the Treasury Board president's resignation required that she move over to Veterans Affairs.

As far as I can tell, that is not an accurate description. Later, the Prime Minister's Office changed its story and leaked to Liberal-friendly journalists the theory that the former attorney general had to be moved out because she tried to elevate a Manitoba judge to become chief justice of the Supreme Court, and that Manitoba judge was not Liberal enough for the Prime Minister's liking. Because he was unhappy with her desire to promote a judge who was not ideologically aligned with the Liberal values of the Prime Minister, he questioned her judgment and that caused their relationship to disintegrate. The story over the original cause of the former attorney general's move changed from "Scott Brison is to blame" to "a not-Liberal-enough Manitoba judge is to blame".

● (1140)

Others have a simpler theory, and that is that she was moved because she refused to grant a special deal to SNC-Lavalin. The Prime Minister denies that, but what he does not deny and what is now on the public record in this regard is that before the shuffle, the former attorney general of Canada took the position with respect to SNC-Lavalin's special deal that the answer was "no". After the

shuffle, the new Attorney General has taken the public position that the answer is "maybe".

Let me reiterate. By shuffling the cabinet, the Prime Minister has changed the state of play on SNC's request for a deal from "no" to "maybe". That is not in dispute. We have documentary evidence showing that the former attorney general said "no" special deal, and we have public comments from the new Attorney General saying "maybe" to a special deal. Whether or not the Prime Minister wants to deny that it was his purpose in the shuffle, it was undeniably the result of the shuffle.

Let us examine the merits of the notion that the company should get a special deal. The legislation amending the Criminal Code that allows for such deals was rammed through this place in a 500-plus-page budget, and it allows the prosecutor to extend these deals to corporate criminals in certain circumstances. Was the prosecutor right when she rejected the company's plea for such a settlement?

We can look to subsection 715.32(2) of the Criminal Code, entitled Factors to consider:

the prosecutor must consider the following factors:

(a) the circumstances in which the act or omission that forms the basis of the offence was brought to the attention of investigative authorities;

How did these circumstances come to the attention of the authorities? In other words, did SNC-Lavalin self-report? Did it stand up and admit that members of the company had participated in fraud and bribery of the Libyan people? The answer is no. We found out about it because Swiss authorities arrested an SNC official and convicted him of the offences that we all now know are before the courts in Canada.

When the prosecutor looked at criterion (a) to determine if it favoured a deferred prosecution agreement for the company, she would have correctly concluded that the circumstances that led to the act or omission, in this case fraud and bribery, becoming known to investigative authorities would not be a mitigating factor, that the company did nothing to show its ethics and transparency by self-reporting and that, in fact, the RCMP learned of the crime when Swiss authorities acted against the individuals who committed it.

● (1145)

(b) the nature and gravity of the act or omission and its impact on any victim;

This paragraph of the Criminal Code makes clear that the prosecutor must determine whether the crime was grave and whether it had an impact on any victims.

Who are the victims? It is easy to think, with white-collar crime, because its effects are not immediately visible, that there are no victims. Violent offences lead to broken bones and bloodied flesh, so it is very easy for the visual human mind to ascertain who the victims are in those cases.

The Budget

White-collar crime is more insidious, but its damage is no less severe. In fact, that damage can be manifested to the naked eye when one goes to countries that are ravaged by parasitical corruption. We can see it in the slums and shanty towns of the world, where people who are no less talented and industrious than Canadians live in squalor. The most striking thing in these places is the relentless work ethic of the people who live in them. They are always bustling, moving, repairing things and carrying heavy objects and heavy loads. They are toiling away to bring about their survival. However, despite their relentless hard work, often for much longer hours than we in much richer countries work, they never seem to advance and always seem on the cusp of starvation.

What is the difference? What is the cause of their misery? We know it is not them. We know it is corruption. Corrupt interests bleed the wealth of those nations.

In this particular case, SNC-Lavalin is accused not just of bribery, as is so often recorded, although it is accused of that, but also of fraud. So often the two go hand in hand. Let us start first with the bribery, and then we will get to the fraud.

The company is accused of bribing the Gadhafi family with prostitutes, yachts and a whole assortment of other benefits designed to win over the favour of the brutal Libyan dictator so that the company could win public contracts in Libya. It is alleged that the company created a phoney shell corporation through which this bribery could be funnelled. Gadhafi's son, Saadi, received prostitutes and other so-called companion services in the amount of tens of thousands of dollars. Gadhafi and his inner circle received yachts from SNC-Lavalin or its shell companies.

Most people sitting by will ask who the victims of this crime are. The answer is the Libyan people, because the second shoe to drop in the charges is fraud. It is alleged that SNC-Lavalin defrauded the Libyan people of \$130 million. This is a group of people who do not have \$130 million to give. As a result, they are the victims of this scandal.

Some people might ask how we know that they suffered as a result of the fraud. It is obvious that if that \$130 million had not been defrauded by SNC-Lavalin, it could have been put to other more productive purposes for the betterment of the poor and suffering people in the war-ravaged nation of Libya.

● (1150)

The Libyan people could have paid for hospitals and food and medicine for their children. They could have paid for schooling for girls and boys so they could grow up and live in better lands. They could have repaired their crumbling infrastructure with that \$137 million of defrauded money. They could have done all those things but for the fact that this company allegedly stole the money and made it impossible to do so.

Maybe that money could have stayed in the pockets of the Libyan people so they could have paid for their own household items to better nourish their children or feed their families. However, that is not possible when companies defraud the people. Therefore, it was a not a victimless crime. It is not acceptable to say that this is just how those people do things over there. The reason people such as the

Libyan people live in poverty is that there is this kind of corruption. Therefore, there are victims.

An old tactic of wealthy western companies was to commit their crimes then leave the country before they could be prosecuted locally. They would head back to their western headquarters with their looted cash and live high on the hog with impunity. That is why Canada signed on to international treaties. It was so countries that were host to those companies would prosecute them at home. In other words, the message was this: If they were going to defraud people, if they were going to steal from the poor, they would have nowhere to hide. We would give them no comfort. They would be prosecuted, and they would face punishment for their crimes.

The reason the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is now examining the Prime Minister of Canada on this matter is that this organization is worried that his political interference might violate our international treaties against fraud, bribery and corruption. That may very well be true.

When the prosecutor examined paragraph 2(b) in section 715.32 of the Criminal Code to determine “the nature and gravity of the act or omission and its impact on any victim”, she correctly concluded that this criterion favoured a rejection of a deferred prosecution agreement for this alleged corporate criminal, SNC-Lavalin.

What about paragraph (c) “the degree of involvement of senior officers of the organization in the act or omission”? In this case, we know that the corruption went right up to the highest levels of the company. In fact, the former CEO not only had to resign but has pleaded guilty to bribery himself. The players in this particular scandal were all tied right into upper management. In other words, this was not some junior intern operating on his or her own accord as a rogue player; it was a corruption scandal that went right to the top and straight to the heart of SNC-Lavalin as an enterprise itself.

Subsection 715.32(2) of the Criminal Code states that the prosecutor must consider this factor:

(e) whether the organization has made reparations or taken other measures to remedy the harm caused by the act or omission and to prevent the commission of similar acts or omissions;

Let us break that into two parts and first look at “whether the organization has made reparations or taken...measures to remedy the harm caused”. Actually, it has not. The company has not paid the Libyan people back the \$130 million. If it really believed that what it was doing was wrong, it would have made those reparations.

● (1155)

If, as the act requires, the company was taking responsibility for its wrongdoing, it would have reimbursed all the stolen cash. Imagine all the good that company could have done if it had returned the cash to the people who are suffering in Libya, one of the poorest countries in the world. For reasons unknown to us, that has not happened and thus the prosecutor was unable to use that criterion as a justification for extending a deferred prosecution to SNC-Lavalin.

The Budget

What other measures has the company taken to remedy the harm it caused the poor and suffering Libyan people? I am not aware of any, and I suspect, nor is the prosecutor. Once again, the director of public prosecutions was correct in evaluating that this criterion found in paragraph 715.32(2)(e) was not met and, therefore, the company does not qualify for a deferred prosecution agreement.

As for any actions the company has taken to prevent the commission of similar acts or omissions, we have had public assurances from the new CEO that the company has changed its corporate culture and has brought in a bunch of new rules requiring that its new members behave in a manner that is more ethical. However, I have no evidence to prove that. The only way to know for sure is if the company goes on for a prolonged period without any repeat of the copious examples of corruption in which it has engaged systematically over the last two decades.

In paragraph 715.32(2)(f), did the organization, SNC-Lavalin, identify or express “a willingness to identify any person involved in wrongdoing related to the act or omission”? The answer is no, it did not. In fact, the wrongdoers, as I pointed out earlier, had to be caught by Swiss authorities and only after that occurred did they get a conviction and did those individuals pay a price. It was not some act of virtue by SNC-Lavalin that led to the prosecution of the wrongdoers in this case, not even close. Once again, the prosecutor was absolutely right when she said the company did not meet the criterion in paragraph 715.32(2)(f) of the Criminal Code, which asked whether the organization had identified or expressed “willingness to identify any person involved in wrongdoing related to the act or omission” in question.

The next criterion that the prosecutor is asked to evaluate is:

(g) whether the organization—or any of its representatives—was convicted of an offence or sanctioned by a regulatory body, or whether it entered into a previous remediation agreement or other settlement, in Canada or elsewhere, for similar acts or omissions;

In other words, is this an isolated incident? Did SNC-Lavalin simply make a small mistake once and, for God's sake, can we not all make a mistake from time to time? Even in the six hours that I have left, I do not have time to chronicle all of the proven corruption in which this company has engaged over the years. We would have to go too far back in history and travel too many years to the present in order for all of its crimes to be listed on the floor of this House of Commons. This company has officials who have been convicted or have pleaded guilty to bribery in relation to the Jacques Cartier Bridge and, once again, bribery in relation to the McGill University Health Centre.

• (1200)

Did the Prime Minister, by the way, when he was working so hard to get the company off these charges, insist that in exchange for the settlement the company repay Canadian taxpayers for any wrongdoing in respect of the Jacques Cartier Bridge? Did he ask SNC-Lavalin to repay Quebec taxpayers for the bribery in respect of the McGill University Health Centre? I suspect not.

Those are just two examples. We have SNC officials who are accused of crimes in Mexico and Panama, who have been charged in Switzerland and, of course, in Libya. There are other examples I could list but, again, due to a lack of time I will not at this moment.

All of this is to say this organization and its representatives have a track record of criminality that would be hard to match anywhere in Canada, and competes with companies around the world for its prodigious criminal track record.

It says here that the prosecutor must also consider whether the organization or any of its representatives is alleged to have committed any other offences, including those not listed in this part. Once again, of course, its representatives are accused, convicted and have pleaded guilty to countless other serious crimes. I will not reiterate what I just said.

Finally, the prosecutor is obliged to consider any other factor that he or she considers relevant. I suspect the prosecutor did that very carefully. She properly concluded, having looked at this criteria even more systematically than I have just now done, that the company did not qualify for a deferred prosecution agreement. That is probably why the former attorney general took one look at the act in the Criminal Code and one look at the track record of the company accused, and said the director of public prosecutions was absolutely right not to grant this company an exemption from charges by signing a deferred prosecution agreement.

I wonder if anyone in the Prime Minister's Office even bothered to read their own legislation when they made this relentless drive to convince or strong-arm the former attorney general to overrule her prosecutor.

I note that the argument the government used was one that it is not even allowed to make. In subsection 3 of this chapter of the Criminal Code it says:

if the organization is alleged to have committed an offence under section 3 or 4 of the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act, the prosecutor must not consider the national economic interest, the potential effect on relations with a state other than Canada or the identity of the organization or individual involved.

The government has claimed, falsely, that it was doing all this to protect jobs. I have, in previous interventions, proven that was a complete falsehood. I call it the “jobs lie”. The government was not protecting a single, solitary job, except for, perhaps, those of the powerful executives at the company. Otherwise, the claim that this was a job protection plan by the Prime Minister is completely false.

However, even if it were not, the act in question is clear that the prosecutor cannot take into account national economic interest. In other words, such arguments ought never have been made in the first place, true or otherwise.

• (1205)

Given the act, as it is written, it is impossible to imagine how the prosecutor, or later the former attorney general, would have concluded that this company was entitled to a deferred prosecution agreement. However, I am curious if there is any record anywhere that the Prime Minister's Office tried to dispute the legality of the director's or the former attorney general's position on this.

The Budget

In all the documents released, including some from our friend Gerald Butts, we see nothing about the criteria in the act that would have justified giving the company a deferred prosecution agreement. I ask members to browse through the documents that Gerry Butts provided. They are supposed to exonerate him and the Prime Minister somehow.

Did any of those documents show that the company was entitled to a deferred prosecution agreement because of the circumstances of the act or omission that forms the basis of the offence? Did those documents show the company was entitled to a deal because the nature and gravity of the act or omission was small, or that the impact on the victim was mild? No. Did Gerald Butts table any document or any information, and did Michael Wernick do the same, showing the degree of the involvement of the senior officers of the organization was so remote that the company was entitled to a deferred prosecution agreement? If they did, I sure as hell did not see it.

Did the government, any of its members, since this scandal erupted publicly in the last two months, show that the company qualified for a deferred prosecution agreement because they had made reparations to the Libyan people, who are the victims of this fraud? Is there any evidence that the government can provide that the Libyan people have been made whole in the aftermath of this \$130-million theft?

Did the government, at any time, present to the House or the justice committee or the former attorney general, in any of the evidence that we see, that the company identified the wrongdoers and reported them to authorities before they got caught? Was there any evidence that the Prime Minister's Office provided in order to argue that the company qualified for a deferred prosecution agreement because it self-reported the crime? Of course there was no such evidence.

Did the Prime Minister or the clerk or anyone else provide evidence to the former attorney general that the company should qualify for a special deal because, under the criteria in paragraph (g), neither the organization nor its representatives have ever been convicted or sanctioned by a regulatory body on similar charges. Did they ever provide evidence that the company should be entitled to a special deal because the individuals in the organization listed in the offences had already reported themselves for their offences?

Was there any evidence on any of these criteria that SNC-Lavalin was entitled to a deferred prosecution agreement? There was none, yet the Prime Minister and his team pushed and pushed in what Gerald Butts admitted was 20 meetings, phone calls and text messages, a number that is probably an underestimation. At least 20 times the Prime Minister and his team would go back to the former attorney general again and again. Not once, in any of those 20 occasions, do we find evidence that they argued that the company was even entitled, under the criteria in the law that the government wrote, to receive a settlement. In other words, they were clearly doing something for which they had no legal grounding.

● (1210)

We have text messages proving that instead of acting in accordance with the law, Gerald Butts had cooked up a scheme whereby the government would get a pre-cooked legal opinion to try

to justify letting this Liberal-linked corporation off the hook. If that does not defeat, pervert or obstruct the course of justice, I do not know what does.

That brings us from the past to the present and the future.

We now know that in the past, from December through to the attorney general's removal in January, the Prime Minister orchestrated this massive campaign. It is all documented. It has all been proven.

But what about the future? Everyone is forgetting about the future. The Liberal member across the way yelled, "It's over." I wish it were, but the door is open. The current Attorney General has said he may still grant a deferred prosecution to SNC-Lavalin. He is open to directing the top prosecutor to negotiate such a settlement.

Furthermore, we have looked at the sections of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act, and while it is clear that direction from the Attorney General to the prosecutor must be published in the Canada Gazette, such publication can be delayed if the Attorney General believes it is necessary.

In other words, it now remains a possibility that the Prime Minister will attempt to force through such a negotiation without Canadians immediately finding out. It is possible that the Prime Minister is now hatching a scheme that he will quietly plan right now to grant this settlement to SNC-Lavalin in a way that will only become public after the next election.

Imagine that. After all we have been through, after the brazen interference in the legal system that we have already witnessed, the Prime Minister still will not rule out the possibility that this company will get a settlement instead of going to trial.

Some might say that this is just an opposition allegation. They might question how we can prove that. We cannot prove what someone is going to do in the future, but if he were not going to do it, there is a pretty easy way for him to prove it. The Prime Minister could stand in the House today and say the top prosecutor has made her decision, that being that the company does not deserve a settlement but deserves a trial. He could say he respects the prosecutor's decision, that it is final, and that our government, including our Attorney General, will do absolutely nothing to overturn it.

So far, the Prime Minister has not stood in the House of Commons and said that. Rather, he has allowed his Attorney General to take a public position contrary to his predecessor's and say that an agreement is still a possibility. In other words, we could be sitting here if, God forbid, the Prime Minister is re-elected, and before Christmas we could learn that the Prime Minister has granted a special deal to SNC-Lavalin to allow it to avoid trial in the case of fraud and bribery.

This is very much an open question. Canadians who have followed this scandal breathlessly for two months obviously are interested in the answer to that question, and they should have that answer before the next election.

The Budget

•(1215)

I can state with certainty that the leader of the Conservative Party, as Prime Minister of Canada, will not direct or in any way influence his future attorney general to hand SNC-Lavalin a deal. He has said, and so I can restate, that he will not interfere with the work of an attorney general or of a top prosecutor. Even if we believe that a deferred prosecution agreement should exist in the Criminal Code—which is something we never really had a chance to debate, because it was buried in a massive omnibus budget bill—we ought to at least believe that granting one is the exclusive decision of the director of public prosecutions, who is an independent and separate agent of the legal system and has the authority to act with an independent frame of mind to make the right decision. Any future Conservative government, much like previous Conservative governments, will always respect the sacrosanctity of prosecutorial independence.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: It is funny. Most Liberals members have been hanging their heads in shame for most of my speech as I roll out one devastating fact after another. Now, all of a sudden, when I restate that a Conservative will not grant a special deal to SNC-Lavalin, they start screaming and hollering. They come unglued. It is as though they are more outraged by the possibility that SNC-Lavalin will go to trial for its alleged fraud and bribery than they are about the conduct of their own Prime Minister. I wish they had been screaming and hollering a few minutes ago, when I was laying out all of the evidence of how the Prime Minister's top advisers interfered with a criminal prosecution, but they were dead silent and just sat there in disgrace. The second they find out that a future Conservative government will let the legal course of action run independently and that SNC-Lavalin will be made to answer for itself before trial, that is too far; it is too much, and they cannot handle it and they erupt in screams and hollers.

I think members will agree that this says an awful lot about the things that matter to this Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

Canadians have been hearing my colleague from Carleton's brilliant explanation for the past few days. It is disappointing that when we are laying out specific facts, we have to listen to the people across the aisle hurling insults about the facts. Facts are the very foundation of the political argument and debate that we should be respectfully having in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to use your authority to remind all parliamentarians that when a member has the floor and is giving the facts, giving the evidence, and is ready to table documents, other people may object, but it is crucial that all this happens in a respectful, cordial atmosphere. If they have something to say, they will get an opportunity to say it at the appropriate time. Ultimately, Canadians will have the final word on October 24.

•(1220)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for his remarks.

I generally preside over the House with care to ensure that decorum is maintained. As the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent indicated, decorum is essential during debates in the House. I will continue to enforce decorum and will intervene if things start to get too loud.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on another point of order to correct what I said.

It was brought to my attention that I inadvertently said that the election will take place on October 24. I am sorry if that is indeed the case. I misled the House. Canadians will have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and tell the government what they think of it on October 21.

The Deputy Speaker: Since that is not really a point of order, we will resume debate.

The hon. member for Carleton.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the next part of my presentation.

According to the CBC article just published in the last 24 hours about the conditions the former attorney general allegedly brought to the Prime Minister in order to put an end to the public controversy that has been raging, the final one was that the Prime Minister admit:

—publicly, or to caucus alone—that his office acted inappropriately in its attempts to convince her to consider granting SNC-Lavalin a [deferred prosecution agreement].

The Prime Minister apparently considered this a demand he was not prepared to fulfill. He thought that she was in no position to tell him he was wrong. He was the boss around there and did not take responsibility for anything.

That has been the story of his life. He inherited what he calls a “family fortune” from his grandfather. That family fortune had been in a testamentary trust fund for over a decade, the income from which is sheltered from personal income taxes, and he was therefore able to avoid paying the same rate of taxation that another Canadian would pay on earned income for the growth in that trust fund. This was called the testamentary trust fund loophole, and it existed up until the beginning of 2015, when the loophole was closed.

I will note that it was the former Harper government that closed that loophole, and the then Liberal leader opposed Harper's decision to do that. I believe he stood in the House of Commons and actually voted against closing the loophole that he profited from.

We have to do some thinking about whether we need to change the ethics laws to prevent members from using their vote in this House of Commons to profit themselves, or at least to take positions that clearly place them in a real conflict of interest, even if these positions are not captured in law.

Nevertheless, because he has inherited this great family fortune, he has never had to live with the consequences of his own decisions, and he was not prepared to do so in this case either.

The Budget

The former attorney general had asked him to stand up and say it was wrong to badger, hound, threaten, pressure and interfere in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. According to this story, if he had done that and had met the other conditions, she might have stayed in caucus and continued to work with the Liberal government. Although the Prime Minister apparently considered apologizing and although it was widely reported that he would apologize, he showed up at a press conference and put on another high school drama production, which is an extension of his earlier profession, and avoided taking any personal blame or responsibility for his actions. It was at that press conference, I note in passing, that he stated the blatant falsehood that the former attorney general had never once raised any concerns with him about his interference in the file, but I digress.

He did not take responsibility. That says something about him and about the kind of leader he is, versus what he promised he would be. He promised he was going to be the great Prime Minister of reconciliation. He was going to do things completely differently. He would usher in a new era of idealism, and Canadians could take him at his word. That would involve taking responsibility for one's own failures.

When he did not do so, he proved that he had failed to live up to the expectations he deliberately and meticulously set in the last election. Furthermore, by trying to blame the first female indigenous attorney general for his own behaviour, he proved what many have long suspected: that his talk about reconciliation has been nothing more than drama and theatre.

• (1225)

Yes, he has given sobbing speeches and has acted with great symbolism. We know he can put on a show for the cameras. That is what he did as a drama teacher; he acted. However, there is a difference between acting and action, and actions speak louder than words.

Let me examine the approach the Prime Minister has taken in using first nations people for his own political objectives.

In a Rolling Stone magazine article, a reporter asked a question about the Prime Minister's boxing match with Patrick Brazeau, who is now a Senator in the upper chamber. We should note the descriptive language that the Rolling Stone article reports after the Prime Minister was asked that question. The article noted:

[The Prime Minister] mischievously smiles when I ask how much of the boxing match had been planned out. "It wasn't random," [he] says. "I wanted someone who would be a good foil, and we stumbled upon the scrappy tough-guy senator from an indigenous community. He fit the bill, and it was a very nice counterpoint." [The Prime Minister] says this with the calculation of a CFO in a company-budget markup session. "I saw it as the right kind of narrative, the right story to tell."

This is exactly what I said earlier. He is a drama teacher putting on a production, telling a story about his grandeur at the expense of a so-called scrappy tough guy from an indigenous community.

What is much more disgusting is what he was since caught on video as saying. Wanting to shame Mr. Brazeau, the scrappy tough guy from the indigenous community, the Prime Minister wanted Brazeau to cut his hair, which was part of the bet to fulfill after the outcome of the boxing match. "We're both known for our hair on the Hill. Let's say the loser gets a haircut", the Prime Minister said of the

bet, adding that Brazeau "resisted back a little bit, you know, pointing out that hair has a cultural significance for first nations people, and I said, 'I know. That's why I proposed it.' When a warrior cuts his hair, it's a sign of shame, so it's very apropos."

Let us digest that. The Prime Minister did not just want to win the boxing match; he wanted to do it against an indigenous person. Then he wanted Brazeau to cut his hair because it was a cultural symbol of shame, of him dominating over that person, of him humiliating that person.

• (1230)

Putting aside whether or not Mr. Brazeau agreed to participate in the fight, he did, it was the pleasure with which the Prime Minister embraced this opportunity to shame someone on the basis of cultural traditions. That is the Prime Minister. That is the heart of the so-called reconciliation Prime Minister. This is not lost on first nations leaders.

Let me quote from an interview by Mercedes Stephenson. She said, "Joining me now to discuss this", and this was referring to the SNC-Lavalin affair, "is Grand Chief Stewart Phillip. Grand Chief, you had a chance to see that video." She was talking about a video in relation to the scandal. "What did you make of it?"

Grand Chief Phillip said:

Well it was deeply disappointing to know and understand at this late date in the game that the vision and the promises of [the Prime Minister] that were announced in October 2015 have not come to pass. All of the promises and the commitments that he made have simply been set aside and now that he's under tremendous pressure from the [former attorney general] SNC-Lavalin issue, [the Prime Minister] is really revealing himself to be who he really is, which is a very self-centred, conceited, arrogant individual and I think that was demonstrated with his very smug, mean-spirited response to the Grassy Narrows demonstrator. That situation is incredibly tragic. Many, many people have died. Many people—

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. member for Carleton that when we use citations to make references to other members in the House, be they ministers or other members, the usual practice is to not do something through a citation that a member would not be permitted to do in the usual spirit of decorum and civil discourse in the House. I would encourage him to perhaps, if there is language in the citation that might sort of fit in that category, he may wish to either rephrase it or perhaps skip over that part of the citation.

I thank the hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Yes I will, Mr. Speaker.

I will restart the quote and I will properly ascribe pronouns and titles in place of personal names. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip is the grand chief of, I believe, the union of first nations in British Columbia. He said of the Prime Minister:

Well it was deeply disappointing to know and understand at this late date in the game that the vision and the promises [of the Prime Minister] that [he] announced in October 2015 have not come to pass. All of the promises and the commitments that he made have simply been set aside and now that he's under tremendous pressure from the [former attorney general in the] SNC-Lavalin issue, [the Prime Minister] is really revealing himself to be who he really is, which is a very self-centred, conceited, arrogant individual and I think that was demonstrated with his very smug, mean-spirited response to the Grassy Narrows demonstrator. That situation is tragic. Many, many people have died. Many people are handicapped and living with the legacy of mercury poisoning and, you know, he's such an arrogant individual. It's very disturbing and very disappointing.

The Budget

That respected chief was referring to the Prime Minister's disgusting comment at a recent \$1,500 a ticket fundraiser where he was speaking to a bunch of well-connected Liberal lobbyists and wealthy donors. A courageous whistle-blower stood up and warned him about an issue of mercury poisoning in an aboriginal community. He had the audacity to laugh about the incident and say, "Thank you for your donation." Then he said again, "Thank you for your donation to the Liberal Party of Canada." He actually said it twice.

Of course, the millionaire Liberals in the room burst into uproarious laughter, thinking it was just hilarious, as she was being dragged out by security. He made a joke at the expense of the people suffering from mercury poisoning on a first nations reserve, saying, "Thank you for your donation".

Is it not nice that he and his wealthy friends can gather together and luxuriate at a beautiful reception, with fine wine and other delicious liqueurs they can enjoy in the comfort and safety of a place where the water is not poisoned by mercury? However, God forbid, someone should stand up and confront him when he thinks no one is looking, when he did not know he was on camera. The real Prime Minister reveals himself, when he is not the drama teacher we all see on television.

The interview continued. Mercedes Stephenson then said, "The prime minister did apologize for his tone and what he said in that video. I take it that that apology doesn't mean much to you.":

The response from the grand chief was, "No. You know, I think at this late stage in the game, again, we're used to [the Prime Minister's] apologies and alligator tears. It's not about apologies. It's about getting it right."

The grand chief made a very good point there, when he talked about the Prime Minister's alligator tears. The Prime Minister has substituted his ability to generate these phony tears on demand for real action on behalf of the first nations people. They were not looking for more water to pour out of his eyeballs. They were looking for fresh water and clean water that they could drink on reserve, and he did not provide any of that. Instead, he provided a disgusting display of mockery against those same people.

