



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 348
Thursday, October 3, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 3, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement to Amend the Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America for the Sharing of Visas and Immigration Information”, done at Ottawa on July 19.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled “Reducing the Harms Caused to Canadian Fish Stocks by Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing”.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table the Conservative supplemental report to the fisheries committee report on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Canada's fisheries are a shared resource that belongs to Canadians, and the government is entrusted with managing and conserving fisheries for the benefit of future generations. The committee received shocking testimony in this study. From the Fraser River in British Columbia to St. Marys Bay in Nova Scotia, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has failed to deliver leadership to ensure Canada's fisheries are conserved through enforcement of federal laws and regulations.

In our supplementary report, Conservatives recommend actions that must be taken to deal with illegal, unreported and unregulated

fishing in Canada, which the government has ignored. The time for action is now.

• (1005)

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

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, presented on Wednesday, May 8, be concurred in.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The Liberals have let Canadians down. They have broken another promise. They promised a Canada disability benefit that would lift persons with disabilities out of poverty, but they did not deliver. Those in the disability community are angry, and they should be; it is obvious that the government failed to listen to them.

Disability advocates and organizations, including the government's very own advisory council, were ignored by cabinet when it released a Canada disability benefit of \$200 a month. Of course, this amount is woefully inadequate. In consultation with community, the Liberals heard about the barriers of the disability tax credit and how many low-income people with disabilities were unable to access it; however, that is what the Liberals decided to propose to deliver.

After years of waiting and official input from 8,000 Canadians, and after receiving over 5,000 pieces of official input, this is what the government came up with. Either it did not try to live up to its commitment or it did not care. The government knows what this benefit needs to include, yet the cabinet acted on none of it. This is a cruel and callous government that continues to leave the most vulnerable behind.

I tried to imagine what the discussion was like at that cabinet table. Liberals must have discussed how choosing the absolute minimum amount of a benefit would hurt people. While discussing how low they could go, knowing that they would be hurting people, did they laugh? Did they laugh knowing that persons with disabilities cannot afford their rent or food? I want the government to explain how it could propose what it did.

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However, the Conservatives are no better. Their history is one of cuts and more cuts. They have never invested in persons with disabilities, and they are certainly not going to now. In fact, they voted against the disability benefit, dental care for persons with disabilities, diabetes medication for persons with disabilities, child care for persons with disabilities, contraception for persons with disabilities and school food programs for persons with disabilities. It goes on and on.

Why has the NDP brought this debate to the House today? We brought it to tell the government that there is still time for it to fix its deadly mistake. The Liberals can make good on their promise to the disability community. They can fix the benefit. Their cabinet has the power. All the consultation is in. They have heard what is needed. Now, they just need to get to work. It is urgent. No one else should die on the Liberals' watch, and that is not overstating it. Suicides, unnecessary MAID and deaths by poverty are a reality in this country, and the government must do better.

Over one million persons with disabilities are living in poverty, and during committee study on the disability benefit, Employment and Social Development Canada shared a comparison between the highest poverty lines per province and the standard amount of provincial disability supports, which is inadequate. Not a single province provides income supports to persons with disabilities that are even close to the poverty line. These numbers are from 2020; with inflation, the gaps are surely higher now. Those gaps do not even include the additional cost of living with a disability in this ablest country.

This benefit needs immediate change. It needs to be raised to an adequate income that truly lifts persons with disabilities out of poverty, including the costs of a disability. This \$200 is an insult. This is a new benefit for a new generation. It needs to live up to the expectations of the community and fulfill its legislative commitments. The time is now to have proper income supports for persons with disabilities.

It is simple to explain what needs to be fixed. This \$200 a month is profoundly inadequate. It is hidden behind an inaccessible disability tax credit, which is totally unacceptable. There is no protection from clawbacks, which needs to be changed.

• (1010)

It is a disgrace that the Liberal government does not care about the impact of clawbacks. A person with disabilities relying on the income benefits they are entitled to knows that clawbacks are deadly. Anyone living in poverty knows this. The benefit needs to be protected from clawbacks.

I think about the CERB. Many Canadians applied for the CERB in good faith and got it. Now, we have a cruel and callous federal government that has decided it is a good idea to start targeting people already living in poverty to get their CERB back. The government knows that people are living in poverty. It knows that the incomes of the people it is going after are the lowest in Canada, but it is still doing it. At the same time, it is giving free rides to the greediest corporate CEOs.

This benefit also needs to get into people's bank accounts right away. There is absolutely no reason for the government to wait un-

til 2025 to deliver income supports for people who are hurting now. There is still time to do what is right, which can be stated in two words: "fix it".

Persons with disabilities continue to live in poverty, with no relief from the government. We have seen rents soar over the last year, pushing many Canadians out of the housing market; they are unable to afford safe and adequate housing. For persons with disabilities, accessing housing that meets their needs is nearly impossible. When we add discrimination on top of that, we find that more and more stories are coming out from across Canada about the reality of persons with disabilities living rough, living in the streets. We see it right here in Ottawa. Persons with disabilities are forced into homelessness because of the lack of affordable housing options. Organizations, including food banks, are at a breaking point because more people are relying on these services.

Many persons with disabilities do not have an adequate level of income, because of discrimination. What the cabinet has brought forward for the Canada disability benefit is discriminatory. Many persons with disabilities are currently using 80% to 90% of their incomes to pay for housing alone.

I end by saying that the Liberals promised "nothing without us". They should not disappoint. I ask the cabinet not to deny the human rights of persons who have disabilities. They should fix it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really important for us to recognize that the government has actually developed and put into place a disability program in which individuals with disability are receiving money. This is the first time ever that this has actually been put into place, and the current progressive government has done so on a number of different files. Yes, it is \$200. Yes, it would be nice if it were more than that.

At the very least, let us acknowledge that this is a significant step forward. I think we could all agree that it has gone from being absolutely non-existent to a program that is providing some support. I see that as a positive first step.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering what those cabinet discussions were about, and now I know. They were not about actually writing legislation.

The government is not offering a benefit that upholds human rights. It is talking about what is nice and not nice. I am talking about people who are committing suicide, choosing unnecessary MAID, living on the street because they cannot afford rent and have lost their housing, and not eating for days at a time because they do not have access to food. This is not an idea about what is nice and what is not nice. It is a violation of human rights.

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• (1015)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time and time again, we hear the NDP get up in the House of Commons and talk about how terrible the Liberal government is. They talk about how all these terrible things are happening in this country because of the Liberal government and how horrible it has been as a government. However, their party has helped keep the Liberals in power for the last three years.

If the member really has conviction behind what she is saying, is she going to finally stop supporting the government she thinks is so terrible and vote non-confidence in it?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I am in my sixth decade in this country, and I have lived all across Canada. The Conservatives have been in government many times in my life, and they are worse. I would not want to have a Conservative government. A Conservative government made sure that I did not have child care, had to pay for my own contraceptive and did not have the access to housing that was required.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was not surprised by the Liberals' response. They voted against pensions yesterday. They are patting themselves on the back. They voted against my bill for a guaranteed livable basic income in addition to other supports meant for specific and special needs, which would have lifted people with disabilities out of poverty. At every turn they have continued to be front and centre in violating the human rights of people within the disability community.

The member said that the Conservatives would be worse. I agree with her, because they have voted against every measure to assist people living in poverty. What does she think needs to be done to deal with the issue head-on?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for the work that she has done to lift indigenous women out of poverty.

I mentioned earlier that the Liberals' choices on income supports for Canadians are killing people. We know this is true for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, and the Liberals still continue to do nothing on the calls for justice.

What the Liberals need to do is start supporting people who are not their rich CEO friends with every kind of support that is available in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot I could talk about, but I am going to limit myself to one aspect of my colleague's speech, for which I thank her. I would also like to acknowledge her commitment to people living with disabilities. She is very passionate about this issue. That is what I wanted to tell her.

In her speech, she talked about people with disabilities and this long overdue benefit. Organizations in my riding, like the Dynamique des handicap s de Granby et r gion, or the DHGR, have questions. They want to know where this matter stands. They know that people with disabilities need this supplement.

What would my colleague say to them?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, the government needs to start delivering an adequate income immediately. It has the money; it can make it happen and it needs to do it.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost I want to thank my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam for all of her advocacy and work. It is clear that we have an advocate and an ally for people living with disabilities across Canada, and I am incredibly proud of the work that is being done.

This is a very important debate for us to be having today. We should be debating the issue every day until people living with disabilities are lifted out of poverty and have access to their basic human rights. This is what we should be talking about until it is done, and it is so far from where it needs to be.

I do not understand how we live in such a wealthy country, Canada, and people living with disabilities are expected to make ends meet with such a minimal amount of funds. I do not know whether anybody in the chamber has been to the grocery store lately, but there is just nowhere near enough money going to people living with disabilities to be able to keep food on the table, keep a roof over their head and be able to make ends meet.