Mercedes Stephenson then asks, "How would you describe the relationship between the government and Indigenous communities under the [Prime Minister] compared to previous governments?"

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip replies:

Well, I think started off with a great sense of hope and anticipation that the [Prime Minister and his] government was going to...embrace a UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples and the TRC calls to action were going to be fully implemented, that there was going to be a seismic change with respect to our jurisdictional issues and the other issues around energy in this country. And as time has moved forward, all of those promises have been simply swept aside and have not come to pass. And here we are, six months out from the next...election and we're faced with the [Prime Minister's] government totally unravelling, coming apart at the seams and without question, the sun is setting on [this Prime Minister].

● (1235)

Mercedes Stephenson continued the interview:

Do you think it's that the government isn't committed to reconciliation or that it's simply much more difficult than they were anticipating and it's taking more time and more effort to solve what are some very complex problems?

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip replied:

Well, quite honestly, I think that the clip that we witnessed, the most disturbing part of that clip, aside from the smugness and the mean-spirited remark on the part of the prime minister, was the spontaneous applause from the Liberal Party members who were attending, which to me is a reflection on the heart and soul of the Liberal Party, which for many, many decades has had this arrogant sense of entitlement, that they are a national party that is so accustomed to forming government and I think that's the central issue here. [The] Prime Minister...paid a lot of lip service, you know, to this historic change but I don't think the party itself was, you know, that much in support of those visionary statements made by [the] Prime Minister...in the early days of his tenure.

Then Ms. Stephenson asked the grand chief about the former attorney general, as follows:

Are you upset because of what happened there or is it also about the government not meeting the promises that you feel they put out there?

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip replied:

It's both. But believe me, British Columbians, the Indigenous community in British Columbia, were so proud when [the former attorney general] was appointed as justice minister. We have had the privilege and the honour of working with her and we know her to be deeply committed, very conscientious and an absolute work horse. And she's very meticulous in terms of preparation and keeping records of meetings and so on and so forth. And we knew immediately that the efforts to smear [the former attorney general] were politically motivated and needless to say, we were deeply angered by how terribly she was treated as an Indigenous woman, when the prime minister said there was nothing more dear to him than relationships with Indigenous peoples and in a very misleading way has always held himself out as a feminist.

Then Ms. Stephenson finished up the interview. I encourage everyone to watch the interview and listen to the grand chief's words, which they will find very revealing indeed about the Prime Minister's true motivations and his true character in respect of the issue of reconciliation.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Prime Minister's decision to trample all over the will of first nations peoples in the approval or rejection of pipelines. First nations people supported the northern gateway pipeline. It was a wonderful opportunity for northern British Columbian first nations communities to generate billions of dollars for schools and hospitals and thousands of jobs for young people bursting with potential but lacking opportunity to fulfill it.

The aboriginal population in the country is the youngest of any demographic. We have this spectacular opportunity for Canada to address its aging population and retiring workforce by expanding opportunity to young first nations people to take on excellent jobs of the future. Many of those good, high-paying jobs, will be in natural resource sectors: building pipelines, pipefitting, welding, operating heavy machinery to install those pipelines and, of course, rightfully collecting royalties from the resulting economic wealth these projects generate.

● (1240)

One thing a lot of people who oppose natural resource projects do not realize is their potential to pay royalties to the rightful owners of the land, in many cases first nations communities. That is why energy companies regularly sign agreements, not only to pay directly to first nations governments revenues that can be used to build schools, hospitals and clinics and provide other services, but also to employ a youthful workforce in those communities.

The Budget

Let me start with the northern gateway pipeline, which the Prime Minister vetoed, even though it had already been approved and the majority of first nations communities on the pathway of the pipeline had supported it. Many of them had signed benefit agreements with the company Enbridge to share in the prosperity that would come from that project. It is a constitutional obligation to consult with first nations people when their interests are directly affected by a natural resources project in or around their lands. That happened in the case of northern gateway. The project was approved.

However, in the last election, the Prime Minister ran on killing the project, because he wanted to take advantage of a hard-core anti-development agenda that was popular with the far-left base of his party in certain parts of the country. He also wanted to take advantage of the copious foreign dollars that were pouring into Canada to influence the outcome of the last election against resource development.

We now know these foreign interests do not want Canadian resources to get to market, because they are profiting from keeping Canada landlocked in its oil and gas sector. Why? Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Venezuela and numerous other foreign producers of oil do not want to have to compete with Canada. One easy way to prevent that competition is to block the construction of pipelines to tidewater. As a result of the fact we cannot expand our pipeline network to the east and west coasts, we ultimately have to sell 99% of our oil exports to the United States of America, which is the other foreign interest.

The refineries south of the border profit from buying Canada's oil at 40% and 50% price discounts and selling it to the world market at full price. They buy from Canada at 20 bucks, sell to the world at 50 bucks and pocket the difference. No wonder these foreign interests do not want Canada to have pipelines. It has been documented that millions of dollars poured into Canada through various forms of Internet advertising to dissuade people from supporting pro-development politicians, ultimately resulting in the election of an anti-development government. However, the victims of that political agenda, which the Prime Minister deliberately played into, have been first nations people.

Let me read from an article in the Financial Post entitled, “‘We are very disappointed’: Loss of Northern Gateway devastating for many First Nations, chiefs say”.

The article from the April 10, 2017, edition states:

Most aboriginal communities in northern British Columbia impacted by the Northern Gateway pipeline supported the \$7.9 billion project and are angry [the Prime Minister] rejected it, say representatives of three of the bands.

Elmer Ghostkeeper of the Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement, Chief Elmer Derrick of the Gitksan Nation, and Dale Swampy of the Samson Cree Nation said on the sidelines of a private meeting in Calgary on Friday with oilpatch leaders they are disappointed in the “political decision,” which they say was made without their input.

Let us stop there for a second.

● (1245)

The Prime Minister claims to support the constitutional obligation to consult with first nations people on resource projects, but does that consultation only go ahead with those who oppose development? What about consulting the communities, of which the majority

support the development? Do they not have the constitutional right to be consulted by their government?

In that case, I would challenge the Prime Minister to tell me: How many first nations communities that had benefit agreements in the northern gateway pipeline did he meet with and consult personally before he vetoed the project?

The article continues:

They are now looking for ways to generate new energy development.

Ghostkeeper said more than 30 of the 42 bands on the Alberta-to-West Coast pipeline's right-of-way were looking forward to sharing in the construction and long-term benefits.

“Their expectations were really raised with the promise of \$2 billion set aside in business and employment opportunities,” Ghostkeeper said before addressing the Canadian Energy Executive Association at the Calgary Petroleum Club. “Equity was offered to aboriginal communities, and with the change in government that was all taken away. We are very disappointed in this young government.”

Ghostkeeper said he'd like to see an oil pipeline revived, but led by aboriginals. “We have to partner with the oil and gas industry and be treated as equals, not as token, because any natural resource project that is going to take place on traditional lands has to be given free, informed, prior consent now. The old ways of doing business doesn't cut it.”

I continue to quote from the story:

Derrick said his band was supportive from the outset, but the Prime Minister didn't want to hear from supportive communities. “The fact that the Prime Minister chose not to consult with people in northwestern B.C. disappointed us very much,” he said.

Swampy said some of the bands are discussing legal action against the federal government for rejecting the project without proper consultation.

“They understand that it was a political decision, and not a decision acting in the best interests of Canadians,” Swampy said. “They weren't asked about the financial effect, the lost employment. They are trying to get themselves out of poverty, the welfare system that they are stuck to, and every time they try to do something like that, it's destroyed.”

Let me repeat that for the self-righteous anti-development types such as the Prime Minister, who consistently block these resource projects. Let me quote again from this first nations leader. He says of the local indigenous communities that wanted this project:

They weren't asked about the financial effect, the lost employment. They are trying to get themselves out of poverty, the welfare system that they are stuck to, and every time they try to do something like that, it's destroyed.

That was the effect of the Prime Minister's personal decision to veto the northern gateway pipeline. I quote the article:

Saying “the Great Bear Rainforest is no place for a pipeline and the Douglas Channel is no place for oil tanker traffic,” [the Prime Minister] killed Northern Gateway last November. The Enbridge Inc. project had received regulatory approval, as well as approval from the previous Conservative government, after a decade of planning and more than half a billion in spending.

The Budget

Think about that. First nations, entrepreneurs and the previous Harper government consulted, studied and examined the ecological and economic impacts for a decade. The company spend half a billion dollars on that process, yet after the independent Energy Board concluded it was in the public interest and it was environmentally safe, the Prime Minister politically interfered and overturned the decision without consulting with the communities on first nations that had supported it and counted on it as their best hope to escape poverty.

● (1250)

The article goes on:

[The Prime Minister] also imposed a ban on tanker traffic on the northern B.C. Coast, while approving Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline expansion and the upgrading of Enbridge's Line 3.

I will stop quoting right here.

In the case of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain, the Prime Minister claims he has approved that. Not a single shovel is in the ground, all these years later. Not a single inch of steel has been added in pipeline to the Kinder Morgan project. It has been entangled in political obfuscation now for years, even though it must be the least controversial project in the history of pipelines. They are not even seeking a new right-of-way. The pipeline is already there, and they are simply looking to twin it so that its capacity can go from the existing 300,000 barrels to 900,000.

So far, the Prime Minister has bought the old pipeline but done nothing to build the new pipeline. The courts have found that once again he failed to properly consult first nations communities along the route of the Kinder Morgan project and as a result had to go back to the drawing board and start all over. In the process, he has moved as slowly as possible. Do nothing in a mile that could be done in a yard. Do nothing in a yard that can be done in a foot. Do nothing in a foot that can be done in an inch.

The process inches along, with the Prime Minister giving vague reassurances that some day, one day, steel will be in the ground and we will begin building this project, a project on which he has already spent \$4.5 billion in exchange for nothing we did not already have.

We know his real agenda, though. He is going to get through the next election by trying to convince Canadians, who polls show support pipelines, that he does too. If he gets back in, there will be no pipeline built, just as there has not been for the last three and a half years, because he is ideologically opposed to energy development.

He said so. He said he wants to phase out the oil sands. Those were his words, and he is succeeding. By blocking the three pipelines that were ready to go when he took office—Trans Mountain, northern gateway and energy east—he has landlocked the industry, put 100,000 people out of work and, as I was just saying, has attacked the interests and the autonomy of the indigenous community.

I was earlier quoting from the Financial Post in April of 2017. Now similar groups are coming forward to demand an end to the Prime Minister's tanker ban. The Prime Minister claims he supports pipelines. How will he get the oil from the coast to Asia if tankers are banned? Does he have some magical petroleum-carrying unicorn

that is capable of lifting up the oil and taking it to foreign markets? If there is a tanker ban, how could it possibly get where it is needs to go?

Now I am quoting right out of the National Post:

First Nations coalition calls for rejection of [Liberal] tanker ban; one group plans to file UN complaint

Now we have first nations that are considering going to the UN to fight against the Prime Minister's anti-development policies that keep them in poverty.

The National Post continues:

The coalition has sketched out plans to build a roughly \$18-billion oil pipeline from northern Alberta to around Prince Rupert, B.C.

A coalition of First Nations groups is imploring Ottawa to rein in an oil tanker ban on the northern B.C. coast, with one organization planning to level a United Nations complaint against the government to protest the legislation.

● (1255)

The plea is a last-ditch effort to reverse Bill C-48 as it nears passage through the Senate. The coalition, composed of the National Coalition of Chiefs, the Indian Resource Council and the Eagle Spirit Chiefs Council met with a number of senators Tuesday morning in Ottawa to oppose the moratorium.

Calvin Helin, who led the talks with senators, is CEO of Eagle Spirit Energy Holding, which has sketched out plans to build a roughly \$18-billion oil pipeline from northern Alberta to around Prince Rupert, B.C.

Helin, a Lax Kw'alaams Band member, has long pitched the idea as Canada's sole First Nations-led oil pipeline. Helin said C-48 is a matter of "enormous concern" for the roughly 200 First Nations communities represented by the coalition, and said [the Prime Minister's] tanker ban explicitly targets the project, effectively stripping Indigenous people of their economic self-determination.

"Is this what reconciliation is supposed to represent in Canada?" he said.

Is this what reconciliation looks like? When a group of ambitious, smart and industrious first nations people come forward with an \$18-billion project that could lift whole communities out of the long-term poverty in which they have been trapped and give them full independence and control over their own destiny and the Prime Minister comes forward with a bill banning them from doing so, is that what he meant by reconciliation?

That is the question that this band member asks as he speaks out against the tanker ban, because the tanker ban is not just about blocking big oil companies from moving their product: It is about blocking these communities from their one chance to escape poverty. If the Prime Minister believed half as much in reconciliation as he does in his great dramatic and theatrical productions on the subject, then he would consult with and listen to these first nations people.

To members of the government, what did he say to Mr. Helin when he put forward Bill C-48, the tanker ban? Did he look him in the eye and tell him that generations of first nations people in western Canada will have to be held back because the government is blocking them from achieving economic independence through resource development, or did he even meet with him at all? My suspicion is that he could not be bothered. If there was no camera nearby and no photo opportunity to carry out, then he simply could not be bothered to show up for reconciliation.

The article continues:

Privilege

His comments come amid intense angst in Alberta, which has failed for many years to build the necessary pipelines to carry away steadily increasing oilsands production.

The Eagle Spirit Chiefs Council said Tuesday it would file a complaint in “coming days” under the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) against the federal government.

I will pause on this point. There is much legitimate debate about whether the declaration is the best way to achieve reconciliation with first nations people, but the Prime Minister gave plenty of lip service to that declaration before the last election. Now he appears to have violated it with his tanker ban, which prevents first nations from achieving the economic independence that they have worked so hard to achieve.

The National Post article goes on:

The chiefs said the ban unfairly restricts oil exports by the First Nations group, while allowing multinational corporations to ship their products from the southern portion of the B.C. coast.

So here we go again. Large multinational corporations will continue to ship their product, so this is not even about stopping the shipment of oil and gas; it is just about stopping Canadians from shipping their product.

The Prime Minister would never contemplate banning oil tankers from arriving at the east coast. All of those east coast tankers come right across the Atlantic, one tanker after another, to the eastern coast of our country, shipping foreign oil to Canadian markets. As that oil comes in, our money goes out, and we get poorer and poorer. No wonder our trade deficit is approaching record highs.

● (1300)

Let me quote further from that National Post article:

“All we’re trying to do is take advantage of the resources available to us,” said former chief Wallace Fox, chairman of the Indian Resource Council, a part of the coalition.

The Eagle Spirit pipeline appears to present a conundrum on Indigenous rights. A handful of first nations communities—including the Yinka Dene Alliance, which opposed the other pipeline projects in B.C.—have opposed the project in the past due to environmental worries. Meanwhile, a host of Indigenous communities along the pipeline route support Eagle Spirit, saying it will give them more financial independence.

Helin said he is close to a consensus among First Nations on Eagle Spirit. He said much of the First Nations opposition to the pipeline comes from Indigenous people, backed by activist organizations, who claim to speak for whole communities but do not.

I continued to quote from the National Post there.

The story goes on and on. The Prime Minister—

● (1305)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. member for Durham rising on a point of order?

* * *

PRIVILEGE

SOLICITOR-CLIENT PRIVILEGE IN THE CONTEXT OF PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Hon. Erin O’Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hate interrupting my colleague from Carleton, but in accordance with Standing Order 48(2), I filed appropriate notice with respect to a question of parliamentary privilege that I wish to bring at this time.

I have spent considerable time researching this important point for the chamber, for yourself, Mr. Speaker, and for Canadians who may be watching. There are two aspects to parliamentary privilege that I feel are both touched upon with respect to the subject of my question of privilege and my recommendation.

First, there is the individual privilege of every single member of this chamber, including opposition, to fulfill our challenge function, our parliamentary role of holding the government to account, but as well there is the collective privilege of the chamber, which represents all of Canada. All members should be able to deliberate, legislate and fulfill our parliamentary functions, whether on the front bench of the government side or in the shadow ministers’ bench or in the far corners where some former Liberals now sit.

Parliamentary privilege has both an individual and a collective aspect. Our collective privilege and my individual privilege has been impeded by the Prime Minister’s partial waiver of privilege with respect to the former attorney general, the current member for Vancouver Granville.

My question of privilege will outline a recommendation to you, Mr. Speaker, on my behalf and on behalf of this chamber. I remind my colleagues that parliamentary privilege is absolute and has been, as a defining feature going back to the 1600s, to allow parliamentarians to fulfill those functions I outlined at the beginning.

As Canada was created in 1867, the Constitution Act incorporated parliamentary privilege and its supremacy as part of our both written and unwritten Constitution. This was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the New Brunswick Broadcasting Co. decision decades ago.

The point I am raising here is that on several occasions, the most senior officials presiding over this House, helping us fulfill our duties as members, individually and collectively, have confirmed that privilege outranks or supersedes solicitor-client privilege. That is going to be the critical element of my suggestion to you, Mr. Speaker, in response to my question of privilege.

In fact, the first quote I would refer to you and our table officers is a quote from the parliamentary law clerk and parliamentary counsellor, Rob Walsh on November 4, 2009, when he said this about balancing solicitor-client privilege considerations alongside the privilege of parliamentarians:

...I feel I must respond to what Brigadier-General Watkin was just saying about solicitor-client privilege. What he’s saying relative to the obligation on lawyers as lawyers, in the usual context in which lawyers operate, is true.

Solicitor-client privilege, in my view, is an important privilege. It is one the committee obviously should respect but not necessarily be governed by. It is a principle that relates to the legal rights of people who are in that solicitor-client relationship. It’s all designed for the benefit of the client, not the lawyer. It is to protect the client’s rights from being prejudiced by the wrongful disclosure of information exchanged with a lawyer.

But that’s in the context of legal rights, legal proceedings. There are no legal rights at issue here—

That is with respect to parliamentary privilege and the rights of parliamentarians. I will continue:

These are not legal proceedings. These are parliamentary proceedings. It is, in my view, open to the committee to seek answers from a lawyer appearing as a witness, notwithstanding this principle...

That is from the former law clerk of this chamber, looking at the ability for the executive branch of government to preclude Parliament from fulfilling its function on the grounds of solicitor-client privilege.

This determination by the former law clerk of Parliament was considered by Speaker Milliken, in your chair many years ago, in his April 27, 2010, decision with respect to the Afghan detainees. He said:

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

● (1310)

This matter has been considered in recent memory by the Speaker, on advice of Mr. Walsh, as law clerk, confirming that solicitor-client privilege consideration is an important privilege and, I say this as a lawyer, does not outstrip the primacy of Parliament and the primary function of Parliament to fulfill the individual and collective roles we have as parliamentarians. Therefore, solicitor-client privilege cannot bar the release of information. This has been confirmed in other Parliaments in Westminster where parliamentary privilege outranks court injunctions. Orders of the court rank below the importance of parliamentarians to have their privileges recognized and respected.

This has been reiterated when we look at the underlying principles of solicitor-client privilege. This is important. Whether it is the Daughters of the Vote yesterday or Canadians, I do not think we have ever had a more fulsome discussion of solicitor-client privilege in the history of our country. Let us look at its underpinnings. It is not absolute as parliamentary privilege is.

If we look at the Descôteaux decision of the Supreme Court of Canada written by Justice Lamer before he was chief justice, solicitor-client privilege can be nailed down into three elements. The first is that solicitor-client privilege can be raised when communications are likely to be disclosed to prevent that disclosure. The second is that, unless otherwise provided, that prevention of disclosure and the extent of limiting disclosure should be decided leaning in favour of the privilege, but that is not absolute. The third is that, when the law provides, “the decision to do so”, meaning disclosure, “and the choice of means of exercising that authority should be determined with a view to not interfering with it except to the extent absolutely necessary in order to achieve the ends sought by the enabling legislation.”

In our case, the enabling legislation is our Constitution. It is the supremacy of Parliament going back before 1867—

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the hon. member for Durham had given notice of his question of privilege at an earlier time and was interrupted several sitting days ago when the House moved on to another part of the daily program, so I am quite willing to hear his intervention in this regard.

He is aware that chair occupants are obliged to be mindful of the time that questions of privilege or points of order take in these matters. As he rightfully pointed out at the outset, normally these

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kinds of things come at typical times during the daily program, for example, after question period and the like. In this case, we are in the middle of debate, so I take what the hon. member has to say. I would ask him to give some indication as to the time he may take in bridging from the subject at hand to where he believes this breach of privilege has occurred. That would be good to hear.

The hon. member for Durham.

● (1315)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, certainly I was going to give more of an underpinning of the supremacy of parliamentary privilege with respect to the attempts by the executive to use solicitor-client privilege to fetter that absolute right. I will condense down to where I am going in a few minutes of remaining time to show you and my friend, the deputy House leader from the Liberals, what the request to respect the individual and collective rights of parliamentarians should be. In particular, my parliamentary privilege to fulfill my individual and collective function has been impeded by the Prime Minister's inappropriate use of solicitor-client privilege to bar full consideration of the facts underlying the SNC affair, the Shawcross doctrine and the crisis that has really gripped the government over the last two months. I will narrow in now to be quick.

Yesterday in this chamber, the Prime Minister said he has provided this waiver. He said, “We issued an unprecedented order in council waiving solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence, allowing her to speak fully on the matter.”

That does not jibe with the order in council he refers to. I am happy to table this order in council afterward. It is 2019-0105. In two parts it is limited to “while she held that office”. That is in two different sections with respect to that waiver. It then goes on to say, “waiver does not extend to any information or communications between the former Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions”.

There has been no full waiver here. It is clear that the full waiver would include any conversations that might be bound by solicitor-client privilege after a cabinet shuffle. The former attorney general became the Minister of Veterans Affairs, a position I hold in very high regard as a former occupant of that position, on January 14. Between January 14 and February 12, when she resigned her role in cabinet, a number of conversations were likely held. We know for a fact that on February 11, when the Prime Minister was in Vancouver, there was a discussion where he said the fact that the former attorney general was still in cabinet showed “full confidence” in and by the former attorney general. In response, she resigned the next day, so certainly there was not full confidence both ways.

Parliament, to fulfill our function individually and collectively, needs a full waiver. The Prime Minister has told Canadians there has been a full waiver when there has been a partial waiver. The member for Vancouver Granville needs to be able to inform the House about all discussions, free of privilege considerations, until the present day.

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I will put one more thing on the record, because I think it is important to know. Although her own colleagues are suggesting she can come in here at any moment and rise on a point of order, the member for Vancouver Granville has professional obligations as a lawyer. The Law Society of British Columbia's rules of practice, section 3.3-2, states, "A lawyer must not use or disclose a client's or former client's confidential information to the disadvantage of the client". Therefore, that member, who has been seeking advice from a former Supreme Court justice, is taking her Privy Council, cabinet and professional obligations seriously at a time when the Prime Minister suggests that he has provided a full waiver. He used the word "fully" yesterday. There is a month where clearly that waiver has not been provided.

Therefore, for the Prime Minister to live up to the claim that he has provided the former attorney general with a full waiver, he needs to do exactly that, including conversations in Vancouver on February 11, because lawyers have obligations to their clients long after the client relationship ends. The member for Vancouver Granville should not be forced to walk away from her professional obligations when the simplest answer, whenever there are solicitor-client considerations, is a waiver of those protections by the client, which is the Government of Canada, in this case represented by the Prime Minister.

• (1320)

What I am asking you to do is a bit extraordinary, because I am not asking you to find a prima facie finding and to refer this to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. My privilege has also been violated by the executive's use of committees, both justice and ethics, to circumvent or stall the full explanation and exploration of, and deliberation on, these events.

Therefore, I take the extraordinary step to ask you, on behalf of all parliamentarians in our collective function, to invite the member for Vancouver Granville to speak fully on the record in this chamber, not burdened by any solicitor-client privileges, going all the way to the present day, which would include any conversations and continued pressure that happened after her shuffle to Veterans Affairs. If you give a declaratory judgment or statement telling the member that parliamentary privilege supersedes any legal obligation she has to the Law Society of British Columbia, to her former client, the Prime Minister, or to her status as a privy councillor to show and reaffirm that parliamentary privilege is absolute, I would ask the Chair to take that extraordinary step of inviting the member for Vancouver Granville to speak, unfettered, in this chamber. It is within your power. Parliament can let her speak.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Durham for his intervention. I will certainly take his comments under advisement.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a different point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is a different point of order in the sense that I, as an individual, am concerned about how privileges might be utilized, whether today or previously, as a mechanism to achieve some sort of alternative agenda. That concerns me.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, privileges are very important and are about the rights of individual members of Parliament. Maybe a review could be done of the last 50 or so points of privilege brought to the attention of the Speaker for an overall opinion. Maybe what is necessary is for the Speaker to give some guidance, with respect to the standing orders, on when members are standing up.

I have been a parliamentarian for almost 30 years. My concern is that the very important rule about why it is there is maybe being deviated from. It is the reason I raise this as a point of order. I would appreciate it if you and the other Speakers of this House would review the rules. It is all I ask.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the parliamentary secretary for his point of order. He certainly touches on a topic that has come up in the last several days. I can assure him that there are a number of questions of privilege currently under consideration on which the Speaker has yet to provide direction.

As members come up with points of order or questions of privilege, these are privileges accorded to them in the Standing Orders. That said, as I indicated in my intervention relating to the hon. member for Durham, it is incumbent on Chair occupants to ensure that the time being taken for these interventions is managed in a way that is in line with the expectation of this privilege given to hon. members. It is not a means by which a member can tax the time of the House unnecessarily. At the same time, if members have additional points to add that provide new information or other aspects of the question of privilege that are relevant and pertinent, there is an obligation to hear those comments as they pertain to the question under consideration.

I appreciate that it is a bit of a subjective call on our part. We listen carefully to what is being said. As you have seen on numerous occasions, if a member is soon into, for example, some form of debate on a question under the guise of a standing order, you will see that these interventions are very short-lived.

I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his comments. In turn, we will take those under advisement and get back to the House, if necessary.

* * *

• (1325)

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, at the outset of my presentation today, I brought the House of Commons' attention to a detailed report by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in which it listed the extensive conversations, secret discussions, the Prime Minister's Office had been carrying out with the former attorney general, and indirectly, with the former Treasury Board president, about putting this whole scandal behind the government. I listed the five different conditions the former attorney general is said to have provided in exchange for her willingness to put the matter to rest. Those conditions are the following:

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First, remove the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, the now disgraced Gerald Butts.

Second, remove the outgoing Clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick.

Both of them have been removed.

The third condition was to remove senior adviser to the Prime Minister Mathieu Bouchard, whose inappropriate behaviour, and perhaps illegal conduct, I chronicled for the House extensively earlier today.

Fourth, guarantee that the new Attorney General would not overturn the decision of the director of public prosecutions and issue a deal for SNC-Lavalin to avoid a criminal trial.

Fifth, and finally, the former attorney general asked that the Prime Minister take responsibility for his inappropriate conduct and apologize, either to caucus or to the public, or better yet, both.

The first two conditions were met. Butts and Wernick are gone or going, but the three remaining conditions have not, apparently, been met. Mathieu Bouchard, the senior adviser, remains. The Prime Minister has not committed, not guaranteed, that he will avoid further interference in granting SNC-Lavalin a special deal to avoid trial. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Prime Minister has not taken responsibility for his conduct. He has not apologized. He has not held himself to account, this at the same time he has punished the whistleblowers for speaking out.

Today the former Treasury Board president, the MP for Markham—Stouffville, appeared in an interview with Anna Maria Tremonti, a CBC reporter. Tremonti confirmed that secret negotiations were going on.

I quote from her: “We just learned last night on CBC News that there were secret discussions to broker a compromise with the former attorney general before you were both removed from caucus this week.”