We know that almost one million people across Canada are living with disabilities, and we know that the numbers are going to continue to increase as we have inadequate health care in place and inadequate access to mental health supports. We are setting ourselves up for a disaster moving forward if we do not look at how we can adequately support people so they are able to make ends meet.

There are many pieces that we know we can be doing to lift people living with disabilities out of poverty, yet we are not doing that. It is incredibly frustrating. As a result of the work of the NDP, there has been a national disability benefit finally moving forward. This is a huge move in the right direction. Absolutely, the Liberals worked with us, although it sure was not easy pulling them along to put the disability benefit into place.

It was a win for people living with disabilities, but instead, the Liberal government put into place \$200 a month for people living with disabilities. It is nowhere near enough. I have heard from people living with disabilities who have said that this is "a slap in the face". It is a slap in the face to say to them, "Here is \$200 a month to be able to make ends meet." That does not even cover the very basics of what they require.

There have been consultations with people living with disabilities. We have all the information we need, and now it is time to see the solutions being put into place. One of those solutions is, first of all, to raise the national disability benefit to ensure that people living with disabilities are no longer living in poverty; \$200 a month is not the amount needed. That is the very first thing we know we can do.

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Another thing we can do is make sure there is a system set up that allows people to apply for the disability benefit in a way that does not have barrier after barrier. We heard from people living with disabilities, prior to the benefit's recently having been implemented, that it cannot be tied to the tax credit. We know there are barriers to accessing the tax credit, but the Liberal government implemented the benefit in a way that requires it to be attached to the tax credit. It makes no sense.

Recently I hosted a workshop in my riding of Nanaimo—Lady-smith, and I am so thankful I had my colleague from New West-minster—Burnaby there with me, to talk to people in Nanaimo—Lady-smith about how to access the disability tax credit. With very little advertising or information having been put out, the room was filled; there were no seats left. The room was filled with people who are struggling to make ends meet and are experiencing endless barriers in being able to access the disability tax credit. We know that the system to access the disability tax credit is set up in an ableist way, which is not the way to set up a system for people to access money they need and deserve.

• (1020)

During the workshop, I received endless questions from people about how they apply for the disability tax credit, and it became very evident to me that the system is full of barriers. What is interesting is that we know that years ago, the government used to put into place people who would go into communities to discuss with people and help people with applications. All of that is gone; it has been cut. People are left to their own devices to try to sort out how to access the funds they need and deserve.

Clearly there are huge barriers in being able to access the disability tax credit, and now the government has tied the national disability benefit to the tax credit. Instead, people living with disabilities are asking for the disability benefit to be tied to the provincial and territorial benefits. This step would allow people who are already accessing funds through the provinces and territories to also receive the national disability benefit. We know that this is a system that would reduce barriers and allow people to access the supports.

There are clearly some solutions that could be put into place. For the disability benefit, we also need to make sure that the Liberal government is working with provinces and territories to ensure that there are not any clawbacks. It is not good enough for the federal government to put into place a benefit to help lift people out of poverty, which has yet to happen. I hope that this is what we do see. We also need to ensure that the provinces and territories are not going to be clawing back the benefit once the disability benefit is received. In the end, if there is a clawback, people again are going to continue to live in poverty.

I could go on. Clearly the issue is near and dear to my heart, because I am incredibly frustrated to see a government that is not putting the rights and the best interests of people living with disabilities at the forefront. People are reaching out to me, and they are exhausted with the system that has set them up for failure, the system that keeps them in the cycle of poverty. They are unable to get out of the cycle of poverty because of the systems that have been put into place by the government.

The Conservatives are, by far, nowhere near better. I am so concerned about Conservatives standing up and saying that they have the solutions for people living with disabilities, while at the same time they cut, cut, cut. They cut the supports and the programs that people need in order to make ends meet. They cut the health care programs. While the Conservatives were in government, 800,000 affordable homes were lost. They voted against dental care. How many people living with disabilities in Nanaimo—Lady-smith have come up to me and shared with me that they are finally accessing the health care that they need to be able to get their teeth fixed?

The Conservatives made cuts to mental health supports. The Liberals have not fixed the problem. Why is it that people cannot access mental health supports? If we want to look just at the financial side of this, how is it cost-effective to be looking at helping people once the situation has gotten so complex, rather than looking at getting help to people who need the help when they need it?

I could go on for much longer, because this is what we need to be talking about in the House. This is exactly what we have been elected to do: to represent people in our communities. People living with disabilities are struggling to make ends meet. People living with disabilities in our communities are in pain and they need to see members of Parliament standing up for them to get them the help they need and deserve.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other initiatives that the government has actually taken in a very proactive way to support individuals with disabilities. I am thinking in particular about the enabling accessibility fund, which has done a lot of wonderful work in terms of ensuring more accessibility.