The former Treasury Board president was not able to comment on these negotiations, but she did say the following:

Well, I have been very clear from the beginning of when this took place. The issue, just to remind your listeners, is that there is very good evidence that there were attempts to interfere with, have political interference with, a very serious criminal trial, and I had to resign from cabinet because I was not willing to deny that that took place. And from the beginning, I have tried to suggest that the way to deal with this is to speak the truth, to admit that mistakes were made, to apologize to Canadians for it, and find out how it happened and make sure it never happens again.

● (1330)

That's been my stance from the beginning that I have communicated to the Prime Minister and his office and others. So to that extent, there have been conversations going on, but I would not say that they were intense in any way. There were no efforts to bring all the people involved into a room together to actually try to resolve this, so I was, I would have to say, fairly stunned when I was expelled from caucus on Tuesday without ever having had an opportunity to speak to caucus, to share my perspective on what happened and why I resigned from cabinet, for example.

She goes on in this interview to make some other very interesting observations.

I will note that although I do not share the party's colour or perhaps the political ideology of this particular member, she is a widely respected medical doctor, and up until her most recent

political stand, someone the government had put forward as an example of the integrity and expertise it boasted on its front bench. Therefore, I ask Liberal members not to roll their eyes and dismiss her as though she is some sort of political enemy. She has not been a political enemy to the Liberal Party. These remarks show that she might have been the best friend the Prime Minister could ever have had if he had been willing to listen to her wise counsel that he rest himself on integrity. However, he did not listen to that. Instead, he punished her for speaking truth to power. She goes on to explain how that happened. She said:

Well, what I did, for example, I have to say was a hard thing to do. I made the decision to resign from cabinet because there is a constitutional convention of cabinet solidarity. That means that when we talk about a decision in cabinet, we may air our disagreements around the table privately, but we have to go out from that room of one mind prepared to defend and support the decision that we have made together, and I've always been able to do that on any of the other important issues that we've talked about.

In this case...the issue at the heart of this is the independence of our judicial system. We cannot have a democracy without an independent justice system that is free from political interference. And I felt there was evidence that there had been some attempts of interference, and the expectations of cabinet ministers to deny that the interference took place and/or to suggest that it didn't matter, that it wasn't important in some way, was not something I could do in good conscience, and so I could not meet my expectation of cabinet solidarity on that matter, but it was a very hard thing.

You know, I don't want to go into a lot of detail, but I have received some treatment which I think is less than respectful from former colleagues and lots of folks on social media and elsewhere. You know, that's not what the story is about. I can deal with critique, but it takes a certain measure of courage to step up and do something that is going to upset others, but I believe so strongly in the importance of us as a country having a justice system that we can trust, to know that decisions are not going to be made in the courts based on whether the person or the company on trial is friends with or associated with a particular politician who will plead their case. That's the fundamental issue here.

She has hit the nail on the head. A lot of people have said that this is an inside-baseball story. Who could possibly make sense of all the intricacies of the justice committee, the ethics committee, deferred prosecution agreements and the Shawcross doctrine. It is all so boring. When are people's eyes going to glaze over?

What keeps shocking members of the Liberal Party is that eyes are not glazing over. People are not losing interest in this scandal. If the Liberals want to understand why, they need only listen to their own former treasury board president, because she said it here so simply, and I will say again what she said:

but I believe so strongly in the importance of us as a country having a justice system that we can trust, to know that decisions are not going to be made in the courts based on whether the person or the company on trial is friends with or associated with a particular politician who will plead their case. That's the fundamental issue here.

● (1335)

That is why the people of Canada understand and have followed this scandal so carefully. They do not need to know all of the intricacies of the Shawcross doctrine or how cabinet confidence works. What they do know is this. In our system everybody is supposed to be equal under the law, that there is no special treatment for special people or special companies. We have the rule of law and not the law of rulers. We cannot buy justice with powerful lobbyists.

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That is exactly what is at stake in this scandal. Do we have one law for the people and another for the powerful? Everyday people on the streets understand how much we stand to lose if we normalize the process of politicians walking into the court sphere and helping special people avoid prosecution.

The former Treasury Board president was asked by Anna Maria Tremonti, the CBC host, “Do we have a justice system in Canada that is now deeply flawed? You left, you didn't get what you wanted, it doesn't change. Does that mean our justice system is flawed as it stands right now, under this Liberal government?”

The former Treasury Board president replied, “No, in fact I think Canadians can be very thankful that the system did work. I believe it worked because the former attorney general did not bend to the wishes of those who wanted her to interfere in the trial.”

“The decision around this particular trial, the SNC-Lavalin case, it's been described by some as the largest corporate corruption trial in modern Canadian history”, says the former Liberal Treasury Board president. “It's not an insignificant trial in any way”, she goes on, “and there is a person called the director of public prosecutions who is completely non-political, who has a large office of people who are trained in criminal prosecutions. She made the determination that this should go to trial. There is a tool that the former attorney general could have used if this company qualified, but the director of public prosecutions said they did not qualify for that.”

She goes on to state, “There is lots of evidence as to why. We can be thankful that we did not have...political interference did not occur, but it was because the former attorney general was not willing to meddle.”

This goes right to the heart of one of the principal defences that the government has so far made. The Liberals say that the company did not get a special deal in the end, so none of this matters, so let us forget about it and move on. It is not because of them; it is because of one principled woman who stood in their way. What did they do? They trampled over her, kicked her out as attorney general and now they have forced her right out of the Liberal caucus. They have tried to destroy her reputation and sent out powerful former Liberal ministers to make racial and sexist slurs against her as part of a long-standing, two-month campaign of character assassination.

With all of that said, it is because of her that this company did not wrongly get off without a trial. The former Treasury Board president was quite right when she pointed out why, and let me say it one more time, “There is lots of evidence as to why. We can be thankful that we did not have...political interference did not occur, but it was because the former attorney general was not willing to meddle.” In other words, the Prime Minister's office was on one side, the former attorney general's office was on the other side and further still was the director of public prosecutions. The Prime Minister's Office slammed and slammed against that wall that was the principle built in stone of the former attorney general.

● (1340)

Try as they might, like a battering ram, to bust through that wall, that wall held. On the other side of that wall was the top prosecutor of the land, whom the Prime Minister was trying to overpower but he could not do it. The seemingly irresistible force of a Prime Minister

was up against an immovable object, and that was the principled former attorney general.

No one on that side of the House of Commons, who still stands behind the Prime Minister, should fool themselves into thinking the administration of justice was protected by anything other than her principle. It is true that as of now SNC-Lavalin is headed for a criminal prosecution. However, it is not true that this has anything to do with the Prime Minister or the people around him. He did everything in his power, over a steady campaign, four months long, to avoid that trial, a trial that his own former Treasury Board president says might be the biggest criminal corruption trial in Canadian history.

However, the people who stood their ground paid the price. We know that. We have witnessed it this week. The Prime Minister has signalled how he responds when strong, principled, courageous people stand up to him and speak truth to power.

George Orwell said, as my friend from British Columbia recently reminded me, “The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those that speak it.”

No more appropriate words could be spoken in the House of Commons than those on this particular week. The anger and hatred that senior Liberals have shown these two courageous whistle-blowers over the last two months demonstrates just how accurately Orwell captured the sentiment and the consequences that truth tellers often face.

We are all blessed that they did tell the truth, that they did do their job and that, for now, the sacred, precious, fragile gift handed down from our ancestors of an independent legal system is, in the moment, safe. I say in the moment because we do not yet know the next chapter in the story.

Will the government succeed in covering up any other political interference that went on? We do not know. Will the government succeed in covering up the real motives for the Prime Minister's extraordinary defence of this accused corporate criminal? Will we ever find out who stood to benefit from the Prime Minister blocking this trial for fraud and bribery? Finally, will the trial ever actually make it to court? These delays will drag on, maybe until after the next election.

With the Prime Minister refusing to rule out a future deferred prosecution agreement, with his current position that he has done nothing wrong, what assurance could we possibly have that he will not do it again? If he, as is his current position, believes there was nothing wrong with the four month campaign of pressure applied to the former attorney general, that it was perfectly acceptable for everyone from his chief of staff to his principal secretary to the clerk of the Privy Council to his senior adviser to his finance minister to the finance minister's chief of staff, all relentlessly badgering the former attorney general to write a letter overturning the decision of the prosecutor and shelving the charges, if he thinks that all of that was perfectly appropriate, why would he not just do it again? He is open to it.

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• (1345)

The Attorney General says he might do it, but he does not know yet. He will not say, but he is thinking about it. There is no further comment, and he tells us we will see him after the next election.

Members should not say I did not warn them. They should not be surprised if in the lead up to Christmas later this year, the Prime Minister is back in office and all of a sudden, unsurprisingly, SNC-Lavalin gets let off corruption charges. Members opposite get excited about the prospect that SNC might get let off on the crimes of fraud and bribery. Some Liberal members take great delight in the prospect that after the next election, the Prime Minister could step up and have his Attorney General shelve those charges so the company could get off with impunity, as the Libyan people are left to suffer the consequences of the corruption that SNC is said to have carried out.

The reaction we just witnessed on the floor of the House of Commons confirms my warning that if the Prime Minister is back in office, make no mistake that he will let SNC-Lavalin off and he will contaminate our justice system with more political interference. He has made it clear that he does not believe there is anything wrong with a prime minister pressuring an attorney general to override a top prosecutor.

That is not my allegation. He had a chance to stand up at his February 15 press conference and state clearly and definitely that what happened was wrong. In fact, what the former Treasury Board president noted as a solution was for him to stand up at that press conference and say that it was a mistake, that he should not have done it, that he would never do it again and that he was sorry. However, he refused to do that because he does not think there is anything wrong with what he did. If he does not think there is anything wrong with it, why would he not just do it again?

I welcome him to come before the House and make a promise to that end, not that his promises have meant anything in the past. Even if they did and we could believe them, he has not even yet promised that a future re-elected Liberal government would refrain from imposing a settlement that would shelve the criminal charges against SNC-Lavalin.

In other words, this is not over. This is only the beginning. The future of judicial and prosecutorial independence is very much a live issue in the coming federal election.

One leader has thus far said that if he becomes prime minister, he will not interfere with his attorney general and will not allow for a political decision to override the prosecutor and shelve criminal charges against large-scale, white-collar criminals. That leader is the leader of the Conservative Party.

Maybe the leader of the NDP will say the same thing. I welcome him to do so. By all accounts, he is an honourable man. The leader of the Green Party may say the same thing. Our disagreements notwithstanding, she too is an honourable person. I believe they all will commit to the idea that if they are elected prime minister of Canada in October of this year, there will be no political interference to let this large-scale, accused corporate criminal off the hook.

However, there is one leader who has thus far refused, and done so resolutely, to rule out doing that.

In other words, we are just at the very beginning of this debate about the future of the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. We will have to decide as a nation whether it is acceptable for crony capitalists and corporatists to flood this place with lobbyists and illegal donations in order to buy themselves justice.

• (1350)

Any other Canadian accused of any other offence would have no political recourse against it. Those individuals would have to hire a lawyer and fight the charges in front of a judge or a jury of their peers. However, the Prime Minister thinks there is absolutely nothing wrong with the idea of a corporation with billions of dollars, massive influence, shareholders, lobbyists and board members linked to power in government using all of that influence to avoid repercussions in our criminal justice system.

He thinks that is perfectly fine and he believes that decision should reside with his office, not with an independent prosecutor who is immune to political interference, not with an attorney general who is sworn to non-partisanship, but with him, with the Prime Minister with the most political office in all of the land. He is creating a justice system based on who people know in the PMO, where there is one set of rules for the people and another set of rules for the powerful, where he replaces the rule of law with the law of rulers.

We have to remember just how fragile a gift we have inherited. We are among the blessed few born in a democracy with an independent system that judges the guilt or innocence of people in the court of law and carries out that judgment independent of political decisions. Billions of people around the world would literally give their lives for the chance that their children might live in such a country as ours.

Three hundred thousand people a year arrive on our shores, the largest sustained rate of immigration of any country in the world, because people flee from places where politicians decide who faces trial and who walks free. These people come here because they heard and they understood that in Canada it is different, that everybody is equal under the law and no one is above the law.

They understood, those many newcomers who came to our shores and enriched our country, that we had a long-standing and apparently durable tradition of judicial and prosecutorial independence that developed over more than 800 years, from the time of the Magna Carta in Great Britain, the mother country of our parliamentary and legal system. They knew that at the moment that King John signed that parchment he was committing himself to being under the law not above the law, and that meant that henceforward the king, all of the Crown and all those inside the court of the Crown would be subject to the same treatment. No matter their name, their title, their lineage, their wealth, their race, their religion, people understood that when they came to Canada they would be treated as equals.

The protection of that principle is what is at stake in the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal.

Statements by Members

●(1355)

Are we going to hold this company accountable, just like any other Canadian would face accountability if charged with a crime, or are we going to allow backroom meetings by lobbyists and insiders with political decision-makers in the Liberal Prime Minister's government to extend a special deal to avoid trial and dodge accountability? That is what we are debating here today.

I heard the cries of those on the other side that we should just move on, forget about this and get back to talking about something else. "Hey, didn't you hear? We spent \$41 billion the other day in the budget. Can't we talk about all that deficit spending?", the Liberals cry. We will have time for that. They will be held accountable for all the money they have squandered, the debt they have piled up and the taxes they have raised on the working class people to pay for it.

There will be plenty of time for that accountability, I assure the Liberals, and we will welcome that debate with relish. They can spray dollar signs in all directions all they want. We will not be distracted in our role of official opposition. We will show up here every day and do our job of protecting the rule of law, the system of justice and the equality of people. We will do that here today and every day. We will never apologize for doing it.

They can cry, they can howl and they can scream on the other side of the floor, as they are now doing, begging and pleading for silence, but we will not be silent. We will continue to speak up. We will defend the principles that made this country great. We will remember when we look at the green on the ground here that it represents the fields in which the original commoners met to fight for their rights. We will remember that this is the House of the common people—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I came in during the beginning of that speech and was not sure exactly what it had to do with the budget.

Could the member back it up a little and explain to us how this actually has anything to do with what we have been talking about? I did not want to miss the point and I want to make sure of that for hon. members who are confused like me.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay will know that the rules of relevance, as they relate to budget debates, are quite vast. We will allow the hon. member for Carleton to wrap up. There is just about one minute or so remaining before we need to interrupt for members' statements.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the hon. member, who missed the beginning of my speech, I will start over again at the very beginning.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you put aside the normal rules of decorum to allow the member to bring popcorn into the House of Commons, because I promise it is going to be one hell of a show.

The Speaker: I naturally urge the hon. member for Carleton to be judicious in his choice of words and not use words that would be considered unparliamentary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the minister of employment is rising on a very brief point of order, as it is time to go to members' statements.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I caught most of the member's speech but I recorded it all. To help him out, I am going to binge-watch it this summer. It is called "Game of Drones".

●(1400)

The Speaker: I think the hon. member for Carleton also enjoyed the humour of the hon. parliamentary secretary, but that was not a point of order.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MIRABEL EXPROPRIATIONS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago, 12,000 people were forced from their homes by the Canadian government so that it could build the disastrous Mirabel airport.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau scooped up prime farm land to pave it over. After expropriating land from 12,000 people, tearing down their homes and ruining their land, the same Pierre Elliott Trudeau authorized having air traffic bypass Montreal for Toronto, meaning that those farmers sacrificed their land for nothing.

Taxpayers shelled out \$500 million to expropriate land from families for an airport that Ottawa doomed to failure.

Yesterday, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously called on the Canadian government to officially apologize to the people of Mirabel who had their lands expropriated.

I am calling on the Prime Minister to acknowledge Quebec's request and apologize on behalf of Canada for the unnecessary harm caused to these 12,000 people.

* * *

PAUL-ANDRÉ MASSÉ

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with emotion that I pay tribute to a committed politician who touched the lives of many people in the riding of Saint-Jean.

Paul-André Massé passed away on March 17. Born in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Mr. Massé became a member of Parliament for the Liberal Party of Canada in 1979 and was re-elected in 1980. As a former member of the military, he proudly promoted Royal Military College Saint-Jean and the Saint-Jean Garrison.

Paul-André was a public official who served others in the interest of bettering society. Generous and dedicated, he was a tireless volunteer for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Centre des aînés johannais.

I wish to extend my sincere condolences to his family, relatives and friends. They will miss him, but they should know that his spirit and optimism will live on and continue to guide us.

Statements by Members

[English]

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 1, as we all know, is April Fool's Day. It has recently become something altogether different.

This year on April 1, gas prices across Canada went up due to the carbon tax. The carbon tax in British Columbia, already the highest in Canada, increased yet again with no rebate, punishing drivers to fund government pet projects. Many people in rural and remote communities simply do not have access to alternatives to their vehicles to get to work, school or medically necessary appointments.

Adding insult to injury, the B.C. government-owned monopoly, ICBC, raised auto insurance rates. Also, every year on April 1, the federal excise duty on beer, spirits and wine increases automatically, along with thousands of user fees instituted by this Liberal government. In my view, any tax increase should be presented as part of annual budget where it can be debated and voted on.

The bottom line is that April 1 is the day that leftist governments of all stripes have decided to make the cost of living more expensive. It has become the day that left-leaning governments decided to take taxpayers' money—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Don Valley East.

* * *

SHOOTINGS IN NEW ZEALAND

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly condemn the horrific slaughter of 50 Muslim men, women and children in Christchurch, New Zealand. This act of terrorism perpetrated by hate and ignorance tried to divide communities, but it has had the opposite effect. It brought diverse faith groups together in solidarity around the world.

As the chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I recently led a delegation on a bilateral visit to New Zealand. I convey my deepest condolences to the victims' families and to the people of New Zealand for this heinous attack.

I will end with a quote from Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise*:

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to talk about Jim. Jim is no stranger to parliamentarians. He sits each day on the bridge between the Château Laurier and Parliament Hill in every kind of weather: rain, hot sun or the brutal Ottawa winter, which often hits -30°. Jim always has a warm smile and a hearty greeting for everyone.

Jim lives on a fixed disability income that barely pays for his rent and food. The medication that he urgently needs to stay alive costs him \$580 each month. There is no way he could ever afford that, so he relies on the generosity of strangers to get through each month

because we have no pharmacare in this country. Every day the Prime Minister and Liberal cabinet ministers pass Jim in their limousines and they just do not seem to care.

There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians like Jim who are struggling to pay for their medication in the face of the Liberal betrayal on pharmacare. The leader of the NDP, like Tommy Douglas before him on medicare, will make sure Jim and countless others like him get the pharmacare they deserve.

* * *

● (1405)

SHELTER MOVERS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Shelter Movers is a national charity providing moving and storage services at no cost to survivors of domestic abuse.

Leaving abuse can be fraught with obstacles. Beyond the costs, logistical challenges and safety concerns, women fleeing violence face the prospect of losing everything they own. Returning is too dangerous.

Shelter Movers is the only service of its kind in Canada, working with community partners to fill a major gap in our social safety net. The organization has completed almost 800 moves to date and is on pace to perform move number 1,000 this year. Three hundred volunteers help up to nine families every week to move out of abusive homes in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver.

Now a national expansion is under way across urban and rural Canada, thanks to \$1 million in support from our Liberal government. I thank Shelter Movers volunteers for their compassion and service. Let us work together in the House to ensure their services are no longer needed.

* * *

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 2015, after my personal assistant, Nate Veltkamp, left my office to work at St. Clair College in the foreign student program, Adam Roffel joined our team to take his place.

Adam was a recent graduate of the University of Windsor, with a masters degree in history. I knew we had an excellent raw recruit to train. He quickly grew into the role of personal assistant, and for four years learned all about government services and constituency communications, as well as all the challenges of engaging and enlisting the help of a multitude of ministries and bureaucratic agencies for the benefit of the constituents of Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Statements by Members

Then last month he accepted a position with a local health integration network. We all want to wish Adam the very best in his new position with the LHIN, where I am convinced he will continue to flourish, grow and serve our community, as he did so well as the special assistant to the member of Parliament for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

* * *

LIUNA UNION MEMBER

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Italian Canadians have always been a key part of Canadian society for generations and helped to build this great country. That is why I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize a remarkable man by the name of Rocco Di Giovanni, who came to Canada in 1960.

A now retired construction worker who has been a LiUNA union member for over 57 years, Rocco has helped build subways, bridges and highways throughout the city of Toronto. He has contributed to a better way of life for his family and all of ours in Canada. I am truly blessed to know Rocco and to call him and his lovely wife Giovanna true friends.

It is stories such as Rocco's that show that Canada really is the best place to live. I thank Rocco for everything that he has done and continues to do to improve the lives of all Canadians.

* * *

INTERCULTURAL ONLINE HEALTH NETWORK

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to acknowledge the InterCultural Online Health Network, iCON, for its efforts in advancing the well-being of multicultural and indigenous communities in British Columbia.

Celebrating 10 years of service and partnership with the South Asian community, I was happy to attend a health forum for seniors and caregivers living with diabetes and hypertension. iCON has successfully brought together key stakeholders in health, such as the B.C. Ministry of Health and its health authorities, health care providers, patients and families. iCON has started a dialogue on health care issues to help educate communities with workshops and web-based resources.

I encourage the Minister of Health to connect with Dr. Cheema and Dr. Ho, iCON leaders, to explore how we can bring iCON to communities throughout the country.

* * *

MANITOBA COURT CHALLENGE

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I quote: "Ottawa cannot impose a carbon tax on a province that has a credible greenhouse gas-reduction plan of its own, and we do." Those were the words of Manitoba premier Brian Pallister yesterday as he announced that Manitoba would launch a court challenge to the newest Liberal tax scheme.

On April 1, the Liberal government's carbon tax came into effect. The tax has already raised the price of everything in our province.

Manitobans are paying more for fuel, more for groceries, more for home heating and more for everything.

My province is in good company, joining Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick to fight against this Liberal cash grab. Whether in eastern, western or central Canada, the Liberal carbon tax is hurting Canadian families. I applaud the Government of Manitoba and Premier Brian Pallister for doing what is right.

Conservatives look forward to forming government so that we can scrap the carbon tax and help all Canadians get ahead.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

LAKE MEMPHREMAGOG

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to restate my concerns about the water quality of Lake Memphremagog, which supplies drinking water to 175,000 people living primarily in Sherbrooke and Magog.

Coventry, Vermont, is home to a massive landfill very close to our lake. Last fall we learned that the American authorities had approved a 51-acre expansion to the site. I remind members that this landfill is seeping toxic tailings into the lake. The landfill limit will jump from 250,000 tons to 600,000 tons of waste per year for the next 22 years.

Elected officials at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, along with experts and residents on both sides of the border, are demanding that the project be halted and that more extensive studies be carried out. A number of environmentalists in Vermont even thanked Canadians for their commitment. I urge all levels of government and neighbouring municipalities to support this cause day in and day out.

Clean water is essential not only to our everyday lives, but also to the lives of our children and our—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges

* * *

VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES WINE EXPO

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past 16 years, people in my riding have been getting together at the Salon des vins to sample local and international wines. This fundraiser for the local hospital foundation helps ensure that future generations in our community will have access to the best possible services.

[English]

This year, citizens, wine enthusiasts and exhibitors will gather in Vaudreuil-Dorion to sample local and international wine, enjoy gastronomic delicacies and discover the talents of more than 30 exhibitors from our community, our country and beyond.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

As honorary president of the 2019 Salon des vins, I invite everyone in our community to join me, the organizers and the exhibitors on May 15 at the Vaudreuil-Dorion arena for an evening of tasting, discovery and good conversation, all for a good cause.

Cheers, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[English]

MANITOBA COURT CHALLENGE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my neighbours to the east in Manitoba for joining the legal fight against the Liberal carbon tax.

Since day one, Saskatchewan has opposed this tax, which has increased the cost of gas, groceries, home heating and much more.

Manitoba had a plan, but no, it was not good enough for the current Prime Minister and the seven Liberal MPs from the province of Manitoba.

The carbon tax is not about the environment; it is a tax grab by a cash-strapped government. Otherwise, the Liberals would not have negotiated the massive exemptions for Canada's largest emitters, who will now be able to pollute for free while the rest of us have to pay for their mistakes. The Liberal government is imposing punishing taxes on Canadians while calling it an environmental plan.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight the importance of budget 2019 for my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore.

As residents of a waterfront community, many of my constituents have shared with me their views on the importance of safeguarding the environment for future generations by making greener choices. Our government is taking real action by putting a price on pollution and putting money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians through the climate action incentive rebates. Our plan encourages businesses to innovate more and pollute less.

Budget 2019 invests in measures that will make it easier and more affordable for Canadians to contribute to a clean economy. They include incentives for zero-emission vehicles, creating a realistic option for more of us by reducing the costs of ownership by up to \$5,000; lower energy costs through programs like the new home retrofit program; and investments in infrastructure to build cleaner and healthier communities.

Budget 2019 is a real plan to fight climate change, grow our economy and help make life more affordable for Canadian families.

● (1415)

[Translation]

CLAUDE LEBLANC

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Claude LeBlanc, a great man from Sherbrooke who passed away recently. He was taken from us far too soon.

Mr. LeBlanc spent his whole life, right up to the very end, working to improve the quality of life of the people of Sherbrooke.

One of the projects that was very important to him in recent years was the installation of automated external defibrillators. It is estimated that 85% of cardiac arrests occur in places outside of hospital and that nearly 30% of those who are saved are under the age of 40. We also know that, if defibrillation is performed on a person within four minutes of going into cardiac arrest, that person has a 75% chance of survival.

There is no doubt that Claude's hard work and dedication saved the lives of many people in the Eastern Townships. He was very convincing. However, his mission is not complete. We must carry on because there is still a lot of work to be done.

As recently as two months ago, Claude and his partner, Dr. Wayne Smith, came to me with the idea of a law that would require the installation of defibrillators in federal buildings and federally regulated businesses.

I am therefore asking everyone here to consider this idea and to continue the work that was started by Mr. LeBlanc. That is what he would ask us to do if he were still with us today.

Thank you, Claude.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians struggle to make ends meet, the government chooses to make life even harder and more expensive.

On April 1, the Liberal carbon tax came into effect, making everyday essentials such as gas, home heating and groceries more expensive for all Canadians. This carbon tax will hit Canada's most vulnerable the hardest. Seniors on fixed incomes will see what little resources they have chipped away by higher costs for essentials, with many unable to afford the new prices.

With the increased cost of home heating and groceries, young families will struggle to save for their children's futures. Our farming communities, which rely on transportation and heavy machinery to harvest and get their product to Canadian dinner tables, will have to pay more and receive less for providing this vital service.

Only a Conservative government will help make life more affordable for all Canadians by scrapping the carbon tax.

*Oral Questions***NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In the post-World War II wasteland of Europe, the continent's weak democracies faced an existentialist threat from a military superpower with an expansionist Communist ideology and more battle-hardened divisions than all of western Europe combined.

In the postwar period, Louis St. Laurent and Lester B. Pearson determinedly advocated for a defensive transatlantic security organization which would ally countries with shared democratic values. In April of 1949, 12 countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, NATO established the principle of an expanding shield behind which nascent democracies would find security. Today, 29 countries are NATO members and 21 aspire to membership.

May NATO's defensive shield continue to expand, and in the words of Pearson, "promote the economic well-being of peoples to achieve social justice...on the side of peace and progress."

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been caught again, trying to deceive. On February 7, when he said the initial Globe and Mail story was false, he was not telling the truth.

Now we know that when he said the former attorney general never raised her valid concerns with him, he was misleading Canadians. Just yesterday, he accidentally admitted that on September 17, the former attorney general told him very directly to back off.

The Prime Minister cannot seem to keep his story straight. Is that because it is just not true?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear from the beginning that Canadians deserve to know and that is exactly why the Prime Minister provided an unprecedented waiver. He waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence.

The reason why the facts are all now on the table and why the public is able to see for itself is because the Prime Minister took that step. The committee confirmed through testimony that the rule of law was intact in Canada and that the rule of law was followed.

The Prime Minister recognizes that we can always strengthen our institutions and that is why he has taken additional measures.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 15, the Prime Minister said that if anyone thought he was doing anything wrong, then it was their responsibility to come forward, but he said that no one did.

Yesterday he admitted that this just was not true. The former attorney general warned him several times, including on September 17, not to politically interfere in the SNC prosecution, but he refused to listen. He fired her, and he continues to spread falsehoods.

Why will the Prime Minister not simply tell the truth about his interference in a criminal prosecution?

• (1420)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that there is an ongoing court case on this matter. We know that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating this matter. We know that the justice committee spent over five weeks on this matter.

We believe that Canadians deserve to know and that is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence. It is important to note that this is an unprecedented waiver. It has never been done in the history of our country. The Prime Minister recognizes that Canadians deserve to know, and that is exactly why all facts are now public. They are on the table.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us review the facts. The Prime Minister tried to politically interfere in a criminal prosecution. His former attorney general said no, so he fired her.

The truth comes out and he denies everything. The Prime Minister then shuts down the investigation and refuses the full waiver. A tape proves that the former attorney general has been telling the truth. The Prime Minister is furious, so he kicks the two women out of his caucus and runs a smear campaign against both of them.

It is time to end the cover-up. When will the Prime Minister tell the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the facts.

Justice committee members, members from all recognized parties in the House who sit on the justice committee, came together and set parameters when it came to these allegations to ensure that Canadians could hear about those allegations directly from witnesses. The Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence.

Even though at every step of the way the Conservatives, the opposition frankly, believed that these meetings would not take place, that witnesses would not appear and that cabinet confidence would not be waived, actually the committee met, witnesses appeared and confidence was waived, so Canadians themselves could see and hear.

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been misleading the House for more than eight weeks now. On February 7, he said that claims in this interference scandal involving him and his office were false. He denied everything and then changed his story every week. Yesterday in the House his memory magically came back to him and he ended up admitting that the former attorney general's concerns had been brought to his attention.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why he has such a hard time remembering the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians need to be able to hear it for themselves. That is why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence.

We know that members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights did their job. They decided to hear from witnesses. The witnesses came to testify. At every stage, the Conservatives said that these meetings would not happen, that the witnesses were not allowed to come, but that was not the case. Members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights called the witnesses. They did—

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

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians simply want the truth.

La Presse requested the Michael Wernick documents on November 1 and December 15. The department normally responds to these requests within 30 days. The newspaper was told that the documents would not be ready for 240 days. Coincidentally, that would be four weeks after the election.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, will he release the documents to the media and to Canadians, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence so that Canadians could hear the truth for themselves. Canadians can now see the facts, since they are now out in the open. The member himself said that the media asked a question and had received a response. He knows very well that they will receive the requested documents.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the member for Markham—Stouffville reminded us that this was about the fundamental principle of politicians interfering with the justice system. She said, “I chose the truth. I chose...principles that are so important to the future of our country. That’s more important than my political career.”

Could the Minister of Justice assure the House that he will not overrule the decision of the public prosecutions for the sake of a wealthy corporation?

• (1425)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House on a number of occasions, we are still in a period in which an appeal of

the judicial review decision is possible. Therefore, I will make no pronouncement on the situation with respect to a deferred prosecution agreement. Anything that I might say might be interpreted and have an impact on litigation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former president of the Treasury Board chose principles, truth and to do what is right for Canadians. The Prime Minister chose his rich friends and his own political interests.

Will the Liberals commit to respecting the fundamental principle of not interfering in criminal prosecutions?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House on a number of occasions, in particular when answering the questions of my Bloc Québécois friends, we are still in a period in which an appeal of the judicial review decision is possible. Therefore, I will make no pronouncement on this situation because it may have an impact on litigation.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers led the way when they created a hybrid public-private pharmacare plan, but the Liberals and the Conservatives abandoned the Quebec government. Due to Ottawa's failure to take action, 10% of Quebecers do not buy their medications because they are too expensive.

Will the Prime Minister undertake to help Quebec put in place a public and universal pharmacare plan?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canadians are proud of their health system, but that we can do better. That is why this past year we created the advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare. We asked the council to have a national conversation with Canadians. I received the interim report a month ago and I look forward to receiving the final report at the end of June.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not need any more studies; they need action. Too many Canadians are struggling to afford their much-needed medicine. I spoke to one young person who was more worried about his parents' spending on his medication than his own health. Canadians are asking for help.

The New Democrats' medication for all plan would put hundreds of dollars back into the pockets of families and ensure that affordable medication would be within reach of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister finally stand up to large drug and insurance companies and ensure that this program is enacted?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of their publicly funded health care system, one that is based on need and not on their ability to pay. However, we certainly recognize that we can do better.

That is why, last year, we launched the advisory council on the implementation of a national pharmacare program. Unlike the NDP, we choose to want to have a plan as we move forward with this very important initiative, which is very important for all Canadians. I received the council's interim report last month. I look forward to receiving its final report later on in June this year.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby not to be speaking when someone else has the floor. As much as we love to hear his voice, we would like to hear it when he has the floor.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Prime Minister said, “sunlight is the best disinfectant.” In 2019, he is blocking the former attorney general from sharing all the facts about his interference in a criminal prosecution, including what was said and done when he removed her from that position.

On February 7, he said that the claims that he, his staff and officials pressured her were “false”. On February 12, he said that no one, including her, raised any concerns. However, all the evidence shows otherwise.

Why will the Prime Minister not end the cover-up and tell Canadians the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Canadians can hear the truth is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence.

For Canadians watching, who might not recognize what kind of an essential step that was to having these documents be public, I would like to say that from the history of our country since Confederation, cabinet ministers are sworn by cabinet confidence, cabinet secrecy, so that whatever happens in cabinet stays in cabinet. To ensure that witnesses could appear and put this information into the public, the Prime Minister waived such measures. He waived cabinet confidence as well as solicitor-client privilege to make—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, but he has not fully waived confidentiality, and the Liberals have shut down two committee investigations and are withholding documents to a paper until after the next election. Top officials have resigned.

Yesterday in question period, the Prime Minister finally admitted that she did raise concerns with him directly in September and told him to back off. In fact, she and her staff did that at least nine separate times over four months. She told the Privy Council clerk that it was inappropriate to interfere with prosecutorial independence

14 times on the December 19 call alone, and Wernick said four times that the Prime Minister was firm.

The Prime Minister has caught himself in his own tangled web. He should tell the truth.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Canadians receive the truth, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege, as well as cabinet confidence. Members who sit on the justice committee set parameters when it came to these allegations. To ensure that Canadians could hear for themselves, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. That is why the facts are all on the table. They are all now public.

What is interesting is the Conservatives continue to ask for more information, but the information has become quite repetitive and they refuse to actually pay attention to it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to mislead Canadians. On February 7, he said that no one had ever raised concerns with him about his political interference aimed at helping the engineering firm avoid a criminal trial. Yesterday, however, he finally admitted to the House of Commons that he had in fact heard the concerns raised by the former attorney general. I am not allowed to call the Prime Minister a liar in the House, but Canadians may be thinking it.

Why did he mislead Canadians?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles knows that he cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly. I advise him to choose his words carefully.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians deserve to know the truth. The justice committee did its work. The Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence so that Canadians could hear the truth. Witnesses testified in committee for five weeks. All the facts are now public. We know that the Conservatives do not want to hear the facts, but the facts are on the table. Canadians can decide for themselves.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Leader of the Government's job is to say the same thing day after day, but solicitor-client privilege was limited, and the committee refused to call the witnesses that the opposition wanted to hear from. Nobody on that side of the House wanted to shed light on what happened and expose the truth.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister himself said the former attorney general told the truth. Two upstanding ministers were fired in an attempt to protect the Prime Minister's image. Canadians know exactly what the government and the Prime Minister are up to.

Why did he mislead Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at every opportunity, every day in question period, Conservative members ask the same question, yet they do not understand why I give the same answer. If they ask me the same question, they are going to get the same answer because the truth is the truth.

Ensuring that Canadians hear the truth is the very reason the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

It is also clear that the Conservatives are still doing indirectly what they cannot do directly, and we must—

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in February, the Prime Minister went on TV and said that if only the former attorney general had told him that she was feeling undue pressure to intervene in ongoing criminal proceedings, he would have taken action. Yesterday, the Prime Minister admitted in the House that the former attorney general had in fact raised her concerns about his political interference with him, directly and in person.

Why did the Prime Minister mislead Canadians about that meeting for weeks? Why does he always experience it differently when it comes to telling the truth?

• (1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to make sure that Canadians know, that is why the committee had meetings in public. That is also why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence.

The Conservatives know very well when it comes to misleading, because that is what they continue to do day after day in the House. It is important that they listen attentively to the words that are coming out of witness testimony. Witness testimony confirmed that the rule of law was followed, that the rule of law in Canada is intact and that it was followed at every step. We recognize that we can always improve and strengthen our institutions. We will continue to work—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask hon. members for respect for the House and for other members and to listen when someone else has the floor whether they are asking a question or answering it.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the SNC-Lavalin story broke, the Prime Minister dismissed it as a fabrication, but we now know that it was the Prime Minister's story that he was unaware of the former attorney general's concerns about his political interference that was the fabrication. We know that because he admitted in the House yesterday that he had been warned in person by the former attorney general way back in September that his actions on this file were inappropriate.

Fabricator, fabricator, pants on fire. Why can the Prime Minister not tell the truth?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. First of all, I would ask the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope to be judicious in his choice of words.

Second, members should avoid characterizing other members negatively. They should reflect on decisions, on actions, etc., but not on individual members on either side.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that Conservative members came to their conclusion prior to the justice committee even meeting. The Conservatives recognize that there is an ongoing investigation when it comes to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The Conservatives also know that there is an ongoing court case.

What is clear to the rest of us in the House is that the member for Carleton is on his fourth day of the budget debate and nobody else can speak in the House if the Conservatives have the floor. They have been up multiple times and it is not appropriate if someone has the floor that they not be able to hear, yet when I have the floor they will always try to speak louder.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Markham—Stouffville was very sincere this morning. She said that she had chosen the truth and the principles that are so important to the future of our country.

She paid dearly for her choices. She was kicked out of the Liberal caucus by this Prime Minister because she did not agree with the political interference in our justice system. She chose integrity and truth instead of bowing to pressure from the Prime Minister.

Why did the Prime Minister choose to punish a member of Parliament who truly did the right thing?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to hear the facts for themselves, which is exactly why the facts are now out in the open. This is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

I think it is important to respect our institutions. I will choose to respect our institutions. I have faith in our institutions, and I know that they work well.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office is running its daily smear and leak campaign against the two women cabinet ministers who stood up for the rule of law, but yesterday in the House women from across Canada turned their backs on the Prime Minister to show their repugnance with his behaviour.

The member for Markham—Stouffville stated, "I chose the truth. I chose to act on principles that are so important to the future of our country. That's more important than my political career."

What did the Prime Minister choose? He chose a get out of jail card for corporate corruption. Does he not see how morally adrift he has become in this scandal?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague already answered that question.

Yesterday when these seats were filled by 338 young women from across the country, we were able to see what is possible when the federal government steps in and invests in creating spaces and opportunities for young women to take their rightful seats in positions of power and influence.

I thank the Daughters of the Vote for their courage and effective advocacy. We will continue to engage with equal voice to ensure their efforts are sustainable, and maybe next time the NDP will support this initiative by voting in favour of it.

• (1440)

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Abbotsford not to speak when someone else has the floor, as I am sure he wants to hear from the next member on this side. I am sure he knows that each side gets their chance to have their say. I know he wants to hear now from the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader seems very convinced that the Conservatives had arrived at a conclusion before the investigation began, but it is Liberal members who called it a witch hunt. It is Liberal members who called it a fishing expedition.

Twice the Prime Minister has been caught misleading Canadians. First, he said the story about political interference in SNC-Lavalin was false. Clearly, that is not true. Then he said that no one came forward to him with concerns about interference with SNC, but yesterday, he admitted to hearing the concerns raised by the former attorney general. He caught himself in his own trap. Why will—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

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

What is clear is that the Conservatives will continue to focus on us, but we will continue to focus on Canadians. We will continue to have respect for our institutions. We know that the justice committee did important work. We know that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating this matter and we know that there is an ongoing court case.

We on this side respect our institutions. We do not undermine them like the Conservatives do and did under 10 years under Stephen Harper.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think if the current government members were actually focused on Canadians, they would be telling the truth and being transparent. We know that the Prime Minister has been caught misleading Canadians twice. First, he told Canadians that the SNC-Lavalin story was false. That was not true. Yesterday, he admitted to

hearing the concern raised by the former attorney general on September 17.

Instead of fabricating more falsehoods or showing the door to anyone who dares to tell the truth, why will the Prime Minister not just tell the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Canadians can hear the truth for themselves is exactly why the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence. These meetings took place in public so that Canadians could hear and decide for themselves.

For anyone who actually listened to the witness testimony, they would have heard that the rule of law in Canada was followed and that the rule of law is intact in Canada. However, we recognize that we can always strengthen our institutions and that is why the Prime Minister has taken additional steps. The Prime Minister has also stated that he should have directly spoken with the minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all parents teach their children that they must always tell the truth or else sooner or later they will get tangled up in their lies. That is exactly what has happened to the Prime Minister over the past eight months.

For eight months, the Prime Minister has not told Canadians the truth. In February, he said that no one had expressed concerns about interference in the SNC-Lavalin case. Then yesterday he finally acknowledged that the former attorney general had shared her concerns with him on September 17.

When will the Prime Minister stand up and tell Canadians the truth?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Canadians heard the truth for themselves, the Prime Minister waived solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence.

Parents also tell their children to respect the rules and institutions and to have a climate plant that will help future generations. The Conservatives have no respect and no plan.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is why greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 2.2% under our government. That is the Conservative track record, and we are very proud of it. Respecting institutions mainly involves preventing partisan politics from interfering in the judicial process. That is exactly what these people did in the SNC-Lavalin case. The Conservatives need to be re-elected. Why? Because the Liberals are inserting partisan politics into the justice system.

When will the Prime Minister stand up and tell Canadians the truth?

Oral Questions

●(1445)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that Stephen Harper's Conservative government did was withdraw from the Kyoto protocol. Canadians are well aware of that.

Today, the member will continue to talk. I listened to his question, but he will never listen to the answer. Now, he is going to talk about why Ontario has been so successful. Ontario achieved good environmental results because the Ontario provincial government made decisions. However, neither the federal nor the provincial Conservatives will do that.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, students from Nelson recently participated in a climate change strike and Ktunaxa students in grades five and six from the ?aq'am reserve wrote me passionate letters warning about climate change.

It is clear my constituents from Kootenay—Columbia and Canadians from across the country want immediate action, but the Liberal government is failing them. The Liberals' budget continues fossil fuel subsidies, which limit our ability to transition to a low-carbon economy before it is too late. We have fewer than 12 years to act.

When will the government end fossil fuel subsidies and help workers transition to the green jobs of the future?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the question and more importantly, his continued advocacy for climate change.

In particular, I would like to thank the young people who march all across Canada and around the world to support climate action. At this time in our history, it is hard to imagine anything more important. I am pleased to share that last week we commenced a consultation with Canadians to identify inefficient non-tax fossil fuel subsidies that we can phase out. In addition, our plan includes over 50 measures that are going to help implement climate action in Canada, including putting a price on pollution, ensuring 90% of our electricity is generated from clean resources and a number of other measures. This is what real action looks like.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs shortened its psychological questionnaire, which is filled out by mental health providers. The changes resulted in the removal of questions that allow health professionals to ensure a proper diagnosis of PTSD. Without it, veterans will not qualify for the support they are entitled to and desperately need. What is shocking is that the minister ignored his own mental health advisory panel that deals with these very issues.

Will the minister listen to these health providers and ensure that veterans get the proper support they require?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the well-being of our veterans is our number one priority, and our government is committed to moving forward on mental health. We have opened a centre of excellence on post-traumatic stress disorder, and Veterans Affairs Canada is working with more than 4,000 health professionals. It is also important to note that, thanks to the streamlined process we have put in place, the current approval rate is 97%. The opposition had 10 years to provide mental health support to veterans, but it was too busy axing essential services and trying to balance the budget at the expense of veterans.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last federal budget, the government promised to invest \$300 million to increase the number of zero-emission vehicles.

Given that the transportation sector accounts for 23% of our greenhouse gas emissions, could the minister tell us more about this new commitment?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a great question, and I want to thank the member for Alfred-Pellan for doing such a terrific job for the people of Laval.

Yes, we want to reduce greenhouse gases by making zero-emission vehicles more affordable and more readily available. That is why we are very proud to announce an incentive of up to \$5,000 for vehicles with a retail price of less than \$45,000. Unlike Stephen Harper's Conservatives, who have no plan for dealing with climate change and do not seem to care about their children and grandchildren, we actually do have a plan, and today's announcement is great news.

* * *

●(1450)

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the judicial appointment process for the Supreme Court of Canada is very strict and, more importantly, confidential. People involved in the process adhere to very strict confidentiality agreements not to disclose any information about the process or the potential candidates. The reputation of eminent jurists in Canada is at stake.

The leak of confidential information about the potential appointment of Justice Joyal is completely unacceptable.

We want to know who disclosed the information.

Oral Questions

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I met with chief justices from across Canada. I assured them that the judicial appointment process was of a very high standard.

I am concerned by the release of this information. As Minister of Justice, I will ensure that this does not happen again. In future, we will continue to have an appointment process of the highest quality.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have demonstrated their complete contempt for the rule of law. In another shocking display, they have attacked the independence of the judiciary by leaking highly confidential information about a respected jurist and his application to sit on the Supreme Court, all part of a desperate effort to change the channel on the Prime Minister's corruption.

Who leaked the information?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I met with the chief justices of Canada this morning, and I assured them that our process for naming high-quality judges to the Supreme Court of Canada will continue.

I have said that I am deeply troubled by the publication of these details, but our nomination process will remain merit-based and will consider Canada's finest jurists for this lofty position.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer is an absolute insult to Canadians. It is no coincidence that the leak occurred on the eve of the release of damning evidence submitted by the former attorney general to the justice committee. It was a clear attempt to undermine the credibility of the former attorney general, and it demonstrates that the Prime Minister will go to no end to obstruct justice.

Again, who leaked the information? Was it Gerry Butts?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is unfair for parties to see their names and their information used as weapons in this kind of debate for political reasons. We have said that, and we have expressed our concern about this situation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise. I know members want to hear both the questions and the answers. We need to respect the right of other members to have their say. In fact, it is vital in this place that members, when they have the floor, are able to speak. Members ought to respect that and recognize the importance of that in a democracy.

The hon. Minister of Justice has the floor.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the integrity of the process demands confidentiality. Moving forward, we will continue to ensure that our nomination process for the Supreme Court of Canada, as well as for other courts, remains of the very highest quality to get the very best appointments.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these leaks had to come from somebody very close to the Prime Minister. The Liberal government's corrupt practices know no

bounds. It did not hesitate to drag the good name of Manitoba's chief justice through the mud.

The justice minister, in his own words, said, "I am concerned by the publication of details of the most recent Supreme Court justice selection. The integrity of our process depends on confidentiality...in the administration of justice."

If the justice minister believes his own words, why has he not started an investigation into these leaks?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the party opposite had any respect for the Supreme Court of Canada, it would not have attacked a sitting Supreme Court justice and appointed a candidate who had been reversed by the court.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, A&L Hammer is being investigated by the IRCC for human trafficking. The victim, Roger Demoto, is a key witness in this case. He was scheduled to give evidence to the IRCC yesterday, but instead, the CBSA detained him and wants to deport him. It is absurd that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

We must do everything we can to combat human trafficking. Urgent action is required. Will the Minister of Immigration work with public safety to stay the deportation to avert this travesty of justice?

• (1455)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member well knows that I cannot get into the specifics of an individual case. However, I commit to working with her on any issues of concern she has, on this or any other case, in her capacity to advocate on issues of concern to her.

What I can say is this. Every case that comes before my department is looked at based on its merits, and no decision is made on removal, especially after exhausting numerous avenues of appeal. That is the law in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Netflix saga shows no sign of ending. First came the tax breaks, and now the Liberal government is giving in to Netflix's demands without even requiring the American giant to produce French-language content. This is an assault on the language rights of francophones across the country, an assault we must condemn. It may not be Netflix's job to promote official languages, but it is the government's duty to protect them.

When will the government take its job seriously and demand that Netflix produce an appropriate amount of French content?

Oral Questions

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages made it clear that our government is fulfilling all of its official language obligations.

We have always protected French, and we will continue to do so. Francophones across the country know that we are investing more in our official languages than ever before.

While the NDP busies itself with petty politics, we are busy modernizing our laws.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister fired the former attorney general to cover up his political interference over SNC, and he has hired powerful lawyers, at the taxpayers' expense, to protect himself, Katie Telford, Gerald Butts, Michael Wernick, Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques in a potential RCMP investigation, yet the Prime Minister refuses to do the same for Admiral Mark Norman. Why will he not pay for the admiral's legal fees and ensure a fair defence? Why is there one set of rules for Liberals and another set of rules for everyone else?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rules for counsel in all cases are set by the department and apply to all members of Parliament and other people who work in the departments.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a double standard. The legal fees incurred by the Prime Minister and his office for trying to interfere in a criminal case will be covered, while a senior officer, a vice-admiral who wanted to protect the Royal Canadian Navy and, by extension, jobs in Quebec, gets dragged through the mud by the Prime Minister. The vice-admiral's reputation has been tarnished and he will not get reimbursed one cent by the government for his defence.

Why the double standard? Why not stand up for justice and those who stand up for it?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that General Norman has excellent legal representation. I can assure the House that the Department of Justice is co-operating in this case and providing the necessary documents.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals involved in the SNC scandal have retained lawyers at the public expense. I am informing taxpayers that they are paying for the Prime Minister, Gerry Butts, Katie Telford, Michael Wernick, Mathieu Bouchard, Elder Marques and the present justice minister. Do members know who is not having his legal fees covered in a politically sensitive matter? Admiral Mark Norman.

Since the justice minister is in a conflict, my question is for the defence minister. Why do the Lav-scam Liberals get their fees covered, and a 30-year veteran is left out to dry?

• (1500)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rules for the retention of counsel for members of Parliament and for other officers of the government are well known. I do know that Admiral Norman has very able legal representation, as is always the case for persons in the private sector.

I can assure Canadians that the justice department is co-operating with all requests in this case for documentation.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, women's organizations provide vital services, supporting women and girls to be financially secure, to be free from violence, and to be fully able to participate in the economy and society.

In my riding and across Canada, there is increasing demand for their services, yet these organizations struggle to keep their doors open after a decade of neglect by the Harper Conservatives.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality please update this House on what the government has been doing to support these organizations and the women they serve?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills for her strong and courageous leadership and for her important question.

We know that the most effective way to advance gender equality is by investing in women's organizations. The Conservatives undermined, underestimated and underfunded women's organizations and muzzled them so they would not be able to advocate for women's rights.

Our government has made the single largest investment in the sustainability of women's organizations so that over 250 of them could keep their doors open, keep their lights on, and continue to save and transform lives.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Again I ask members to show respect when other members have the floor and are speaking. Order.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last December, the foreign affairs minister stated:

We're seeing a lot of countries around the world that are starting to play fast and loose with...rule of law.

The minister promised:

Canada is not going to be one of those countries.

Oral Questions

That promise came three months into the Prime Minister's incessant campaign to corrupt the rule of law to help a corrupt corporation avoid criminal justice. Does the Prime Minister not owe that minister, as well the former attorney general and all Canadians, an apology and a resignation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated on numerous occasions, when it comes to respecting our institutions, when it comes to respecting the law, that is exactly what we will do. We are here to ensure that we do respect the rules, and that is why oftentimes it is the Conservatives who are being called out by the Speaker, because they always manage to find a way to break them.

We know that not only has the rule of law been followed, we can always improve our institutions and strengthen our institutions. We know that is what Canadians expect, and that is what we will continue to fight hard for. The Conservatives will stay focused on rhetoric and shenanigans. We will stay focused on Canadians so that we can deliver for them.

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[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned on Friday that the Minister of Transport, who has a history of very quietly announcing questionable decisions, did not re-appoint Mr. Desjardins-Siciliano as head of VIA Rail. Mr. Desjardins-Siciliano had a strong record and set the stage for the high-frequency train, but the government thought that a change in leadership was the right thing to do. Furthermore, the Liberals' recent budget made no reference to the high-frequency train, even though an announcement by the minister was promised.

Is the Minister of Transportation disavowing VIA Rail's vision of development?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a habit of kicking in doors that are already open. We thank Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, who did excellent work for five years. He did a great job and I thanked him personally. Cynthia Garneau will now be replacing him, and I am sure that she will guide us into the future with her vision to replace VIA Rail trains and work on the high-frequency train.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout our national dialogue on the country's energy future, generation energy, Canadians have told us that inclusiveness is a foundational principle of success, and across this great country, stakeholders who have contributed have made it clear that the time to act is right now. Indeed, putting gender equality at the heart of a global transition to a clean energy future is the key to achieving success.

Would the Minister of Natural Resources please update this House on the initiatives that have been taken to ensure that progress

towards equality for women in the clean energy sector by 2030 is successful?

● (1505)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for South Surrey—White Rock for his hard work. Yesterday, this chamber was full of bright young women from across our country. Whether it is Parliament or our natural resources sector, we all must do our part to close the gender gap. That is why we launched Equal by 30. Countries, companies and organizations around the world are joining us as we work toward equal pay, equal leadership and equal opportunity for women in the world in the energy sector by 2030.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear that there was an attempt to obstruct justice by the Prime Minister and his operatives in the SNC-Lavalin scandal. Let us recap how we got here.

After the Prime Minister initially called the allegations false, they were found to be true. They were so true, in fact, that they cost Gerald Butts his job, Michael Wernick his job and two former cabinet ministers their place in caucus. They left our great country with a government and a Prime Minister that cannot be redeemed but can only be replaced.

How come every time Liberals form government, a culture of corruption and entitlement follows?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question on numerous occasions. We know there were five weeks of meetings for the justice committee. We know the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is studying this matter and we know there is an ongoing court case. We know all information is public so that Canadians can decide.

Let me share something else. For three and a half years now this government has been in office and we have seen almost 300,000 children lifted out of poverty. We have seen over 800,000 Canadians lifted out of poverty. We have the lowest unemployment rate in our lifetime. Canadians have created over 900,000 jobs. Conservatives could not do a fraction of that in 10 years.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago, Quebec was thinking about religious neutrality as part of the Bouchard-Taylor commission. Six years ago, Quebec was debating secularism following the introduction of the Quebec charter of values. Those passionate and necessary debates led to the introduction of Bill 21 on secularism last week. Today, Ottawa wants to prevent us from resolving that issue.

Why is the government trying to prevent Quebecers from setting guidelines to protect the religious neutrality of the Quebec state?

Business of the House

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always defended the fundamental rights of Canadians, 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, the secularism of the Quebec state falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and Quebec alone. It is not up to Ottawa, which is out of touch with Quebecers' priorities, to decide what is good or bad for Quebec.

The Minister of Justice refuses to give any assurances that he will not challenge Bill 21 before the courts. However, Quebecers elected the current government, their government, because they wanted to resolve this issue once and for all.

Will the Minister of Justice finally commit to respecting the will of Quebecers, yes or no?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a secular country. That is reflected in all our institutions. Government employees have the right to display their faith, and no one should have to choose between a job and the right to wear a religious symbol. We all have a responsibility to protect fundamental rights. Any initiative that erodes those rights is unacceptable. Canada is open, inclusive and enriched by its diversity.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week gas prices went up in the four provinces where the government imposed its carbon tax. It was reported this morning that the environment minister is also preparing to release new regulations that will push up gas prices even more.

Why does the minister falsely claim that she is making life more affordable for Canadians, when she keeps adding taxes and costly regulation?

• (1510)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is real and the cost of inaction is simply too great to ignore. I am beginning to get sick of politicians on the right side of the spectrum denying this truth. I see them stand up and say that CO₂ is plant food and not pollution. It is time we take action. Our government is putting a price on pollution and investing in public transit, and 90% of our electricity will be generated from green resources by 2030.

The member for Beauce is at least honest enough to say that his plan is to do nothing. I would invite the Conservatives to be similarly honest with themselves.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. All members of the House of Commons want the truth. Therefore, you will undoubtedly find the unanimous consent of the House for the tabling of a Natural Resources Canada document concerning greenhouse gas emissions, which indicates that, between 2005 and 2015, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector decreased 2.2% while GDP grew by 16.9%.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order arising from Question Period, in my question, which was directed specifically to the Minister of National Defence, related to a government policy in respect to covering legal fees for senior government officials, I specifically addressed the Minister of National Defence, following the fact that the Minister of Justice had indicated that each department is responsible for their own decisions on legal things.

The minister answered that question, but he is also in a conflict. I would like—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. That sounds like debate. I do not see any minister rising to respond.

I believe the hon. opposition House leader has the usual Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the usual Thursday question.

I know that this has been quite a good week, where we have had some excellent comments and excellent debate, spearheaded by the hon. member for Carleton. We would very much enjoy that continuing because of the important discussions that have gone on. I would be interested in hearing from the government and I think my hon. colleague is about halfway through his speech.

I wonder if the government can tell us what business we will be continuing on this week and next week when we return.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking a different approach, where we actually believe that many members should be able to stand up and represent the voices of their constituents, regardless of their political stripe. However, we see that the Conservatives have continued their shenanigans of having one member speak over four days. Luckily, that is about to come to an end. This afternoon, we will continue hearing from the member for Carleton, as we have the final day on the budget, which confirms that they like repetition.

Tomorrow, we will have the first allotted day of the current supply period.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

At noon on Monday, we will start the second reading debate on Bill C-93 concerning cannabis and record suspensions.

In the afternoon, we will have the vote on the ways and means motion moved earlier this morning by the Minister of Finance.

On Tuesday, we will resume consideration at second reading stage of Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.

On Wednesday, we will begin debate at second reading stage of the 2019 budget implementation bill.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO MINISTER OF JUSTICE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order, please. I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 18, 2019, by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, regarding allegedly misleading statements by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary.

In his intervention, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby accused the Minister of Justice and Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary of deliberately misleading the House by repeatedly denying accusations of political interference by the Prime Minister's Office in the work of the former minister of justice and attorney general.

[Translation]

As proof, the member cited certain answers provided by the minister during question period on February 7 and by the parliamentary secretary on February 8, where it was argued that at no point was either the current or former justice minister pressured or directed by the Prime Minister or anyone in the Prime Minister's Office to make a decision on this or any other matter.

[English]

These answers, he contended, are contradictory to the testimonies given before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on February 27 by the former minister of justice and attorney general, the member for Vancouver Granville, and on March 6 by Gerald Butts, as well as a statement made to the media by the Prime Minister on March 7.

He concluded that:

All parties involved, specifically the former attorney general, the current Attorney General, the Prime Minister's former principal secretary and, especially, the Prime Minister himself admit that there was pressure placed on the hon. member for Vancouver Granville in her former role.

[Translation]

While he acknowledged that accusations of misleading the House are usually found to be disagreements as to the facts, he argued that the two versions of events presented amount to a breach of the privileges of the House.

As I mentioned in my ruling on January 29, 2019, which can be found at page 25018 of Debates:

The charge of misleading the House is always regarded by the Chair as a most serious one for it touches not only on the technical aspects of the charge but also the integrity of the member.

[English]

This, in large part, explains the rigorous burden of proof required to reach the conclusion of a member misleading the House. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 85, describes this proof as threefold, stating:

...one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

[Translation]

When questions of privilege are raised which involve a charge of a member having deliberately misled the House, essentially the Speaker is being asked to pass judgment on statements made; in this particular case, it is the answers of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General and his parliamentary secretary to oral questions.

Members, of course, are well versed in the limited authority of the Chair in this respect. The Speaker is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions.

[English]

However, as has been suggested, it is also true that exceptional circumstances could exist whereby, with proper evidence, a determination could be made that certain statements made to the House breached its privileges.

After thorough study, the Chair cannot find that the statements in question were misleading, made with the knowledge that they were incorrect and made with the intent of misleading the House. Accordingly, the Chair is unable to conclude that this matter constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

I want to thank all hon. members for their attention.

PROCEEDINGS ON OPPOSED VOTE NO. 126—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised during the sitting of March 20, 2019, by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, concerning the validity of the vote on Motion No. 126 under the opposed votes of the interim estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

[Translation]

In considering this question of privilege, I have noted the point of view of the House Leader of the Official Opposition and the members for Chilliwack—Hope and Calgary Rocky Ridge. I also thank other members who spoke on this matter.

[English]

In his intervention, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby correctly points out that a point of order was raised with respect to the inability of members to hear the question that was put to the House. After listening to the point of order, the Chair began reading the question anew and the House proceeded with the vote on Motion No. 126.

The issue identified by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby was that many members were allegedly still entering the chamber when the Chair was reading the motion the first time. The member contended that the voting by some members who had arrived after the Chair had begun reading the question breached the rules and practices of the House. As consequence, there was some doubt about the integrity of the vote.

[Translation]

On April 1, 2019, the House Leader of the Official Opposition agreed, arguing that, as many members had entered the House after the question had been put the first time, without admitting as much, this amounted to interference in our proceedings and a contempt of the House.

The right to vote in a recorded decision is one of the most significant rights members have in this House. As recently as February 21, 2019, I was called upon to rule on a similar matter, where I reaffirmed this, at page 25018 of Debates, stating:

The right of all members to vote is fundamental. This cannot be overstated. It is through voting that members participate in making the decisions of this House. As Speaker, I am entrusted with protecting this right that belongs to all members.

[English]

To perform their parliamentary functions, such as voting, members must trust that they can carry out these functions without interference and in the manner prescribed by our rules and practices. Relevant to the matter at hand is Standing Order 16(1), which states:

When the Speaker is putting a question, no Member shall enter, walk out of or across the House, or make any noise or disturbance.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, at page 588, also tells us that:

Members must be in the Chamber to hear the motion read and be in their assigned seats during the division in order for their votes to be recorded. Any Member entering the Chamber while the question is being put or after it has been put cannot have his or her vote counted. Members must remain seated until the result is announced by the Clerk.

As the Chair has said on many occasions, to be allowed to vote, members must be in the chamber so that they hear the question. The Chair said as much when the vote on Motion No. 126 took place. The logic of this is inescapable. Simply put, members are expected to make an informed decision.

[Translation]

Recorded votes usually proceed in an orderly fashion with the Chair finishing the reading of the question without interruption once started, followed by the other steps of the voting process. However, there are situations when the Chair must adjust slightly the application of this in response to unforeseen circumstances. Interrupted by a point of order on the vote in question during the sitting of March 20, the Chair did just that after it was made aware that there had been audio difficulties. Given the importance of members hearing the question, the reading of the question was restarted and read in its entirety for the members present. With respect to the circumstances surrounding the vote on Motion No. 126, the Chair rendered a ruling that applied to that particular division.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

The votes held during the sitting of March 20 were somewhat exceptional. They can justly be described as a marathon of votes. Voting continuously and successively on over 250 motions for more than 30 hours, the movement of members in and out of the House was naturally and understandably more frequent. As Speaker, I can assure the House that this did not alter the expected applicability of and respect for the rules and practices of voting.

However, it is the uncertainty of the right of some of the members who voted on Motion No. 126 that is the crux of this matter. At the suggestion of some members, I reviewed the relevant video footage. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine from this if or when exactly each member entered or exited the Chamber and I have been informed that no other relevant video footage exists that would further the Chair's understanding of this situation.

[Translation]

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby, for his part, is turning to the Chair to confirm who of the members did not hear the question, whatever the circumstances of the moment during a vote, this is not a power conferred upon the Chair. This is a reality that all members can most assuredly appreciate.

The responsibility for determining who can or cannot vote rests solely with each and every member. Bosc and Gagnon indicates at page 588:

...if a Member's presence is disputed and the Member in question asserts that he or she was present when the motion was read, convention prescribes that the House accept the Member's word.

[English]

It falls on each member individually to know, and to make known, if their vote should be counted or not. The Chair cannot be expected to police the House or to know at all times exactly who was present or not when a motion put to the House is read. Rather, the Chair must rely on all members to ensure that, when they stand and vote in this House, they have heard the question on which they are pronouncing themselves. In fact, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby noted that, for Motion No. 126, some members abstained, while others voted or withdrew their votes which should not have counted.

As for the recorded division on Motion No. 126, the results of the vote stand and, as Speaker, I cannot conclude that this matter constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

* * *

● (1525)

POINTS OF ORDER

BUDGET DOCUMENTS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on March 19, 2019, by the honourable member for Wellington—Halton Hills, concerning the tabling of the budget 2019 documents by the Minister of Finance.

The Budget

In raising the matter, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills explained the long-standing parliamentary convention that the budget is not made public before the Minister of Finance presents it to the House and usually not before North American equity markets close. As his point of order, he questioned whether the minister broke the convention on March 19 when he tabled the budget documents in the House before 4 p.m., making them public while an embargo was still in effect.

[Translation]

In response, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader contended that the budget 2019 documents had been tabled in accordance with the rules.

[English]

With respect to a minister's latitude to table documents, Standing Order 32(2) states:

A Minister of the Crown, or a Parliamentary Secretary acting on behalf of a Minister, may, in his or her place in the House, state that he or she proposes to lay upon the Table of the House, any report or other paper dealing with a matter coming within the administrative responsibilities of the government, and, thereupon, the same shall be deemed for all purposes to have been laid before the House.

[Translation]

Although the tabling of documents pursuant to this standing order most often takes place during routine proceedings, it is not limited to that time. This is confirmed by the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 445:

Practices for tabling documents allow a Minister to table a document at any time in a sitting....

Neither a budget presentation nor a budget lock-up has a procedural effect or bearing on this rule.

[English]

As members will recall, the business scheduled for March 19 was somewhat unusual in that a deferred recorded division was scheduled to begin only minutes prior to the time the Minister of Finance was set to present his budget. As it happened, the minister tabled the budget documents before 4 p.m., at 3:52 p.m. In doing this the minister seemed to acknowledge that he was not following the convention, but he expressed his confidence that "members will be judicious with their privileges before 4 p.m."

In conclusion, while there was a departure from usual practice with respect to the tabling of the budget documents, there is no point of order.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[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, it is an honour to rise again and continue my remarks on the cover-up budget 2019. When I stood at the outset of this debate on Monday, I said that I would be delighted to cede the floor at any time if only a member of the government, speaking with the authority of the Prime Minister, would enter this chamber and say definitively that the government was prepared to have a full ethics committee investigation into the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal and subsequent cover-up.

I said that the investigation would have to include sworn testimony from all of those alleged to have interfered with former attorney general's role in the matter of SNC-Lavalin. I told the House that I would cede the floor immediately upon receiving such a binding offer and that Conservative members would accept it and an investigation would go ahead.

Allow me to provide some background to the House as to why I made that original offer. Members will recall the origins of this scandal happened in the budget of 2018, when the finance minister presented an omnibus bill to implement his budget measures and buried within it was an amendment to the Criminal Code creating a new mechanism to offer deals to accused corporate criminals that would allow them to avoid criminal prosecution for such serious offences as bribery, fraud and corruption.

● (1530)

At the time, members of the finance committee were astonished to find such a measure contained in a budget bill. It is extremely unusual for budget legislation to amend the Criminal Code. In fact, it may even be unprecedented.

The Liberal member for Hull—Aylmer said that he did not think it was right. The chairman of the committee, an ardent, partisan and committed Liberal, said that the measure did not belong in a budget bill. The Liberal member for Hull—Aylmer made further comment based on his reading of the Criminal Code amendment that the finance minister had put in the budget bill. He said, "if I steal \$10, I'm in trouble, but if I steal \$10 million, I can work this out."

What struck us in that moment was this question. Who was asking for this? I remember looking over at the member from the Okanagan, a Conservative who has been listening carefully today. He raised the concern that this should not be included in a budget bill. He believed it should be separate legislation that carefully studied the widely known consequences before it became law.

However, the government was determined to push ahead, with as little scrutiny as humanly possible. We all went home late that night with the mystery of who was driving this agenda.

When we go out to our communities, all of us talk to people about their concerns. We hear people say that they are worried about the cost of living, or health care wait times for their families and or safety in their streets. No matter the topic, we hear about it.

However, none of us heard that there was a need to amend the Criminal Code so that corporate criminals could get let off without conviction. That has never come up at any of the events I have attended, the hundreds if not thousands of them, since I was elected almost a decade and a half ago.

The Budget

Somebody had to be driving this agenda, somebody powerful and influential enough to convince both the Prime Minister and the finance minister that such a Criminal Code amendment was needed.

A nagging part of me wondered whether the former attorney general did not like this Criminal Code amendment, as she would have normally been the person to introduce it. At the time, she was also the justice minister. While she was bound by cabinet solidarity and was thereby required to publicly support initiatives that the cabinet had decided upon, it was extremely unusual for her not to be the sponsoring minister for legislation changing the Criminal Code, a statute for which the justice minister has the carriage.

However, the bill passed and it became law. It would not be until February of this year that we would find out who was driving the train on the bill. An explosive headline on the front page, above the fold, in *The Global and Mail*, said that the Prime Minister and his team had pressured the former attorney general, by then moved out of her position, to grant SNC-Lavalin a settlement to avoid criminal prosecution.

Then it all made sense. The late-night session, the massive, 500-page bill, the tiny Criminal Code amendment tucked away at the very end, rushed through with no time to discuss. We now knew where it all came from. SNC-Lavalin, a powerful, Liberal-linked corporation had given over \$100,000 in illegal donations to the Liberal Party, funnelled through the production of false invoices, phoney bonuses and deceptive receipts through employees into the Liberal Party coffers. That same SNC-Lavalin had successfully convinced the government to change the law allowing for a settlement so that companies accused of serious white-collar crime could evade prosecution altogether.

• (1535)

There is a problem with the plan though. It started with a very accomplished director of public prosecutions. The bill requires that the top prosecutor agree that a company is entitled to that special deal in order for it to go ahead. She read the act, even as the Liberals had written it when they introduced it, and concluded that the company was not eligible. It did not qualify. Why? Because the crimes were too serious, because it did not report its own crimes, because the participants were at the highest level of the executive management of the company and because the company had done absolutely nothing to compensate the victims of the alleged \$130 million of theft.

These victims are among the poorest people in the world. The company is alleged to have stolen their money. It is a pretty miserable way to make a living, stealing from they poor. Fortunately, it is also an illegal way to make a living, at least we thought so. However, the Prime Minister attempted to apply political pressure, *The Globe and Mail* reported, to let this company off without prosecution despite that fact.

What happened? The Prime Minister denied it all. He said that the story was false, full stop, end of story. Therefore, Bob Fife and Steve Chase, the reporters who wrote it, got it all wrong and must have made it all up. That was the Prime Minister's story, and on we were to move. However, it turned out it was not false.

The Prime Minister would go out days later and say that the proof that the story was false was the continued presence of the former attorney general in his cabinet, then as veterans affairs minister. He said that her presence spoke for itself. Well, she could not stomach that anymore, so she resigned, and her resignation spoke for itself.

The Prime Minister then began to make up a new story that, yes, he had pressured the former attorney general but that it was okay. There was nothing wrong with a little pressure.

However, because of relentless public pressure, the Prime Minister was forced to allow the former attorney general to testify before the justice committee where she laid out a spectacular chronology of political interference at the highest level, including the personal interference of the Prime Minister himself. He denied, denied, denied.

Then the evidence arrived, demonstrating that in fact he and his top members had participated in pressuring and interfering with the former attorney general. She provided text messages, written journal entries and finally an audio recording in order to demonstrate that everything she had said was true. Therefore, the Prime Minister's story had to change again. He went out into the world and said that the former attorney general, according to the Prime Minister's minions, was just angry because she lost her dream job.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

That is supposedly the reason why she not want to continue working with the Prime Minister, the reason why she made all of this up, and the only reason why she came forward about the political interference in the system. She was angry about having lost her dream job.

Supposedly it was bitterness, not principles or facts, that motivated her to come forward about the Prime Minister's political interference.

We heard the Liberals' personal attacks. For example, former deputy prime minister Sheila Copps talked about the former attorney general's indigenous roots. Others accused her of being a difficult woman. Yes, she was difficult. We are happy that she was difficult. When a prime minister tries to interfere with the justice system, I hope that the attorney general would be difficult. It is a good idea to be difficult when a prime minister is trying to corrupt the justice system.

The Prime Minister therefore had to change his story again. He rose to say that this was about jobs. He interfered in the justice system but it was to save jobs and the company's headquarters. It was easy enough to learn via the Internet that the company had no plans to move its headquarters. In fact, the company has an agreement with the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the major pension fund, that requires the company to keep its headquarters in Montreal for another six years in exchange for a \$1.5-billion loan. It is therefore impossible for the company to move its headquarters, contrary to what the Prime Minister and his team claimed.

The Budget

Furthermore, the company had just signed a 20-year lease for its building in Montreal. Companies do not sign 20-year leases if they are thinking of moving. The company had just announced plans to renovate to accommodate its employees. It would not have taken on that kind of expense if it were planning to move. That means suggesting the head office was going to be moved was a lie. The Prime Minister also said that 9,000 jobs would have disappeared if he had not interfered in the justice system.

His best friend and former principal secretary said that the Prime Minister was very emotional and that he felt he had to interfere in the system to save those 9,000 jobs. The Green Party leader asked Gerald Butts if he had any proof at all that 9,000 jobs would disappear if the trial went ahead. He said he had no specific proof. All that interference took place over a period of four months. There was a campaign that included at least 20 attempts to make contact to save those 9,000 jobs, yet the Prime Minister's principal secretary and best friend said he had no specific proof those 9,000 jobs were at risk. The Clerk of the Privy Council was asked if he had any reports showing that 9,000 jobs were going to disappear. The answer was no. At a press conference, the Prime Minister was asked if he had any proof that 9,000 jobs would disappear if the trial went ahead. The answer was no.

• (1545)

The company's CEO stated that he never threatened to move the headquarters or to eliminate 9,000 jobs. In any case, this never made sense. Construction projects must go ahead in their respective locations. For example, SNC-Lavalin was awarded a rail project here in Ottawa. You cannot build 14 kilometres of rail in China or London and then have a helicopter drop it in place in Canada's capital. It was therefore impossible that these jobs would be moved. SNC-Lavalin has \$52 billion in construction projects in Canada and they have to be carried out here.

Thus, for contractual and practical reasons, these jobs cannot be moved. This lie was repeated over and over by the most senior members of the Prime Minister's Office. It is one thing to interfere in the judicial system to prevent a case from going to trial, but it is even more serious to lie about it. In my view, lying to an attorney general in order to prevent a criminal trial is a Criminal Code violation. Section 139 clearly states that anyone who attempts to obstruct or defeat the course of justice is guilty of an indictable offence. Today, the Prime Minister no longer talks about jobs because this excuse has been discredited. Everyone knows that it is a fabrication. His story has changed again.

Lastly, the Prime Minister told us that the former attorney general should have let him know that his interference in SNC-Lavalin's criminal case was a problem for her, but she never did. However, in her testimony before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, she said that she had looked him in the eye and asked him if he was politically interfering with her role as the attorney general, and that she had told him she would strongly advise against it.

Yesterday in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister admitted that she had told him that. In doing so, he contradicted himself in front of all Canadians, because he had previously claimed the attorney general never raised any problems with his interference. His story changed yet again. When two people contradict each other and

it is not clear which one to believe, the person who is telling the truth is often the one who does not change their story.

• (1550)

The person who keeps changing their story is usually the one who is not telling the truth. What I have shown in my hours and hours of speaking during this debate is that the Prime Minister has constantly changed his story. He changed his story more often than he changes his flashy socks. Meanwhile, the former attorney general did not change her story. The former attorney general said one thing about each fact. She let all Canadians see text messages and excerpts from her personal diary, and she let them hear a recording of a conversation from December. All of the facts set out in those documents bolster the testimony she gave before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

This matter is not behind us. What lies ahead?

First, people who are still in the Prime Minister's Office interfered to help the company. These people were meeting with SNC-Lavalin for months. We should know what they did and why.

Second, we need to figure out whether the Prime Minister lied to Canadians about this matter.

Third, we need to know what the Prime Minister and his current Attorney General will do in the future. There is a lot of evidence showing that they are both open to or even set on giving SNC-Lavalin an agreement. This agreement could help the company avoid a criminal trial. If this is going to happen, we should know, especially before the election. We may not get an answer, and the trial could continue after the election.

If the Prime Minister is re-elected, I predict that a special deal will be signed before Christmas. This would allow SNC-Lavalin to skirt justice on the fraud reported by law enforcement. Before they go to the polls, Canadians should know whether this agreement will happen if the Prime Minister is re-elected.

All these questions could be answered if members of the Liberal Party attend the meeting of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics next Tuesday. That is when we will decide whether to move forward with an investigation.

As I just said, I will sit down as soon as a Liberal member tells me that the Liberals will vote in favour of an investigation. There is no reason for the Prime Minister to refuse such an investigation. If he has nothing to hide, it will be easy and there will be no problem. Canadians will see that he is just as perfect as he claims to be. However, if there are secrets, then I have some advice for him. He should let those secrets out now instead of trying to save them for later. Secrets are a heavy burden.

• (1555)

Every day that he tries to hide his secrets, the burden gets heavier.

Canadians have the right to know what happened. They also have the right to know what the Prime Minister and his Attorney General are going to do in the future.

The Budget

The choice is simple. The current Conservative leader said that he will not interfere in the judicial system if elected. A Conservative government will not reverse a prosecutor's decision on how a trial should proceed.

[*English*]

I know we are captivated by this scandal and the cover-up budget that has attempted to distract us from it. The two are not entirely unrelated. In fact, they are related for two specific reasons.

First, the government thought it could distract from this scandal by simply spraying around an extra \$41 billion in government spending, almost all of it paid for by deficits in the short run. This is what I call the Liberal three-step: step one, massive scandal; step two, massive deficit spending to distract from the scandal; step three, massive tax increases to pay for it all after the election.

In that sense, these two issues are linked. The scandal is what convinced the government it needed to blow billions of dollars out the door, right before the election, and get everyone thinking and talking about something else.

However, there is a second reason they are linked. The reason companies increasingly think they can get ahead through their connections to this government is that the Prime Minister's philosophy is one of state economic control. He believes in an ever-growing government.

We were told that whenever politicians on the far left decide to grow government, it is to replace greed with some government-directed altruism. We on all sides of the spectrum agree there is a human desire to improve one's lot, to have more and better tomorrow than we have today. In its benign form, we call it ambition; in excess, we call it greed. Whatever word we use, it is part of human nature.

In a recent speech, socialist Senator Elizabeth Warren described it this way: "In reality, billionaire investors and wealthy shareholders in powerful companies often have exactly three goals: maximize profits, maximize profits, maximize profits."

Egalitarian socialism proposes to abolish this impulse from human nature altogether so that all the money goes to the government. In this way, everyone equally owns the government and everyone is equally rich or poor and no one really moves backward or forward relative to the pack—or so we are told.

Ironically, both socialists and Conservatives have accepted that this is what happens when government gets big enough. The former celebrate equal outcomes, the latter decry the lack of incentive to work and produce industry, which will be the result from government trying to eliminate any form of competition between people.

Famously, Churchill once said, "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of Socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." However, is that what happens? Can socialism really expand government to control all the wealth so that it is shared equally by everyone? Can it grow so big that it can replace human nature itself? If so, we must accept the belief that the state can literally banish personal ambition and avarice from human DNA.

● (1600)

Can government grow so large that it not only replaces the private sector but replaces human nature altogether? If so, are we the only species whose very nature governments can alter, or can the state change other creatures as well, so that flies no longer feast on honey, nor ravens on the carrion of dead gazelles, nor fish such as pike on floating garbage, nor the greedy client from the lords of the state? We need to answer "yes" to believe that socialism is capable of changing self-seeking human desires.

The alternative explanation, the alternative theory, comes from the great Nobel Prize-winning economist James Buchanan. He developed something called "public choice theory", which he called "politics without the romance". To quote *The Wall Street Journal*, "Buchanan described it as the application of the profit motive to government: 'It presupposes that if there is value to be gained through politics, persons will invest resources in efforts to capture this value.'

In the market, profit-seekers invest in commercial enterprises to gain wealth, but in government-controlled economics, the profit-seeker invests in political influence to gain wealth.

Buchanan wrote:

However, when the governmental machinery directly uses almost one-third of the national product, when special interest groups clearly recognize the "profits" to be made through political action, and when a substantial proportion of all legislation exerts measurably differential effects on the separate groups of the population, an economic theory can be of great help in pointing toward some means through which these conflicting interests may be ultimately reconciled.

People act rationally in a market economy, investing in order to get a return. Dr. Buchanan found that government-controlled economies have exactly the same type of calculated trade-offs. People invest in politics in order to get rich. In fact, the only thing that changes is the way one gets rich.

The way one gets rich in a government economy is by winning the favour of the political decision-makers who allocate the resources. Instead of selling things that people agree to buy, one buys the politicians who control the money. If all the money is in the great vault of the state, profiteers work at buying or renting the keys to that vault. They donate to politicians who give them subsidies. They offer luxurious vacations to prime ministers in exchange for grants to their foundations. They hire lobbyists to convince governments to shut down their competitors with more regulation and tariffs.

Buchanan wrote:

The individual who seeks short-run pleasures through his consumption of modern "luxury" items sold in the market is precisely the same individual who will seek partisan advantage through political action.

The Budget

In the book *Welfare for the Well-to-Do*, economist Gordon Tullock put it this way: “Today the individual who works hard and thinks carefully in order to make money in the market will also work hard and think carefully in order to use the government to increase his wealth. Thus, we should anticipate that effort and ingenuity would be put into using the government for gain, and if we look at the real world, we do indeed see such activities.”

Therefore, the larger the government becomes, the more we can expect profit-seekers to turn their money into power and to turn that power back into yet more money.

We see this here in Canada. In 2017, there were 23,000 lobbying interactions with designated public office holders in the federal government, a 79% increase in just three years, which just happened to coincide with a 20% increase in government spending.

• (1605)

Guess what? The two fastest-growing sectors in the economy now are government and lobbying, which are two sectors that grow hand in hand.

South of the border is no different. The American company called Strategas Research Partners produced a fascinating graph showing the correlation between the amount of money American business spends on lobbyists and the share of the U.S. federal government as a part of the GDP. It showed that as the U.S. government in Washington gets bigger, so does the amount of money U.S. companies spend on lobbying that government. In 2000, federal spending in the U.S. was about 19% of GDP and there was about two billion dollars' worth of lobbying. By 2009, a decade later, government spending had grown to 25% of GDP, almost a third bigger, and real lobbying had nearly doubled in inflation-adjusted terms to \$4 billion. With more money in the government in Washington, there is more money spent on lobbyists to get that money from Washington.

It looks like Elizabeth Warren was right: Corporations seek profit, profit, profit. What she did not tell us is that they are just as capable of seeking that profit from big government.

It makes sense. When government decides who gets what, business buys a bigger share of government. Who wins when that happens? Of course it is those with money. They can hire the best lobbyists, promise future jobs to politicians, make donations and schmooze the officials.

The working class, by contrast, can afford none of these things. They are too busy trying to keep their heads above water and raise their kids and take them to hockey and soccer. They do not have the financial means to hire lobbyists and accumulate and leverage political influence.

Let me give an example of the payoff.

Bombardier invested in lobbyists and got a \$400-million interest-free loan from the current Liberal government. This is how it worked: The government gave Bombardier the \$400-million interest-free loan so the company did not have to raise the money in equity markets. That was so important, because the billionaire Bombardier-Beaudoin family wanted to remain the majority controllers of the company. The family owned 53%. If it had sold

more shares, it would have diluted its interest below a majority control and would no longer have been in charge of the family business. Less than 50% meant that it would no longer choose management and would not get to pass the business as a family heirloom from one person to another.

What did Canadian taxpayers get for this corporate welfare? It was not very much. It turns out the company moved its jobs to South Carolina and sold the IP to Europe, but left the bill with Canadian taxpayers. The only winners were the billionaires.

Yes, the lady bagging groceries at the corner store had to pay higher taxes to fund a bailout to a billionaire feudal family that was in charge of this company only because of their political connections to this government.

We can look elsewhere. Private equity funds and investment bankers have invested in lobbyists, and guess what they got? They got a \$15-billion infrastructure bank to protect their investments in infrastructure and megaprojects. If a banker asked us for a thousand bucks, we would say, “What for?” The Liberal government is asking for basically \$1,000 from every Canadian family in order to set up this infrastructure bank.

What is it for? Let us go through the possible explanations of what it could possibly be for.

The first is that it would fund infrastructure, but private banks, capital markets, pension funds and private equity enterprises already bankroll billions of dollars of infrastructure projects, and they will invest \$2 trillion more worldwide, if we believe the estimates in the government's own fall economic update. With so much private money already invested in infrastructure, the last thing we should need is another government bank to provide more. That cannot be the reason.

• (1610)

Perhaps we need the new bank to bridge those private dollars into public projects such as mass transit, yet here again the government's own fall economic update indicates that those investments are already happening without the bank and cited the \$2-billion Canada Line. This was the biggest public transit project in Canadian history, and it daily moves 120,000 passengers from Vancouver's downtown, suburbs and airport. It exists through investments from large private sector and commercial interests. As an example, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec invests in that Vancouver project. Quebec pensioners help build mass transit for British Columbians, whose transit fares in turn help pay Quebec pensioners.

All that happened without an infrastructure bank, just as the privatization of Highway 407 happened without an infrastructure bank and just as the privatization of the Canadian National Railway happened without a government-owned infrastructure bank.

The Budget

What is this bank for? I keep knocking down the possible explanations, but we do have one. The Canadian Electricity Association made a submission at the House of Commons transport committee on how the bank should work, and this is what it said: “Also important is the inclusion of de-risking mechanisms such as loan guarantees....”

Bingo. There is the reason. In one sentence the power companies explained the real purpose of the bank: taxpayer-funded guarantees to protect investors from losses.

The government bill that creates the infrastructure bank uses the term “loan guarantee” 14 times. The power companies are on to something. Their submission uses the terms “de-risking”, “de-risk” or “reduce risk” about five times. The prefix “de-” implies that the bank can delete the risk, just like a magician can make a grenade disappear. If one has a grenade, there is a chance it could explode, but this de-risking magic can make it just vanish into thin air.

Wrong. It does not disappear. It just takes the grenade from the company and puts it in the lap of Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer. It does not de-risk; it relocates the risk. Now we know why the government needs an infrastructure bank.

Years ago, institutional investors could get taxpayer-funded returns from sleepy government bonds, but interest rates have been so low for so long that the only way to make real money is to invest in riskier ventures—such as building power plants, for example.

As a J.P. Morgan Asset Management report indicated, merchant power generation pays 14% to 20% returns, but here is the problem: Its risk category is high. Cost overruns, revenue shortfalls, construction delays and labour disputes can cause major losses unless...unless there is a new government bank that agrees to take all that risk off the government's back.

Currently, governments force builders to cover cost overruns on construction projects through fixed-price contracts, and they force those companies to buy bankruptcy insurance to keep projects on budget if the contractor goes under. I know this personally, because we had an essential piece of infrastructure under construction, a bridge connecting east and west Ottawa deep in the south end of the city, and the builder went broke. The good news was all the risk was on the company's back and the company had to hire a bonding company to take over the project if the major proponent went under. In other words, the taxpayer did not pay for cost overruns, and while there was a delay, the people who pay their bills every day, the taxpayers of Canada, did not pay the price. The company did and the bonding company did.

But that is not the case with the new infrastructure bank. Testifying before the House of Commons transport committee, the top public servant responsible for the bank described the tool as existing for “underwriting sophisticated, highly complex projects”.

•(1615)

The word “underwriting” comes from 17th century London insurers, who would literally write their names under a list of cargo on board a shipping vessel. If the ship sank, so did the underwriter's money.

Taxpayers could sink billions of dollars by underwriting infrastructure projects with this new bank.

Guess who is involved in the Infrastructure Bank. It is a three-letter word: SNC. The bank, though it has a well-paid CEO and fancy offices in Toronto, which, by the way, do not comply with the Official Languages Act, has only one project to its name, and of course, SNC-Lavalin is right in the middle of it. There is no surprise there.

Now, it is easy to imagine why SNC-Lavalin and other wealthy investment bankers and private equity fund managers would want this arrangement, but what is not clear is why a government, elected by taxpayers, would agree. At closed-door meetings in Davos, New York and Toronto, and in direct talks with officials, the most powerful financial interests on Earth have directed the Liberal government on how the bank should work. It is the golden rule of the Liberal government: Those who have the gold make the rules. Their rules are simple. They get the rewards; taxpayers get the risk.

Now that we know what and who the bank is for, those who will pay the price must fight to stop it.

It is not just the Infrastructure Bank. Some technology companies have invested in lobbyists, and they have been able to secure brand new billion-dollar corporate welfare funds called “superclusters”.

Here in Ontario, at the provincial level, we saw the worst kinds of these self-licking ice-cream cones, where a commercial interest pays a lobbyist, which influences a politician to pay the commercial interest, and the commercial interest uses some of that money to pay the lobbyist to influence the politician, and on and on it goes. It is a self-licking ice-cream cone, and it has never been so big and so sumptuous as it is under the Liberal government.

Actually, that is not fair. There was the Ontario government under Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty.

Wait a second. Someone yelled, “What about the Harper government?”

I want to point something out. There was something like 70% less lobbying around this place, according to the registry, when Harper was in charge and the size of government was shrinking. The one place that went out of business was Hy's Steakhouse. Do members think that is a coincidence?

God bless the good people who worked there. They were wonderful people. However, it was a hangout for lobbyists and power brokers. Is it not fascinating that it was right in the middle of the Harper tenure that the place became so tired and so sleepy and so uninhabited that it no longer could afford to pay its bills. These kinds of places are popping up all over Ottawa now, because the good times for the lobbyists and the insiders are rolling like they have not in years.

The Budget

We know where the Liberal government gets its lessons. In Ontario, we learned that the largest corporate donor to the Ontario Liberal Party gave the party \$480,000, in exchange for which it got \$160 million in government handouts. What a return on investment, my friends. John Pierpont Morgan, the Rockefellers, and Warren Buffett could not dream of getting that kind of return on investment. It was \$480,000 turned into \$160 million in corporate welfare.

• (1620)

Then there is the Green Energy Act, a deliberate government decision to pay 80¢ cents for a kilowatt hour of solar electricity that is worth 3¢. The province has already forced consumers to overpay by \$37 billion to buy unneeded, unreliable and overpriced electricity from well-connected power companies. That is why hydro prices have risen by 100% in just over a decade.

Who wins and who loses? Remember that when government gets big, it is supposed to be really tough on the rich and good for the poor, we are told. Who won in this? The rich power companies made off with massive profits, because the government forced people to overpay them for their unneeded power. Who lost? The poorest people lost. Electricity is a larger share of their household budgets than it is for the rich. The Ontario Association of Food Banks called it “energy poverty”. In one year, 60,000 people had their power cut for failure to pay.

When the Ontario attorney general looked at it, she predicted another \$133 billion in overpayments between now and 2032 because of the Liberal government's Green Energy Act. That is a total of \$170 billion the government is forcing Ontario consumers to overpay above market prices throughout a 25-year period, making it literally the single biggest wealth transfer from the working poor to the super-rich in the history of Canada. Never has any government, in my lifetime, taken so much from so many to give to so few. All this followed countless donations and third-party advertising from the very companies that got all the electricity contracts.

We see examples of big socialist governments using the power of the state to take from the poor and the working class and give to the rich and powerful all the time. Now we have something called the clean fuel standard. It sounds very similar to the Green Energy Act. What would it do? It would actually have nothing to do with clean fuel, unlike the name. All it would do is require those who sell gasoline to pay credits to well-connected people who would be able to sell those credits for supposedly green things that are happening in some other places in the world. Of course, there would be all kinds of greasy middlemen who would grab one piece after another of that action as it went flying by.

What the Wynne Liberals did to electricity bills, the Liberal government will do to gas bills. Gasoline is a much bigger share of a family budget for a poor family than for a rich family, so it would be yet another disgusting wealth transfer from the poor to the rich.

Macaulay, the great poet, warned of this. He wrote, in one of his great poems:

Where as you shed the honey, the buzzing flies will crowd;
Where as you fling the carrion, the raven's croak is loud;
Where as down Tiber garbage floats, the greedy pike you see;
And where so ever such lord is found, such client still will be

It is funny that he chose flies on honey as his example, because flies do not make honey. They consume honey, the same way the parasitical interests that profit from big government do not make any of the wealth they consume, but they sure are fantastic at consuming it.

It is bees that make honey, and it is interesting that bees make honey in a process that is very similar to transactions in a free market economy. Bees do this in a mutually beneficial exchange between plant and insect. The plant provides the nectar, which the bee transforms into honey, and the bee pollinates the plant so that it can reproduce. That is the very nature of the free market transaction, where both participants always win. We know they win, because they are voluntarily participating in it.

• (1625)

These are the fundamental truths of the two different approaches to an economic transaction. Every transaction, every single one in the free market, is voluntary. Every transaction done by the government is done by force. Even when the government spends on worthy causes that we all support, such as the military, for example, it does so through the forceful collection of taxes. As government expands, force expands. As free markets expand, free choice expands.

We understand that this is the only distinction between the two systems. We realize that almost everything we have been taught to the contrary is wrong. Therefore, when Elizabeth Warren and socialists like that warn us that “those powerful companies search out new prey, moving up and down their own food chain”, she is making allusions to the law of the jungle.

It is in the government-run economy, based on force and the power of the state, that the strong can use their money and power to prey on the weak. By contrast, in a system where every exchange is voluntary, based on the consent of both participants, such as in a free market, it is impossible for anyone to prey on anyone else. No business in a free market can force the poor person to work for it or buy its products. That person only does so when he or she voluntarily agrees.

Let me use the example of the Apple store. Apple has been said to be the most powerful company on planet Earth, with a market capitalization of almost a trillion dollars, depending on the fluctuations of the stock market. If a boy whose net worth is \$1,000 from mowing lawns throughout the summer walks into an Apple store, some of our socialist friends would ask how this could possibly be a fair transaction. On the one hand, we have a company worth a trillion dollars, and on the other, a young boy worth just \$1,000. In other words, one is literally a billion times bigger than the other. How could they possibly exchange in a free negotiation?

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The answer is that when he walks into that store, he is literally just as powerful as the company, because it cannot get his \$1,000 unless it offers him something that is more valuable to him than the money he has to pay to get it. In that sense, it has to obsess over making his life better. It is the only system where one must make someone else better off to be better off itself.

Let us presume that Apple took a different approach and decided to try to get rich from a government subsidy. Would that boy be equal to the company? Would the two then be on a level playing field? Of course not. The company could hire lobbyists, make donations, cozy up to politicians, have articles placed in newspapers or run advertising to get a government subsidy at the expense of that young taxpayer whose net worth is only \$1,000. In that sense, the company would be far more powerful than that young person. That is the law of the jungle, not the free market.

Any relationship based on force favours the strong over the weak. We know this from the most simple and elemental facts of life. If I have an apple and want an orange, and someone has an orange and wants an apple, we trade, and we are both better off, because each has something more valuable than we had before, even though between us, we just have an apple and an orange. That is the miraculous power of the free market economy. It is a voluntary exchange of work for wages, product for payment and investment for interest. These voluntary exchanges happen literally trillions of times every day in the free market parts of the world, and every time they do, both participants are made better off.

● (1630)

If members think this is just theory, they can look at the facts. Dr. M.G. Quibria, a Princeton-trained economist, compared the poverty rate to the size of the government in 40 different developing countries. For each increase in the size of government as a share of GDP, the percentage of people living on less than \$1.90 a day increased by an average of 41%.

In other words, bigger governments, even in the developing parts of the world, lead to more poverty. This is in spite of the fact we are constantly told that some countries are poor because the state is not big enough, is not doing enough and is not spending enough. The data shows precisely the opposite.

What is true in the developing world is also true in the developed world. Dr. Tanzi, a Harvard-trained former IMF policy director, conducted similar research on developed countries. He found that countries where government is less than 40% of GDP have significantly better outcomes on the UN development index than countries where the government represents more than 50% of GDP.

The two best-ranked Asian countries on the human development index are Singapore and Hong Kong, countries with no natural resources. They actually have to import their own water. They live on land masses that are a fraction the size of the city of Ottawa, with multiple times the number of people. Despite this, they have the highest standard of living compared to any country in the Asian world.

Our critics will point out quickly that these countries have housing crises. Our critics forget, of course, that this is because they are the most densely populated places in the world. However, I will point

out that while housing in these countries is extremely expensive, it is basically the only thing the government controls. Inside those countries, we can see the difference between the immense power of the free market to improve people's lives and the constraints that heavy-handed, excessive government imposes.

Apart from that exception, those countries demonstrate that even though they have governments representing less than 20% of GDP, they have incomes that are equal to or superior to those in countries around the world that have had far longer to develop and far more natural resources with which to do it.

The reality is that the free market system has generated more wealth than any other system ever contemplated. However, unfortunately it has had one failing. Those of us who advocate for this system have allowed the other side, those who believe in expanding the force and control of the state, to steal key words.

I am here today to take them back. Let us start with the word "empathy". The free enterprise not only allows empathy but requires it. The only way to make a profit in this system is to offer something that is more valuable to people than what they have to pay to get it.

There is no one more empathetic than the entrepreneur to his customer, because he knows that when that customer comes into his shop, he needs to do everything in his power to make that customer happy. That is not something any politician across the way can claim, because at the end of the day they make their living and grow their operation by the forceful collection of taxes.

The reason businesses and entrepreneurs in the free market system have to be so empathetic to their customers is that they have to sell their customers things through a voluntary transaction. Empathy means seeing through another person's eyes. There is a trick to sales: If you want to sell what John Smith buys, you have to see through John Smith's eyes. That is the oldest expression in sales.

Let us take back another word. Another word that those on the socialist side have expropriated is "diversity". Liberals believe in anything but diversity. They want government control to snuff out diversity. They just kicked two women members out of their caucus because they were speaking up and their voices brought too much diversity for the government to handle.

● (1635)

The greatest thing about the free market is that it is in a constant state of mutation to accommodate every diverse and particular need. I flew from Ottawa to Toronto recently with a constituent whose 80-person company has made a business of helping companies do billing and marketing in Braille and large print, with no government subsidy, all because businesses want access to the visually impaired market.

Compare that to the inflexible and lumbering government school system under the previous Liberal governments and most governments, which cannot provide basic IBI treatment for autistic children despite billions of dollars of money spent.

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Let us take another example. Let us take back the other word, “tolerance”. Tolerance exists in a place and in a system called the free market, which ruthlessly punishes the bigoted employer. No system more ruthlessly punishes bigotry in an employer than one that makes that employer pay a price for turning down the best employee because of irrelevant characteristics such as race, gender and sexual orientation. The free market ensures that there is always a built-in incentive, an imperfect one, but an incentive nonetheless, to promote and hire based on merit and to treat every customer in the best possible way.

Yes, we need strong civil rights protections in law, but at the same time we also need to recognize that the greatest protector of all of our services is when we have entrepreneurial free enterprise competition that requires entrepreneurs to reach out and serve both workers and customers.

Here is the ultimate difference between the two systems. We can have a free market where businesses get ahead by having the best product, not a government economy where they get ahead by having the best lobbyists. We can have a market where entrepreneurs make money by pleasing customers, not a government economic system where they get by on pleasing politicians or government officials. We can have a market where the underdog gets the same chance as the fat cat and the challenger the same opportunity as the incumbent. We can all advance based on meritocracy, not aristocracy.

I would conclude today that if the Prime Minister had not decided that government had to be at the centre of every economic decision, maybe SNC-Lavalin and others like it would not think the way to get ahead is by relentlessly lobbying for special breaks and deals.

We on this side of the House of Commons will replace this centralized, government-controlled system of crony capitalism and corporatism with a new free market agenda that will allow everyone to get ahead on their own merit, a system where everybody can get ahead and move forward, a system that puts people before government.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the House reject the budget since it is an attempt to bury the SNC-Lavalin scandal under tens of billions of dollars of brand new spending, for which Canadians will pay through higher taxes if the government is re-elected.”

• (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, and I will get to the point of order here momentarily, 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 Courtenay—Alberni, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Housing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As I am sure you and many members in the chamber would attest, when the member sat down, I stood to ask a question, but I suspect his colleagues encouraged him to stand up so he could read an amendment. I would suggest that the amendment is out of order because he actually sat down. When members sit in their chairs, that means their speech is done and they are ready for questions.

I would like to ask my question because I have been waiting hours and hours. I would ask for a ruling. It was very clear that the member sat in his chair, thereby concluding his comments, and that I was standing to ask a question. It was only because his colleagues told him to get back up that he did so. Otherwise, he would not have stood back up. I believe the motion is out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his intervention, and we will get to questions and comments.

I see the hon. member for Carleton rising. Is it on the point of order?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the member's points. As the member correctly points out, I have been speaking for as long as 15 hours. If at any moment I were to have stumbled and for a brief instant touched my chair, I withdraw that stumble. It is now therefore withdrawn. The motion is tabled in the House of Commons and I thank you for finding it in order.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for his additional intervention. The observing members, at the conclusion of the hon. member for Carleton's speech, may well have been aware that it may or may not have been his intention to move an amendment.

As is customary in budget deliberations and budget debates, it is normal for the opposition to put an amendment into the debate towards the end of its first remarks in the same way that the third party does as a subamendment, typically in its first intervention on a budget debate.

While the members may have seen the hon. member appearing to conclude his remarks, he in fact still had the floor, as I remained seated. Until such time as I stand up and interrupt his time on the floor, he still has the floor. This follows the normal practices of the House, as I am sure hon. members understand.

Now we will go to questions and comments, and the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope you will give me a little latitude, given that I listened for many, many hours of the member speaking. The essence of what he was talking about is not that much different from when the opposition first took to the opposition benches. The Conservatives have been on a crusade of personal attacks and fascinations. Whether it is directed at the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance, this is an opposition that is only focused on personal attacks on government members.

The Budget

I am pleased to say this to people who had to witness those hours and hours of debate from the member: As much as the Conservative opposition focuses on those personal gutter attacks, we will continue to focus our attention on Canadians from coast to coast to coast, the middle class. That is why we are seeing the 900,000-plus jobs. That is why we are seeing thousands of seniors being lifted out of poverty and thousands of young people being taken out of poverty.

Could the member opposite explain why the Conservative Party continues to vote against measure after measure that gives an advantage to Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed in the hon. member. I wanted to be generous in helping him to prepare his question for me, so I gave him 15 hours to prepare, and that is what he produced. The rhetorical factory in the PMO must have broken down. It is not cranking out any more good rhetorical widgets. As a result, even in 15 hours of chugging away, that is best we could have from across the way in the House of Commons.

He says that these are personal attacks, that it is character assassination. I have just spent the last 15 hours reading text messages, audio recordings and journal entries written by Liberals about Liberals. If he thinks they are personal attacks, then he should look around him at the mess that he and his team have created and that his own party members, and now former party members, have told us all about.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, back in 2012, I was speaking against a particularly egregious Conservative budget. I rose in the House of Commons and spoke for 14 hours. It is very clear, when we look at that Conservative budget, the massive deficits, the huge spending and handing out to corporate CEOs, that the member's rhetoric does not really match the reality. However, I believe he has just broken a record in terms of a filibuster, with 15 hours. I congratulate him for the stamina. I know it takes a lot of effort to put together coherent arguments, as he has done over the course of the last 15 hours. This could well be the longest filibuster we have seen in Parliament.

Getting back to the budget, because that indeed is why we are here. Part of the legacy of the Conservative government is a series of tax havens and tax loopholes. The government addressed it a little in the budget documents, it talked about the fact that employee stock options were basically being claimed by 2,000 individuals, claiming over \$1.3 billion of employee stock options. These 2,000 people all have incomes of over \$1 million. Therefore, the government understands there is a problem. However, in the budget documents, all the government says is that eventually it will get around to solving it.

What does the member think of a budget that says, yes, this is a problem, but does nothing about it?

• (1650)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his very gracious remarks and also for the counsel and mentorship he has been providing me the last several days. Regularly he has come over to express concern for my physical well-being, and he has given me a number of tips on how to survive this enduring task. I thank him for that in a very sincere way.

He also raises an important concern about the privileges that the government continues to protect for those with the most. He is quite right that while middle and working-class people are paying more and more, struggling harder and harder just to get by, those with connections to government have never done better.

I think the member will agree that we need to bring back the ladder of opportunity and make it available for all to climb, rather than, as the current government has done, pulling that ladder up over the castle walls so no one else can climb it.

We as Conservatives will continue to work to create that aspirational Canada where people can get ahead rather than just get by.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Carleton for his contribution to this debate. Particularly, I was impressed with not only his ability to stand and speak coherently to the issue, but also that he was able to explain some of the innovations, for example, the gentleman with whom he shared a flight. He has a small firm and without any government subsidy and without any expectation of government subsidy it is performing and doing more for people.

Could the member talk a little more about how competition is the best way for Canadians to receive the widest benefits and also how cronyism, particularly when lobbyists are trying to change the rules so incumbents receive protections that the average small business or new firm will never receive, works contrary to the best interests of Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the great popular misconceptions. A lot of people think big business does not like regulation. Actually, a lot of big corporate business likes to use excessive regulation in order to keep out competition, and it is often in the sectors where we have the heaviest regulation that we have the least competition. The lobbyists for those powerful corporate interests then influence the regulators and the politicians to make it more and more difficult for anyone to break in. Why should we be surprised by that?

Powerful big incumbents have the resources to lobby. Entrepreneurial upstarts do not. They are scrambling just to get by. That is why we always see these powerful corporations stepping up with more and more recommendations for government intervention. It is designed to protect their ability to stay on top. We believe in opening up the free market to true competition so the entrepreneurial upstarts can get ahead, can do as Benjamin Franklin said, and that is "Do well by doing good".

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the privilege of asking the member for Carleton a question, also a member whom I sit with on the finance committee. I listened attentively over the last couple of days to his comments on the budget. I just have to throw some facts out there.

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I know facts are inconvenient to the party on the opposite side, but these are the facts: our economy has generated over 900,000 jobs since we were elected; over 800,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty since we were elected; in 2017, we led the G7 in economic growth at almost a 3% clip; Canadians are over \$2,000 better off today than they were three years ago; our debt to GDP ratio is on a declining trend; Moody's, S&P and other rating agencies reaffirmed and confirmed our AAA credit rating. We are the envy of the world and people are lining up to immigrate to Canada.

What does the member opposite think of those facts?

• (1655)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, many of them are not facts.

The member has said that the average Canadian is \$2,000 better off. That is just not true. In fact, Statistics Canada has released the data on median income and it has barely budged in three years. At various times, it has actually gone down. In the previous 40 years, there was growth in median income under only one prime minister, and that was Stephen Harper. People do not have to take my word for it. That data comes right out of the Liberal budget in 2016. It showed that there was a massive drop in median incomes under the father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, that it took about 20 years just to begin to recover those losses and then we had the single biggest and best period of median income growth on record under the previous Conservative government.

Under the next Conservative government, we are going to beat that record.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start with the foundation of this budget, which goes back to what the member for Carleton just cited: the years of Stephen Harper. Under the Conservatives, we saw successive and horrible deficits crippling the country and billions of dollars handed out to corporate CEOs. Middle-class, regular Canadians across the country paid the price of all those policies of the Conservative government.

Coming up to the Liberal government, which took office in 2015, one would have thought it was the time to think first about regular folks across the length and breadth of this land, to actually make a difference in the lives of regular Canadians. I am sad to say, quoting the famous words of Charles Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". It is the best times for a very small elite in Canadian society and it is the worst of times for everyone else.

Let us look at the size and scope of the way regular Canadian families from coast to coast are living. This is not a situation that developed only under the Liberals; the Conservatives are equally guilty. In fact, we have to go back a number of decades when we saw the cutting of part of our social safety net to see why we have come to the state that we are in. The statistics speak for themselves. Forty-six per cent of Canadians say that on any given month, they are \$200 away from not being able to cover all their bills. Nearly half of Canadian families, 46%, are basically living hand to mouth. On any given month, a \$200 shock, like a car breakdown, a medical emergency, medication they have to buy or some emergency at school, can make the difference as to whether they can pay their bills that month.

Canadian families are struggling under the worst debt load of any industrialized country. It is not only the worst debt load in Canadian history. It is the worst debt load that any industrialized country is living under.

The set-up of the budget should give pause for thought. One would think the government would actually want to do something when half the Canadian population is living hand to mouth, basically \$200 away from being able to cover their expenses in any given month.

When Canadian families, as a whole, are massively in debt because of government cutbacks over the last two or three decades, we would think there would be an understanding on the Liberal side of what is at stake and that the Liberals would show some imagination and leadership to bring forward a budget that would make a difference in the lives of Canadian families.

Sadly, that is not the case. Sadly, this budget, which dropped like a stone in the middle of the lake, with just a few ripples after it was presented two weeks ago, has really very little impact on the lives of regular families and does not in any way address some of the most egregious challenges we face as a country.

As I mentioned, Canadian families are really struggling. They are struggling to pay for their medications, to keep a roof over their heads or to ensure their sons or daughters can go on to post-secondary education. Those are all fundamental problems that Canadian families face. I am not even talking about the crisis that indigenous families are experiencing across the length and breadth of the land.

Anyone who has gone to indigenous communities has seen the sad betrayal of the government's lack of commitment on achieving reconciliation. We can look at some of the budget figures, which I will come back to in just a moment.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

At the same time, we are seeing a situation where the government wants to do the same thing as the Conservatives and maintain a system of tax havens and tax loopholes. Tens of billions of dollars are given to large corporations and the wealthiest Canadians every year. That money is given to them with no questions asked and with no consideration for how it might benefit Canadians.

It is estimated that the tax system and our collective investments are losing between \$15 billion and \$20 billion a year to tax havens. As we know, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is currently looking into that. The Parliamentary Budget Office began that work six years ago under the Conservatives and simply asked the Canada Revenue Agency to give it all of the information related to tax havens and tax loopholes.

The Conservatives refused to do that. The Harper government said that it did not want to give that information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Conservatives refused to give him that information for three years.

The Budget

Then, along came the new Liberal government, which claimed it would take a new, transparent approach and tell Canadians what was going wrong with the tax system. However, the Liberals also refused to give that information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer for three years.

For nearly six years, the former Conservative government and the current Liberal government refused to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer those statistics and that information, even though they were required to do so. Last year, as we know, the Parliamentary Budget Officer threatened to take the government to court. It was only then that the Liberals agreed to give him that information, because they were well aware that it would be embarrassing for them if they did not.

For the past year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been collecting all this information and data, and in a few weeks, probably in May, we will know how much money is not flowing into our collective investments.

As I mentioned at the beginning, when a government asks seniors, students and families to make sacrifices and to go into debt because we do not have the resources to help them, yet it gives tens of billions of dollars to big corporations and wealthy citizens, there must at least be transparency. The Parliamentary Budget Officer will provide us with that transparency.

We will finally know exactly how much money is being lost to tax havens and loopholes and going up in smoke because our governments acted irresponsibly.

The Liberals say they know that we are losing \$1 billion every year because of stock options, a loophole that benefits millionaires. Even if they only received a small portion of this money, it means we have the most unfair tax system of all industrialized countries. The Liberals said that they would look at stock options, but at some point in the future.

When we look at the budget, we see nothing to address the unfair tax treatment that is epidemic in our tax system. However, next month, Canadians will be able to judge for themselves, because the Parliamentary Budget Officer will finally table his report. That will be extremely important.

• (1705)

[*English*]

We have a tax system that is the most unequal, the most inequitable of all industrialized countries. We have an effective tax rate for large corporations of 9%, which is unbelievable, yet the Liberals refuse to take any sort of action.

That is why when I say, "It was the best of times", as Charles Dickens mentioned, it really is the best of times for the top 1% of Canadians. They get tax gifts, left, right and centre. They did under the former Conservative government and that continues under the current Liberal government. None of them stops to think for just a moment about the impact that has on seniors and students, or the impact that has on regular families, right across the country.

I mentioned earlier that it is also the worst of times. I will mention two people I know very well who really illustrate how far we have

fallen in the Ottawa bubble from dealing with the problems and challenges that regular families live with every single day.

I will come back to my friend Jim, whom I mentioned earlier in the House, because it is so egregious to me that although the Liberal government is aware of Jim, it is not doing anything to address his situation.

Jim sits right outside Parliament Hill on the bridge between Parliament Hill and the Château Laurier. He is there every day. In -33°C temperature, he is out there. He is out there in the boiling sun. If it is pouring rain or a blizzard, he has to be out there. Jim lives on a disability pension that barely pays for his rent and his food, but he needs medication that costs him \$580 a month. He sits out there with the hope that strangers will do what the government refuses to do and that is to provide enough support so that he can get through that month. His medication is not optional. He has to take it.

Every day Liberal MPs walk by him. Every day Liberal cabinet ministers drive by in their limousines. The Prime Minister drives by in his limousine. Not once over the four years has any Liberal stood up to say that this is wrong, that Jim should not be begging to try to get enough money for medication for the month and that they need to put pharmacare in place now.

I can assure members that an NDP government will do that. It has to be a priority. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, said just this week that we will put pharmacare in place immediately for early 2020. Jim will finally get relief, if the NDP is elected on October 21. Jim's situation is not uncommon. There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are forced into the most difficult situations imaginable to try to find enough money for medication for the month.

When Tommy Douglas, the first leader of the NDP, founded medicare, he had to fight for it. Lobbyists were pushing back and saying no to medicare. Liberals were criticizing Tommy Douglas, but he stuck to it and he got it done. All Canadians benefit from having in place the universal single-payer medicare system that we have today.

Tommy Douglas always envisioned that we would move rapidly toward pharmacare, yet decades later people like Jim are still begging, borrowing and trying to find a way to get enough money for their medication, and this is in a wealthy country like Canada. There is nothing in the budget that addresses Jim's difficulties. The Liberals just promise, like they do so often, to study it a bit more.

Here is another Canadian whose needs are not being met in any way by the budget and that is my friend Heather. Heather lives with her daughter and her mother in a one-bedroom apartment and they are struggling to keep that apartment over their heads. Heather told me that she wishes we had affordable housing in this country, and she is not alone.

The Budget

There are so many families, hundreds of thousands of families, struggling just to keep a roof over their heads. They have to make tough choices as to whether to pay for the heat, pay the rent or pay for medication this month. In the budget, instead of providing money to build affordable housing, which the Liberals do not seem to want to do, they just promise to lend a bit more money. That is their way of solving what is a conscious decision made by the former Liberal government to eliminate the national housing program.

Forty years ago, about 16% of the housing that was built in Canada was affordable housing, co-operative housing, social housing. The Liberals eliminated the national housing program. They destroyed it. Now, 40 years later, that 16% has fallen to 3%, and that is the nut and the crux of the crisis that we are living today.

● (1710)

Because the Liberals destroyed the national housing program, because they ripped up any possibility of continuing to build that co-operative housing, that social housing so that all Canadians would be able to access affordable housing, because they did that, people like Heather and her family are now wondering, on a week-to-week basis, whether they will still have a roof over their heads.

In a country as wealthy as Canada, a country that the Liberals feel is wealthy enough to send tens of billions of dollars to overseas tax havens, Heather, indicative of so many Canadian families, is wondering whether, next month, she will still have a roof over the heads of her family. What is a wrong with a government that does not understand this situation?

When I mention indigenous communities and we talk about national reconciliation, it starts with putting in place a housing program to ensure that in indigenous communities, housing is available. It has to be done in conjunction with and working with first nations, and working with indigenous communities. That is what the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South and I pitched when we went public, just a few days before the budget, to say, "Here is what needs to be in this 2019 budget". The government, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister completely ignored that.

This budget should have contained significant provisions to build affordable housing now, right across the length and breadth of this country. This budget should have contained, rather than just paying lip service, a real, meaningful, true and lasting national reconciliation policy that included housing and working with indigenous communities to make those investments, and it does not.

This budget should have said, very clearly, that we need universal single-payer pharmacare in this country now, not 10 years from now, not 20 years from now, not another 30 years of broken promises, but pharmacare in place now. None of those things are in the budget.

This budget should have contained and could have contained real action to build a fair tax system in our country. We ask people to pay their taxes. I have done hundreds of disability town halls, talking about the tax system, and nobody has ever said to me that they do not want to pay taxes. People want to make sure that within the tax system they are not paying more than they should, but people understand, Canadians understand, that putting money in common makes sure we are all taken care of.

However, we have a government system in place that has allowed, over time, the wealthiest and most privileged of us to get by without paying those taxes. The burden has fallen on seniors struggling with limited pensions. It has fallen on students who are crippled by post-secondary debt, unbelievable amounts of debt. It has fallen on families struggling to keep a roof over their heads, like Heather. It has fallen on families and individuals like Jim, who are struggling to pay for their medications. All of those people, all of those Canadians, are suffering because of the lack of priorities of the government.

Before I finish, I move:

That the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after the words "tens of billions" and substituting the following:

"of dollars in election-year promises that continue the government's track record of decision-making that benefits Canada's most wealthy and well-connected, instead of everyday Canadians, by:

- (a) failing to implement a universal, public, national pharmacare program;
- (b) ignoring the scale and scope of catastrophic climate change on the future of the planet;
- (c) failing to tackle the housing crisis head on; and
- (d) continuing to give billions from the public purse to highly profitable corporations."

● (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the ways and means Motion No. 27.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1750)

The Speaker: The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to the amendment to House]

● (1755)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 1281)

YEAS

Members

Ashton
Benson
Boulerice
Caron
Cullen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Hughes
Jolibois
Laverdière
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Quach
Sansoucy
Weir— 25

Aubin
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Brosseau
Choquette
Dubé
Dusseau
Johns
Julian
MacGregor
Nantel
Rankin
Stetski

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Barlow
Baylis
Bendayan
Benzen
Bibeau
Blair
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chagger
Chen
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davidson
Deltell
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Egliniski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Finley
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gallant
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gourde
Hajdu
Harvey
Hoback
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kent
Khera
Lake
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Leitch
Levitt
Lightbound

Albas
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barrett
Beech
Bennett
Bergen
Bittle
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Breton
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chong
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Généreux
Gill
Gould
Graham
Hardie
Hehr
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kelly
Khalid
Kmiec
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lloyd

The Budget

Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nault
Nicholson
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Rayes
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Schulte
Sgro
Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sohi
Sorenson
Stanton
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Trost
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Warkentin
Whalen
Wrzesnewskij
Young
Zahid

Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendés
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Motz
Nassif
Ng
O'Connell
Oliver
O'Toole
Pauzé
Peterson
Picard
Poissant
Ratansi
Reid
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Sheehan
Shipley
Simms
Sorbara
Spengemann
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Waugh
Wilkinson
Yip
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 228

PAIRED

Members

Dhaliwal
Plamondon
Paradis
Ste-Marie— 4

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

[Translation]

The next question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

The Budget

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1805)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 1282)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Alleslev	Allison
Arnold	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clement
Cooper	Davidson
Deltell	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Gourde
Hoback	Kelly
Kent	Kniec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacKenzie	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nicholson	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Vecchio	Viersen
Warkentin	Waugh
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 68

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benson
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Breton	Brosseau
Caron	Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking

Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Soeurs	
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petipas Taylor
Picard	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Sheehan	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Stetski
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
Young	Zahid — 182

PAIRED

Members

Dhaliwal	Paradis
Plamondon	Ste-Marie — 4

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[English]

The next question is on the main 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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 1283)

YEAS

Members

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

Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Sheehan
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

The Budget

Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peterson
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodríguez
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid — 156

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Alleslev	Allison
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Brassard
Brosseau	Calkins
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davidson
Deltell	Doherty
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Egłinski	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Gill	Gourde
Hoback	Hughes
Johns	Jolibois
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
MacKenzie	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nicholson
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Quach
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Sansoucy	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sorenson	Stanton
Stetski	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Vecchio
Viersen	Warkentin
Waugh	Weir
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 94

PAIRED

Members

Dhaliwal	Paradis
Plamondon	Ste-Marie — 4

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and I am deriving it from the Standing Orders. It is becoming too common to see demonstrations on the floor of the House as we are voting. It is certainly against the rules to have any noise or disturbance while you are putting the question. I seek your guidance as to whether it is appropriate to have clapping, stomping of feet and so on while we are conducting the vote.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. She is quite right that members should not be demonstrating or making noise during the calling of the vote. It is important that the Clerks at the table are able to hear what is being called in terms of who is voting.

It being 6:13 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

DUTCH HERITAGE DAY

The House resumed from January 28 consideration of the motion.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House this evening to speak to Motion No. 207, which proposes designating every May 5 as Dutch heritage day.

This motion was moved by my colleague from Chatham-Kent—Leamington in Ontario. I will read the motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, in recognition of the sacrifices made by Canadians in the liberation of the Netherlands, as well as the contributions made to Canada by those of Dutch heritage, the government should recognize every May 5 as Dutch Heritage Day to honour this unique bond.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my NDP colleague from Vancouver East, our multiculturalism critic, for her excellent work in promoting all cultures represented in Canada.

The NDP will support the motion to designate every May 5 as Dutch heritage day. The NDP is always proud to support diversity, inclusiveness and harmony. This particular motion recognizes the contributions of Canadians of Dutch heritage.

We must pay tribute to the courage of the Dutch people, who suffered a great deal under Nazi occupation for part of the 1940s.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and courage of the veterans of the greater Drummond area, who fought for peace and freedom.

In the same spirit, I also want to thank Branch 51 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Drummondville for being socially involved in our community. We have a duty to remember our veterans and it is important to acknowledge that.

Speaking of diversity, inclusion and living together, I want to use this forum to remind everyone that the Drummondville cultural diversity festival is fast approaching. It will be held on May 24 and 25. It is a time to come together and celebrate the richness of our

cultural communities. I invite everyone to come out in force to the celebrations and shows and visit the many kiosks.

I also want to acknowledge the remarkable work done over the years by an organization that is extremely important to the greater Drummond area, the Regroupement interculturel de Drummondville. It is the driving force behind the Drummondville cultural diversity festival and the only organization that deals directly with newcomers in the Drummond RCM, making it much easier for them to integrate into the community. I congratulate the entire team led by Normand W. Bernier, the director general of the organization. He has been involved in our community for many years.

On that note, I would like to say that immigration has made a significant contribution to the Drummond community. Immigration contributes to our cultural and culinary richness, to citizen involvement in several areas and to the workforce. On this point, accessing affordable housing is an added challenge in our community of Drummond.

I am proud of my party and where it stands on having a social housing program that is much more affordable and much more accessible. We cannot settle for the Liberals' half-measures. We have to move forward and bring in a strong agenda that will quickly meet the increasingly urgent need for social housing across the country, including in Drummond.

At the municipal level, the City of Drummond's immigration, cultural diversity and inclusion commission is made up of organizations and residents who are committed to the social and professional integration of newcomers.

● (1815)

I would like to commend the organizations and residents on this commission, which is led by its chair, Dominic Martin, the vice-chair, Cathy Bernier, and a municipal councillor, Yves Grondin.

With this motion there is talk of observing and studying best practices in the Netherlands, a forward-thinking country in social and environmental terms. I want to highlight some of the Netherlands' successes and accomplishments. One example is the cost of living and tuition fees. Tuition fees in Canada are quite high. Our students are drowning in student debt.

When we speak to young people, such as the Daughters of the Vote, as some of my colleagues and I did this week, they tell us that the amount of debt they are carrying is one of their biggest problems. The NDP also has some very progressive policies to address student debt, which is holding back our young people and causing them considerable stress. We must tackle this problem and solve it. It is important to note that tuition fees are much lower in the Netherlands than in Canada. It is a great source of pride and something we should aspire to. There is a reason why we want to recognize May 5 as Dutch heritage day. We should also be guided by their social measures. That would be a good thing to do.

Private Members' Business

Urban cycling is something else that is very important in the Netherlands, and we should take a look at that. Cycling is very popular and even a culture in the Netherlands. This country has made incredible progress in moving away from car-based urban planning. Instead, it has focused on such things as active transportation and cycling by building safer, greener roads that are more friendly to pedestrians and cyclists.

I would like to come back to our youth and the Daughters of the Vote, who were here all week. They met with MPs and senators, and they saw how our democracy works. When they made speeches in the House, they said that we need to do more to take care of the environment. We need to take care of our planet because there is no planet B. We need a clear plan to fight climate change. We need more than the half-measures put forward by the Liberals, who bought a \$4.5-billion pipeline and continue to provide billions of dollars a year in fossil fuel subsidies. They do not have a real and meaningful plan. What is more, they kept the same targets as Stephen Harper's Conservatives, when we know that his government won all the fossil awards at the time.

We need to listen to our young people. They are talking to us about the environment. Hundreds, even thousands of them, took to the streets in cities across Canada to say that the environment must become a priority like in the Netherlands. We need to follow the Netherlands' lead and support active transportation. On that point, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni who bikes everywhere and encourages others to do the same. Even my leader bikes all the time. They are good examples to follow. We need to make Canada's urban areas a lot more bike-friendly and do more to encourage active transportation. That is extremely important. Let us follow the example of the Netherlands.

● (1820)

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the story of the Dutch in Canada begins well before Confederation. In fact, it starts in 1614, south of the border in what is New York State. In 1614, Dutch settlers established trading posts at New Amsterdam, which is present-day New York City, and at Fort Orange, which is present-day Albany, New York. They named their new colony New Netherland.

Today, scores of places in present-day New York trace their roots back to Dutch names, places like the Bronx, Brooklyn, Broadway, Harlem, Wall Street, Long Island, Staten Island, Rensselaer, Stuyvesant and many more.

The flag of New York City is a Dutch flag, the Prince's flag, introduced in the 17th century. During the 17th century, thousands of Dutch immigrants moved to the new colony. They settled in present-day New York City, up the Hudson River valley into upstate New York, in present-day New Jersey and in present-day Connecticut.

These Dutch immigrants brought with them ideas that have endured to this very day. They were ideas that laid the foundation for Canadian and American societies, ideas such as diversity, tolerance and religious freedom.

New Netherland, like the Netherlands of the 17th century, was a haven for religious diversity. For example, in 1655 the rule of religious freedom was upheld and full residency was granted to Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in New Amsterdam. As a result of the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657, full religious freedom was granted to the Quakers. In the 1640s, two religious leaders, both women, took refuge in New Netherland: Anne Hutchinson and the Anabaptist Lady Deborah Moody. A direct line can be traced from that religious freedom in the Dutch colony of New Netherland to the freedom of religion enshrined in the Canadian and American constitutions.

When the Treaty of Westminster transferred the colony from the Dutch to the British Crown in 1674, thousands of Dutch remained as Dutch subjects of their new sovereign. New Netherland was renamed the Province of New York and New Amsterdam was renamed New York City.

A century later came the American Revolution. Some of the Dutch sided with the rebels, while others remained loyal to the British. By this time, many of the Dutch had been anglicized, after having been in the new world for some two and a half centuries. After the American Revolution, those loyal to the British fled the 13 colonies and headed north to the Maritimes and to present-day Ontario. They were people like Joseph Ryerson, the father of Egerton Ryerson, the founder of Ontario's public education system.

Subsequent to that first wave of Dutch people fleeing the revolution came many more waves, some from the Netherlands directly and others via the United States, and they have made big contributions to this country. They included people like the painter Cornelius Krieghoff, composer Allard de Ridder, photographer Jason van Bruggen, film director Patricia Rozema, actress Sonja Smits and author Aritha van Herk. Many Dutch Canadians have contributed to government, such as the first Surveyor General of British North America, Samuel Holland. They have contributed to business, as exemplified by Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, the builder of Canada's transcontinental railway. They have contributed to our national pastime, hockey, with players like Joe Nieuwendyk, Trevor Linden and Steve Yzerman.

Today over a million Canadians identify themselves of Dutch origin, and today that story has come full circle: I am one of those million Canadians of Dutch origin.

I am here today because my Dutch mother and her family were liberated by Canadian soldiers 74 years ago this May 5. Some 7,600 Canadians died in the liberation of the Netherlands. They died in the canals, the fields, the little villages and cities of that country. They never came home. Thousands of Canadian war graves dot the Dutch countryside. They died so that my mother and her family could live, and we will never forget.

● (1825)

The motion in front of us today says:

That, in the opinion of the House, in recognition of the sacrifices made by Canadians in the liberation of the Netherlands, as well as the contributions made to Canada by those of Dutch heritage, the government should recognize every May 5 as Dutch Heritage Day to honour this unique bond.

Private Members' Business

This motion captures the Dutch story on the North American continent and the unique bond that ties the Canadian and Dutch people together. This motion recognizes four centuries of history on this continent and the continued ties that bind our two peoples.

The Dutch continue to this day to have tight ties with this country, both across the Atlantic and north and south of the border. I was in Washington several weeks ago and I met with representative Bill Huizenga from western Michigan. He, too, is of Dutch origin, and his wife is a Canadian also of Dutch origin from Brampton, Ontario. They spend every other Christmas with her family in Peel Region. There are thousands of stories like that throughout the country. The Dutch have worked hard to settle the country over many years and have contributed greatly in all facets of our national life.

This country is made up of a diversity of different groups, people from all origins, all religions, all races and all walks of life. That legacy that we have been granted in this country of religious freedom, tolerance and diversity is one of the greatest contributions the Dutch have made to our society and that south of the border.

In the 17th century, it was the Dutch who were a haven for persecuted religious minorities and remained so for many centuries thereafter, whether it was Quakers fleeing the United Kingdom; whether it was Huguenots fleeing the south of France; whether it was independently-minded philosophers, like René Descartes or other thinkers who were at odds with the church doctrine at the time. Those ideas were adopted by the Dutch in their new colony in the new world. They were further continued after the transfer of that colony and subsequently into the American Constitution and so, too, within ours. These ideas infused the way we treated religious minorities on this continent prior to confederation and afterwards.

For all those reasons, I encourage members of the House to support this motion and to recognize the contributions made over many centuries by people from the Netherlands.

● (1830)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 207, a motion put forward in this House by the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington, to designate May 5 as Dutch heritage day.

I was really moved, in particular, by the previous speaker's story of what it took for his mother's side of the family to make its way to Canada and establish a new life in Canada.

The story of my existence is very similar in terms of the struggles of my grandparents to come to Canada. My grandparents, Pierre and Gonnie Gerretsen, were two young newlyweds living in Hilversum, which is about 20 minutes outside Amsterdam, in Holland. They too had great hopes for their lives and what they could accomplish and the family they could have. They owned a small corner store, which I have had the opportunity to visit on a couple of occasions, where they sold various goods to people in the neighbourhood. They had three children: my father, who is the middle child; an older brother, Peter; and a younger sister, Marijke.

Their story really changed a lot during the Second World War. When the Germans finally decided to invade Holland, as the previous speaker mentioned, many Dutch males were taken away

from their families to work in factories and fight the war on behalf of the Germans. What ended up happening to my grandfather is that he spent a considerable amount of time, like many Dutch men at that time, hiding from the Germans to make sure that he was not going to be ripped away from his family.

When my grandfather was finally liberated, it was the Canadian soldiers who were liberating Holland. He saw these Canadian soldiers marching through the streets and liberating his country, and I am convinced that it was at that point that he determined that he wanted to move to Canada.

A number of years later, in 1954, my grandparents, who were in their 30s at that time, took their three young children and boarded a boat to go to another part of the world that was not easily accessible at the time. Later in life, I met Joke Gerretsen, who is my father's cousin, who recounted that when they stood on the dock to watch their cousins leave, their mother said that they would never see them again. They left to go to another part of the world in an era when it was not easy to get on an airplane and be in another part of the world. They came here, and after a short period of time, ended up in Kingston.

As the previous speakers have said, the Dutch people have contributed immensely to Canadian culture. I will talk about a couple of personality traits I saw in both my grandfather and my grandmother. In particular, the Dutch were very resourceful people. Having very little money, my grandfather purchased a piece of former prison farmland in the Kingston area that he was going to build a house on. Not having a lot of money to buy the materials to build the house, he went to another site, where they were tearing down other houses to build a shopping centre, and he literally disassembled a house, piece by piece, and used those materials to build the house that is still standing today and that my aunt lives in. It just shows their resourcefulness.

From my experience, the Dutch are also extremely friendly and outgoing. My father, who served a long time in politics, both at the municipal level and later in the provincial legislature, credits the first time he was elected to my grandmother, Gonnie Gerretsen. She had a small hair salon in the basement of their house and would tell the ladies who came to have their hair done that they had better vote for her son John. He credits his first city council win to that.

They also have a reputation, and I think many Dutch people are extremely proud of it, for being a little bit frugal. There is some truth to that. I have witnessed that. I will tell members how it has benefited Canada.

● (1835)

Back in 1984, the Dutch community in Kingston decided it was going to build a not-for-profit seniors home. As a lot of Dutch people were getting to the age of retirement, community members wanted a seniors home, so they built an apartment building they called the Dutch Heritage Villa in Kingston.

Private Members' Business

To build it, they accessed some money from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. They were so successful at building this home under budget that they tried to return leftover money back to CMHC. One of the things I find so remarkable about that particular project is that even when they built it, with the intention of having retired Dutch seniors move into this home in Kingston, they never planned to have it be exclusively for Dutch heritage. They wanted everybody to live there, anybody who was interested in living with them.

One of the things I found the most impressive about both my grandparents is that as much as they were Dutch, and as much as they knew where their heritage and roots originally began, they were equally proud to be Canadian. My dad tells a great story from 1994, when the World Cup was happening in the United States. There was an exhibition game played in Toronto between Canada and Holland.

My dad took my grandfather to this exhibition game, and my grandfather showed up there with the Dutch flag, ready to support the Dutch team in this World Cup exhibition game. As soon as he walked in and saw the Dutch on one side and the Canadians on the other, my grandfather put down his Dutch flag and said that he would be supporting Canada. He said that he lived in Canada now and this was the team he would be supporting.

This is not just the story of Dutch people moving to Canada. This is the story of Canada. Canada is such a young country, at 151 years old. What makes Canada so unique is that it has had the opportunity to see people come from throughout the world to establish new roots in Canada. Unlike some other parts of the world that have become more of a melting pot, in Canada we encourage people to celebrate those differences and the diversity we have.

Last weekend, I was at an event put on by members of the India-Canada Association of Kingston. They talked about the heritage of India and it being 5,000 years old. A lot happens in 5,000 years. When we think of Canada, which is 151 years old, it is a new country. What ends up happening is that our heritage is those various different places we have come from throughout the world. The reality is that unless we are of indigenous descent, we are all immigrants and have all come here throughout the last 151 years to establish new roots in this country.

I am extremely proud to speak and vote in favour of this motion. It gives me great pride to stand here today and talk about my Dutch heritage, as I know other members have. I look forward to voting on this when it comes before the House next week.

• (1840)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the beautiful riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke in the upper Ottawa valley, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to support Motion No. 207 to recognize every May 5 in Canada as Dutch heritage day.

It also gives me great pleasure to congratulate the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington, a southwestern Ontario riding, for putting forth this motion. Parliament will be losing a great member of Parliament, as the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington has announced his intention not to run in the upcoming federal election.

It has been a pleasure serving with such a fine member of Parliament and true gentleman. I can think of no better tribute to make to recognize the contributions of the member opposite to the people of Canada, as we recognize the contribution Dutch people have made to our Canadian heritage, except to pass Motion No. 207.

Before I continue my comments, I must declare a conflict of interest. My roots are in the riding of the member who sponsored the motion.

I was raised in Blenheim, and I worked the fields in Dover and Chatham before leaving to obtain a post-secondary education, eventually following my heart to the upper Ottawa Valley, which I am thankful to call home. Many of my family members reside in the Chatham area to this day.

The motion is about recognizing the Dutch people in our home communities, families like the Van Hoofs, the Rooks, the Jansens, the Vandergragts, the Van der Gallens, the Van Bavel, the Devries, the Van Der Ploegs, the Vandersleens, the Van Gentevoorts and the Stoops, founders of Steqcan, a farm equipment manufacturer in Westmeath. This is just to name a few.

The history of the Dutch in Canada actually starts south of the border, when the Dutch began to settle in the Hudson Valley in the 17th century, as my colleague mentioned earlier. Many of the local, familiar names in southern Ontario today date back to the Dutch united empire loyalists, who emigrated in 1783 and 1784 as refugees from the American Revolution. Names like van Alstine, Van Eck, Van Dusen and Van Ten Brock date from that early period of Dutch migration.

My family was part of the large migration of Dutch people who came to Canada in the aftermath of World War II. The story of my Dutch grandparents is my personal heritage moment, which I intend to share. It is representative of the reason May 5 deserves to be recognized as Dutch heritage day in Canada.

My maternal grandparents, Arnoldus Jacobus Geelen and Elisa Huberdina Geelen-Thiesen, emigrated from Holland, arriving in Quebec City on May 15, 1952, with 10 children, the youngest but a few weeks old. They had heard about life in Canada from friends and relatives who were already here. They said it was good, and my family was not disappointed.

They found the people friendly from the very first as Canada became home to all of them. Family members were understandably nervous about uprooting their growing children and moving to an unknown land with different customs, languages and food. This experience is no different from what the current generation of emigrants to Canada feel today when they arrive in this land.

Our Dutch immigrants made a point of not clinging to old country ways, and their children saw to that. The children in the Geelen family quickly learned English, and more quickly than my grandparents.

Now, most of the people in the Netherlands speak English. Today, the Netherlands ranks second after Switzerland for English proficiency among non-native speaking countries.

Private Members' Business

● (1845)

Back in the 1950s, when they arrived, they learned from grade-one readers, and my parents and their siblings were quick to correct their parents when they got a word or phrase wrong. My mother said she soon lost the taste for Dutch food too, and my grandmother learned to cook in the Canadian way.

I do not think anyone can really put into words why a family emigrates.

The Netherlands is known for its farming and its special practices. Currently it is the world's second-largest agricultural exporter, with specialty crops like tulips, chicory and sugar beets. Given the Netherlands' small land base and high population density, they have to plan carefully to maximize what they have. For example, if a Dutch farmer cannot easily access a patch of land with machinery to cut hay, he will use that as pasture land for livestock.

Dutch farmers like my family were attracted to Canada because they wished to farm the way this country does it. In Holland, they might have a farm of 20 acres, but it was broken up into many fields far distant from each other, and there was constant moving of machinery from one area to another. Some of the fields were less than an acre in size.

In Holland, the house and stables were all under one roof, with the living quarters quite separate. The animals were not in the house, but the house and barns were connected. The building was 100 feet long and 30 feet wide.

During the Second World War, more than 100 German soldiers and their officers billeted themselves in my grandparents' home. War is always a frightening time. As their home was near the German border, and the allied forces were firing on the German troops just over the border, the family was right in the middle of a war zone. The night one of my aunts was born, grenades and bullets filled the sky, and it was too risky for anyone to bicycle to bring the midwife. Someone went on foot for her, and my Aunt Nellie was born in the basement of the home.

One evening, in early January 1945, the Germans nailed notices on all the doors in Velden, the area of Holland my grandparents were from. It said they were to evacuate their homes in the morning. They walked and rode in carts to a town in Germany and were put on a train. My aunt said there was horse manure in the cars and no seats or windows. No one knew where they were going. In addition to my grandparents and their children, they had been giving shelter to three other families who had lost their homes, and all were evicted from the home.

They were taken to Groningen, in northern Netherlands, where they were billeted in homes. There were seven in the family, too many to be placed with one family, so the family was split up, which was very hard on everyone.

My grandparents returned to their home months later to find it in shambles. It was empty and dirty. Everything had been taken, even the sewing machine. The spirit that carried them through wartime deprivations and worry may well have been the factor contributing to the tremendous feeling of unity in the family and the desire to seek a fresh start in a place like Canada.

My grandparents left Holland for Canada with 10 children and the allowable \$200 to their name. The ship the family was piled into was the SS *Waterman*, a troop transport ship from the war, complete with bunk beds, which they had to share. There were four in one cabin and nine females in another cabin. My grandmother remembered being seasick the whole time.

They landed in Quebec city. My mother remembers, through the eyes of a child, a big glass building and getting on a train. The train took the family from Quebec City to Thamesville. They had no food on the train. My grandfather bought loaves of white sliced bread at a train stop. They had never had sliced bread before.

Their Uncle Ben, who had been in Canada, met the family at the train station in Thamesville, Ontario. He brought the new arrivals to his old two-storey house. His family lived at the back of the house, and my mother's family at the front.

School was hard because they did not know the language, their clothes were different, and they had no money. However, by working industriously together, by 1961 my grandparents were able to purchase a 100-acre farm of their own. The children were expected to help on the farm after school and on holidays, and everyone received an equal education. From there, the family has prospered several generations later.

● (1850)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington for bringing this motion to the floor of the House. It is a tremendous pleasure for me to speak in favour of the motion to make May 5 Dutch heritage day, every year in Canada, a day that I grew up knowing as Liberation Day.

It is also very fitting that today we are debating this in the House of Commons on the 70th anniversary, to the day, of the founding of NATO, as Canada and the Netherlands were among the first 12 signatories of that treaty.

I am also a daughter of Dutch immigrants. I grew up eating *hagelslag* and *chocoladevlokken* on my sandwiches, *oliebollen* on New Year's Eve and singing *Sinterklaasliedjes* and *Roodborstje tikt*. This was part of my identity growing up as a proud Canadian but also with the Dutch traditions and the culture and the food that my parents brought with them. That is the beauty of being Canadian, because we can have both. What immigrants bring with them is something that enriches the Canadian identity and the pluralism that we enjoy as Canadians.

Private Members' Business

I also grew up with something else. I grew up inheriting from my parents a deep appreciation for our freedom, for our democracy, for everything that Canada stands for, including the history that we have of always being outward-looking in the world and engaging, where necessary, in order to protect democracy and freedom in other parts of the world so that we can protect it here at home as well. I also inherited an incredible appreciation for those Canadian soldiers who went to the Netherlands, who died there and who sacrificed so much, again because my family would be able to live in freedom.

As a daughter of Dutch immigrants I feel both. I am of course Canadian and I am so proud of what Canada has done historically. My father was five years old when World War II ended. He was born in 1940. He grew up for five years in Deventer in the war. The very first time my dad got a chance to eat a candy was during the liberation when the Canadians came through the streets and they were throwing candies to the children. My dad tasted a candy for the first time because it was given to him by a Canadian soldier.

My mom was a kindergarten teacher in the Netherlands in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Every Wednesday afternoon they did not have classes. She would bring all the kindergarten students to the graveyards where the Canadian soldiers were buried and every four- and five-year-old child would lay flowers on the graves of the Canadian soldiers once a week. This is the deep appreciation that I grew up with, and Canadian children today should have that same deep appreciation because that is why we are all living in the world that we are living in today and in the country that we are living in.

When I was growing up, there was our next-door neighbour. His name was Ernie. He was a curmudgeonly old man. He was very grumpy and if we went on his lawn, he barked at us a bit. We were 10 or 12 years old and we did not like him very much, but my parents told us to always treat Ernie with the greatest respect. We were not allowed to say one bad word about Ernie because Ernie was at D-Day, and Ernie was a scout with the Canadian forces. He was the first Canadian soldier who crossed over the bridge and entered the city, Deventer, where my father was living with his family at the time.

My father's father and his grandfather were in the Dutch resistance. Ernie was the first Allied soldier to make contact with the resistance to prepare the ground for the liberation of Deventer, so my parents taught me that, no matter what happens, I have to honour and respect Ernie and all the other soldiers who did so much for us as a family but also for our country and for the Netherlands.

There are over one million Canadians today, including several in this House whom we have heard from, who are of Dutch heritage. I am very proud to be one of them. A hundred and forty thousand of them came after World War II, like my parents. My dad was the oldest of four children. When he was 20 years old, as a young piano tuner in the Netherlands, his parents decided to make that change, to get on a boat.

● (1855)

They arrived at Pier 21 with all their furniture, including the bed that my mom and dad still sleep in today. The furniture that came on the boat in April 1960 is still in the family today. Five years later, my mom, a 19-year-old kindergarten teacher, travelled to Canada on her own. Young 19- or 20-year-old girls of Dutch heritage could not live

by themselves in Calgary at that time, so she boarded with a Dutch family by the name of Vandenberg.

Three years later, my mom and dad were married. It was my dad's family that she was boarding with for those years. I am so proud that both of my parents come from the Netherlands, that they are part of that proud tradition and that they passed that along to me.

In my riding, there are many people of Dutch heritage. There is even, I am so proud to say, a Dutch grocery store on Merivale Road in my riding, where people can buy *snoepjes* and all kinds of Dutch treats. That is very special, but it is even more special because we know that Dutch Canadians have contributed so much to this country.

Today is about celebrating Liberation Day and what Canada has done for the Netherlands, but also the contributions of Dutch Canadians, and not just Dutch Canadians but all immigrants, to the fabric of our society. From the beginning, when indigenous peoples taught the settlers how to survive in this land, this country has been made by wave after wave of successive immigrants. All have opened their arms and welcomed the groups that have come after, and my family is no exception.

I talk about the liberation of the Netherlands. I am the chair of the human rights subcommittee, and when we look at what is happening in the world today, the human rights abuses, the genocides and the horrible things that are happening in the world, I am so proud that Canada is a country that is contributing to ending those kinds of things.

My mom used to tell this story. Just before she was born, when her older sister was a little girl, their farm was a safe house for Jewish families during the war. One day, German soldiers expropriated the home. There was a family in the barn, and her older sister had to climb through the attic to the barn so she could warn the family that the place had been taken over by the German soldiers. My great-grandfather and his brother were both put into concentration camps because they were union leaders and part of the Dutch underground, the Dutch resistance. They were political prisoners at that time.

I grew up reading Anne Frank and understanding that this is an incredible part of Canadian history. We have always stood up for what is right and what is just, against the atrocities of Hitler and the atrocities that are still happening in the world today, because human rights, democracy, freedom and equality are Canadian values. They are also Dutch values. These are the values my mom and dad, Herman and Maria Vandenberg, instilled in me when I was growing up.

I am so proud I am the daughter of Dutch immigrants. I am proud of the deep friendship between Canada and the Netherlands, and I am very proud to support this motion today to make May 5, every single year in Canada, Dutch heritage day.

● (1900)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to wrap up what has been a wonderful experience. I cannot begin to express my thanks and appreciation to all my colleagues, both on this side of the House and on the other side.

Adjournment Proceedings

Listening to the member for Ottawa West—Nepean telling her marvellous stories reminded me of some of the experiences I had in my own house. My wife is here with me today. She can testify to how her family would protect Jews on the farm as well. My father was a member of the Dutch underground.

This motion has two stories. The first story is about our brave troops, the ones that my colleague so eloquently told us about, and how they died and were left on the shores and in the ditches of the Netherlands. They gave their lives so we could experience this tremendous freedom and place we love so much, Canada.

It is also the story of brave immigrants, not just the Dutch. All of us have so many different ethnicities in our ridings, those who have come from other lands. We have heard about the challenges and the hardships they faced and yet they rose to the top. As a result, Canada is a better country for it.

I had the opportunity to visit with a friend of mine, someone I grew up with. He lived across the road when we were kids. He told me about his dad and mom, Henk and Allie Zantingh, coming to this country in 1957, with their 11 children. He worked for a fruit farmer a little south of Chatham and picked apples for 50¢ an hour.

Clarence said that his first memory of his parents were seeing his dad cry. His dad was experiencing what so many immigrants experience. He was crying and wondering how he was going to make it. Clarence's mother put her arms around him. They were sustained by their faith and by their hope for a better day. Today, I would suggest that there may be as many as 100 offspring of my friend's family and they are all great contributing members of our society.

I share with all members in this place our deep appreciation for this country, for the opportunities that are granted to us as citizens. I know I speak for all Dutch immigrants, as well as all the other immigrants in the country, who are so thankful they are here and so thankful they can contribute to the country as well.

I look forward to the vote that will take place on my motion. I thank all members for their contributions.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 10, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is once again my honour to rise in the House to talk about official languages and the importance of promoting the French language across the country.

On November 21, as a language crisis rocked Ontario's francophone community, I again appealed to the Liberal government about the Ford government's disastrous decision to eliminate Ontario's Office of the French Language Services Commissioner and scrap plans to build a French-language university in Toronto. That decision is affecting not only Franco-Ontarians, but also francophone communities across the country.

Francophones have a well-earned reputation for fighting for their rights and their language. At every opportunity, the Prime Minister says that he stands up for francophone communities, but at this point in time, nothing is happening and Franco-Ontarians are paying the price for political inaction.

I want to start with Ontario's French-language university. In an open letter published in *Le Devoir* on November 21, 2018, historians from the Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française eloquently conveyed the importance of a university for a community:

...the abolition of Ontario's French-language university violates the hard-fought, vested rights of franco-Ontarians to post-secondary education in their own language...To our knowledge, this is the first time in modern history that a state has abolished a university for budgetary reasons.

...universities are crucial institutions to any community, and even more so if the community is in a minority situation.

Members will understand why it is so important to make every possible effort to defend Ontario's French-language university. It is now April 4, several months after the start of this crisis, and talks between the federal government and the Government of Ontario are going nowhere, as they have made no progress on protecting French-language services in the province, where some 800,000 French speakers still do not have their own university.

This is why people in Ontario and in all francophone communities across the country asked why the government did not take real action, including expressly allocating its share of funding for Ontario's French-language university in the budget. Unfortunately, the government is not listening to the people of Ontario.

In addition, Ontario plans to alter the mission and role of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner, an independent body, by creating a French language services commissioner position within the ombudsman's office. Unfortunately, the French Language Services Commissioner will issue his last report on April 16. We must take action.

What more can the government do to improve the situation in Ontario?

• (1910)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of being in the House tonight to speak about Canada's official languages.

I would like to remind my colleague, the member for Drummond, that education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. That is why, for almost 50 years, the Government of Canada has worked closely with the provinces and territories to support minority education and second language education.

[English]

Our government recognizes the crucial role played by institutions to ensure the rights of Ontario's citizens according to the French Language Services Act. That is why we are supporting the Franco-Ontarian community as an official language minority community.

[Translation]

As part of the action plan for official languages, we approved \$1.9 million in funding to enable the team working on Ontario's French-language university to continue its efforts until January 2020. Clearly, the ball is in the Government of Ontario's court.

[English]

It is incumbent on the Government of Ontario to apply for federal funding, not the reverse. On several occasions, from November 2018 to January 2019, our government contacted the Government of Ontario to gauge its intentions and to urge it to apply for funding under the current call for projects. Unfortunately, the province confirmed that this was not its intent at this point.

[Translation]

The communications of the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie with her Ontario counterparts were clear. In a first letter dated November 16, 2018, she expressed her disappointment with the Ontario government's decisions to cancel the proposed French-language university and to abolish the position of French language services commissioner for the province. In her second letter dated January 13, 2019, she reiterated the federal government's commitment to contribute up to 50% of the total cost of Ontario's French-language university if the Ontario government were to apply for funding.

[English]

We should note that the Government of Canada has received a request for one-time funding directly from the team that is developing the Université de l'Ontario français project, concerning preliminary work to be done for the establishment of the Francophone knowledge and innovation hub in Toronto. This

unifying project could host the Université de l'Ontario français once established.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada worked with the provinces and territories to help build post-secondary infrastructure in Ontario and other areas of the country, and we plan to continue that work with Ontario's French-language university.

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, yes, the minister wrote letters, but since this was a crisis, we would have liked to see her pick up the phone to request an urgent meeting and sit down with her provincial counterpart. We would like the Prime Minister to call for a federal-provincial-territorial forum to talk about the situation.

We are in a crisis and this calls for the appropriate action. Unfortunately, the government has not taken strong enough action and has not demonstrated enough leadership. That is what we need.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, with the funding for the Francophone Hub of Knowledge and Innovation, we hope that the preliminary work for creating the university will continue until at least 2020. We want to publicly reiterate to the Government of Ontario that we are fully prepared to help fund this project.

• (1915)

[English]

Let us be clear. The responsibility to carry out this project lies with the Government of Ontario. That being said, the Franco-Ontarian community will always be able to count on the Government of Canada's unwavering support as a partner in this project and to help ensure the vitality of the Francophone community in Ontario and across Canada.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to a question that I brought forward to the attention of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard regarding the herring fishery in the Strait of Georgia, which is the Salish Sea in indigenous language, and familiar to people who live in that region.

As we know, our oceans are under enormous pressure. There are huge threats to our Chinook salmon and to the southern resident killer whales, which the government has identified and is concerned about, it claims. Right now there is only one herring fishery that is open between the state of Oregon and Alaska. That is just off my riding, between north of Nanaimo and Comox, to make it easy instead of using navigation terms on the water.

This fishery is open. The government, DFO, goes out, does assessments and allows a harvest of up to 20% of the biomass. Herring are a dominant forage fish in British Columbia waters, meaning they are a critical prey base, serving as an intermediary between plankton at one end and sea birds and Chinook salmon, southern resident killer whales and northern resident killer whales, as I identified.

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The fishery, as I talked about, opened on March 9, and it is where seine netters and gillnetters go out and catch female herring for their eggs, which are sold as kazunoko in Japan. The rest of that fish, after the roe is taken out, is, like the males, ground up and used for pet food and as food for farmed salmon.

There are a lot of people in British Columbia who think this is of huge concern. They question the whole idea of a reduction fishery, because that is what it is. Actually, over 90% of it is used for pet food or animal feed or fish farms. They do not think it is acceptable at a time when there is so much pressure on our oceans and our ecosystem.

The herring fishery is closed off of the west coast of Vancouver Island, off of the central coast, off of Haida Gwaii, off of Prince Rupert because of low stocks, which has occurred because of fishing based on DFO models and DFO predictions that have resulted in overfishing. In fact, with DFO's own modelling, they have overfished six of the last 13 years. They got it wrong.

As members can imagine, there are huge concerns in our region about DFO getting it wrong on the last remaining herring fishery on our coast. It is vital to all of the species that rely on our forage fish. In fact, in the science community, this concern is even backed up in a sense by DFO's own staff. Jaclyn Cleary, head of the Pacific region herring stock assessment program for Fisheries and Oceans, said there are differing opinions, even among scientists, about whether there should be a fishery for forage species such as herring.

We are hearing that a lot of scientists do not believe we should be fishing over 10%, if any, of our forage species, and even DFO is raising concerns.

The minister talked about relying on local and indigenous knowledge. I have talked to Chief Recalma, chief of the Qualicum First Nation, right off of where the fishery is. Nobody has consulted him. DFO has not even reached out. He thinks the herring roe fishery should be suspended. In the case of the Tla'amin Nation, Clint Williams, the Hegus or chief, has basically said they do not want the herring fishery off of Powell River, where the herring were decimated in the 1980s.

The Comox Valley Regional District Islands Trust is bringing a late motion to the association of Vancouver Island municipalities. Nature conservancy on Vancouver Island, the Courtenay fish and game club and Pacific Wild are all calling on the government to listen to local communities and indigenous knowledge and suspend the herring roe fishery in the Salish Sea.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government takes the conservation and sustainable use of the Pacific herring fisheries very seriously. We are committed to ensuring the conservation of fisheries resources, and I would like to assure Canadians that this is central to the mandate of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The decisions we make about setting catch limits and implementing a fishery management plan for Pacific herring are informed by a rigorous and thorough process informed by science and input from a wide variety of first nations, commercial fishing interests and the broader public.

Each year, scientific surveys are conducted in each of the five major Pacific herring stock areas, one of which is the Strait of Georgia. These surveys, along with biological sampling, inform the annual development of a peer-reviewed stock assessment by scientists at DFO. This stock assessment provides up-to-date advice on the health of each stock, which managers use to draft a fisheries management plan for each stock area that is consistent with the department's sustainable fisheries framework policies, which requires that we take a precautionary approach.

Our draft management plan goes through a public consultation process to ensure that we account for important indigenous and local knowledge before making final decisions about fishery planning.

This year, the peer-reviewed stock assessment estimates for Pacific herring indicate that the biomass of the stock in the Strait of Georgia is in a very healthy state. A limited roe herring fishery was proposed for the Strait of Georgia that ensured that a minimum of 80% of the estimated biomass was left in the water. This will ensure that there are enough herring left to spawn and sustain fisheries into the future and ensure that herring can continue to play an important role in the ecosystem as a source of food for many other species, such as salmon, seals, sea lions and humpback whales.

Where evidence of concerns have emerged in the Strait of Georgia, we have responded. For example, we have implemented several closed areas where no herring fishery will be permitted to occur to protect sensitive spawning areas of localized Pacific herring populations. I can assure everyone that the decision to close an area is not taken lightly and is always grounded in scientific advice.

Furthermore, over the past three years, the department has initiated a comprehensive renewal of its Pacific herring management regime through an extensive consultative process with first nations and fisheries stakeholders to ensure that it reflects the broadened goals Canadians have come to expect from fisheries resource management and the best available scientific advice about how we can achieve those goals.

Our approach to the management of the fishery in the Strait of Georgia this year explicitly reflects this comprehensive work. More details about this can be found in the fishery management plan that was developed by way of a public consultation process and that has been widely circulated to all stakeholders.

In closing, I would reiterate that the management decisions we made this year for the Pacific herring fishery are based on careful consideration of the concerns raised and the best available science.

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•(1920)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, as I stated earlier, they have not actually consulted indigenous communities. The chief of the Qualicum First Nation has not even had a phone call from DFO to be consulted. In fact, they are concerned about DFO science, and for good reason.

Four of the five fisheries in British Columbia are closed. Chief, or hegus, Williams, as they go by hegus in the Klallam language, says, "I'm still not a one hundred per cent believer in their science. Their science said they could fish on the inside here and it's just devastated the fishery here."

It is closed, and the herring have almost vanished. There are concerns from indigenous communities and around the world about DFO science. Stephen Hume's article, in Focus on Victoria, says that in the 1950s, overfishing of Japan's herring led to a collapse. In the 1960s, it was the California sardine. Herring fisheries in Alaska and B.C. were closed in the 1960s. Overfishing destroyed herring stocks off Iceland, Norway and Russia. In 1972, they overfished the Peruvian anchovy fishery. In 1992, it was the Atlantic cod.

We do not want it to be the herring roe fishery in the Strait of Georgia in the Salish Sea. We are calling on the government to do the right thing, listen to local knowledge, trust indigenous knowledge, and do not make this the final chapter of the herring roe fishery on the coast of British Columbia.

•(1925)

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my remarks, all decisions with respect to fisheries management, including the decisions with respect to the herring fishery in the Strait of Georgia, are grounded in science. If my hon. colleague does not believe in science, that is up to him. We have also engaged in an extensive public consultation process.

As I indicated, all of these things are factored into the management of the fishery, but first and foremost is that foundation in the best scientific advice available, which is in fact peer reviewed. We have and will continue to rely on science in these matters.

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each and every year. In Saskatoon, a point-in-time count found that 475 individuals, including 26 young people and 11 children, experienced homelessness one night in April 2018.

In Toronto, 6,800 people experienced homelessness last night, including 523 young people and 802 women.

These are not numbers; they are people. We know the face of homelessness is changing. The fastest-growing population accessing homeless shelters in Canada are families with young children and women and children fleeing violence in shelters. Young people who identify as LGBTQ2S are overrepresented among those who are homeless, as are youth who have aged out of foster care and indigenous peoples in urban centres

For these reasons, and others, the New Democrats believe that all Canadians have a right to safe, affordable housing.

Why does it matter if Canadians have a right to safe and affordable housing enshrined in our laws? Tim Richter, the CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, said it best in a public comment he made last year. He said:

We know that rights-based housing approaches are the most effective approach to resolving homelessness and housing need...Without these rights-based approaches, I think, the national housing strategy will not be as effective as it could be and may not meet its objectives.

In other words, we need a rights-based housing policy, because it is the most effective approach to solving homelessness. Without taking this approach, the government's housing policies and programs are likely to fail.

Why has the Liberal government failed to enshrine the right to housing into law, something we had expected from it? The obvious reason is that perhaps it does not believe that safe and affordable housing is a right. If it does not believe that, as a government it is under no obligation to uphold or protect that right. That is exactly what the government is doing. It is refusing to change our laws to ensure housing is a right, and I believe it is choosing to tolerate homelessness in Canada today, tomorrow and in the future.

The stated goal of the government's own plan to address homelessness is to reduce, by 50%, the number of chronic users of homeless shelters in 10 years. How can we end homelessness if ending homelessness is actually not the goal of the government?

If we fast forward a decade and assume that the government's homelessness policy is 100% successful in achieving its goal, what would we expect on April 4, 2029? We would see 3,408 residents still staying in homeless shelters in Toronto; 169 people would be homeless in Hamilton; 700 people would be homeless in Ottawa; over 1,000 people would be homeless in Vancouver; and in my community in Saskatoon, there would be 288 people homeless, including 13 young people and six children. That is if the current plan works.

I find this unacceptable. Therefore, my original question still stands. Why will the government not enshrine the right to safe, affordable housing in legislation? Why will it not commit to ending homelessness once and for all?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Saskatoon West points out some of the housing challenges that Canada faces. These challenges are well known to our government, which is why, from day one of our mandate, we made it a top priority to ensure that more Canadians have a safe, affordable place to call home. We began funding solutions to these problems from our very first budget in 2016.

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Canadians do not have to wait for results. We have invested \$5.7 billion to date and have improved housing for close to one million families. This includes young families, seniors, women and children fleeing domestic violence, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults. At the same time as we were responding to immediate housing needs, we have begun delivering a comprehensive long-term plan, Canada's first-ever national housing strategy.

Many of the main initiatives of this 10-year, \$40-billion plan were rolled out last spring. New homes and shelters are already being built and existing homes are being repaired and renovated.

We have launched an updated and expanded homelessness strategy with dedicated funding for indigenous homelessness and more flexibility for communities to develop solutions that meet their needs. We are also investing in better data to get a clearer picture of the issues across Canada and to develop innovative solutions.

We are working in close collaboration with the provinces and territories, with seven bilateral agreements in place and others well under way. These agreements are unlocking further investments for housing, like direct benefits for low-income Canadians and funding to stabilize community housing.

Finally, I want to take a moment to specifically address my colleague's comments regarding indigenous housing. In February, we announced \$638 million in investments to ensure that indigenous peoples living in urban, rural and northern communities have better housing outcomes now and for generations to come.

One-third of this funding will be delivered through the Canada community housing initiative as part of the bilateral agreements. It will help preserve and improve the condition of community housing units for urban indigenous families living in cities or urban centres across the country. Two-thirds of the funding will address indigenous homelessness. This represents an increase of almost 70% in dedicated indigenous funding for homelessness. The funds will be delivered through Canada's new homelessness strategy, "Reaching Home", which I mentioned earlier.

A part of this funding will also flow through the national housing co-investment fund, which will lead to more indigenous housing projects, new and renovations, whether they are projects to create new homes or to repair and modernize existing ones.

Finally, we are also working closely with our indigenous partners to finalize distinction-based housing strategies. These first nations, Inuit and Métis strategies will address the unique needs of their communities and they are backed by a significant investment of \$1.5 billion.

I am extremely proud of the work that we have achieved, but we know that there is much more work to be done. To keep that momentum strong, we need to keep housing on the agenda for the long term. That is why we will soon be tabling legislation to protect the national housing strategy.

The legislation will include measures to ensure accountability and to ensure that those most affected by Canada's housing challenges continue to have a strong voice in solutions going forward. It has strong support from Canadians across the country.

I hope we can also count on the support of members from both sides of the House for the legislation. We have an opportunity to make a lasting change for housing in Canada, a change that will create a strong economy and strong communities, where everyone in Canada has a safe and affordable place to call home.

• (1930)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I do want to make some comments. I take some issue with the government's response and their boasts about the infamous \$40 billion we keep hearing about. I think it is important for Canadians to recognize that much of this money was promised under the previous federal government and this government has taken a great deal of credit where it is not owed. We have had lots of announcements and very little investment, especially since the \$40 billion includes matching funding, not only from provinces, territories and municipalities but also from private partners. It is not \$40 billion invested by the federal government.

As usual, Liberal words do not match actions. When it comes to homelessness though, I think we can do better.

I do hope that the legislation that the parliamentary secretary spoke about does enshrine the right to housing in law, commits the resources, develops policies in support of this goal and measures their effectiveness as well. New Democrats know this is needed and we are ready to do just that.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, the bottom line is that everyone in Canada deserves a place to call home that they can afford and that meets their needs. Our government has made this a top priority since the beginning of our mandate and we are already seeing the results.

Already close to one million people in Canada have benefited from our investments in housing, and momentum is strong to reach our ambitious goal of lifting 530,000 out of housing need and reduce chronic homelessness by 50%.

The national housing strategy's main programs have been rolled out and new projects are already breaking ground. We are working to finalize new first nations, Inuit and Métis strategies. New, more progressive bilateral agreements are being signed. We are close to launching legislation to keep housing on the agenda for generations to come.

Yes, housing needs continue to be great and, yes, there is still lots of work to do. However, Canadians are already feeling some relief. We are on track to making a lasting difference, giving more people a safe and affordable place to call home.

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•(1935)

(The House adjourned at 7:35 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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