I am wondering whether the member could provide her thoughts in regard to why it is important that the federal government not only created the program but also continues to have the program in place because mobility is so critical important to today's society.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, the member's question brings up another thing I wanted to talk about, which is how costly it is for people living with disabilities to make ends meet.

Issues of accessibility, like getting to where they need to go, such as getting to appointments, or affording their medications, these are additional day-to-day costs for people living with disabilities, yet they are expected to live on an income that does not even lift them out of poverty.

A lot of work needs to be done, and my hope is that we will see the Liberal government put into place these supports for people living with disabilities today.

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• (1030)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard both NDP members of Parliament reference Conservative approaches to disability. I would point out that during our time in government, our finance minister, Jim Flaherty, known as a champion for the disability community, introduced measures to help Canadians with disabilities in every single budget, including ready, willing and able; the RDSP; the employment works program; and the Canadian autism partnership working group. In this Parliament, the only party fighting against the extension of MAID for people whose sole issue is disability is the Conservative Party.

I want to point out one thing. She said that the Conservative government decreased health care payments. We hear that all the time. The fact is that our Conservative government increased transfers for health care by 6% every single year.

Why does the member and her party continue to spread the falsehood?

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that there are good people in all parties. I do not know the member who he just spoke about, but let us look at the record of the Conservative government. Let us look at how the Conservatives have consistently voted. They have voted against dental care, pharmacare and programs that people living with disabilities need and deserve.

We can have well-intentioned members of Parliament in all parties, but if we look at the actual record of the Conservative Party, it is nowhere near being there for people living with disabilities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I usually do not need to speak so loudly for my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith to hear me, but she changed seats so now I have to talk a bit louder.

I am happy we are taking this up today because it is an important subject. It affects a huge number of people in communities across Quebec and Canada, including my riding of Drummond. I have had conversations recently about the care these people are receiving for their social integration so they can have a decent standard of living and, in particular, so they can access services, such as cultural activities. This is an issue that concerns me particularly, but perhaps I digress.

My question for my colleague may not seem relevant to today's topic, but it is. I am deeply concerned about the way caregivers are being treated. These individuals play an essential role in the lives of persons with disabilities. Caregivers often have to sacrifice their careers and their savings to take care of a disabled loved one.

I would like to know whether my colleague has an opinion on the way these individuals are treated, these people who make sacrifices and put their lives on hold to care for a loved one in need.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work. We absolutely know the impacts of people living with disabilities. We know that it impacts the entire families, their loved ones, and we need to have systems set up to help. Everybody deserves to live with dignity and respect. That is why I hope every-

body will look at putting into place a guaranteed livable basic income. That will resolve many of the issues we are talking about today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to such an important issue. We, as a government, have made significant progress on the issue of people with disabilities. In great part, I attribute that to some of the people who make up the Liberal caucus, who, day in and day out, look at ways to ensure the government is moving forward on this very important file. If we look at some of the actions we have taken as a government, there is a reason to feel confident that it understands and wants to be there for people with disabilities in a very real and tangible way.

I had the opportunity to ask a question of the member who moved concurrence in the report, and I will go into some of the recommendations of the report. Before I do that, I want to acknowledge our Minister of Sport, who was the minister responsible for people with disabilities. I can recall a number of years ago, her standing in the chamber during the pandemic and giving a passionate speech about people with disabilities, the challenges they were going through, particularly during the pandemic, and how the government was trying to deal with and provide direct support to those people during that time. It was not an easy task because there was no data bank per se. However, the minister was determined, supported by the government, to come up with that data bank of sorts to ensure the government could give that one time payment. That was the right thing to do.

During the pandemic, the Government of Canada understood that it needed to help people. We saw that in a wide spectrum of supports. For the first time, we saw a government that took a segment of society and went even further with respect to supporting it, for a number of different reasons, some of which were referred to by the NDP member who brought forward the concurrence motion. That is why I am somewhat supportive, in principle, of some of the things she put on the record. In fairness, we need to look at where we are coming from and where we are going to on the issue of people with disabilities.

I have been a parliamentarian for well over 30 years. My first experience in dealing with disabilities was before I was a parliamentarian. When I was associated with the Winnipeg North Federal Liberal Association, we went into a downtown Winnipeg block with a gentleman by the name of Gary Montgomery, who had a disability. When we walked into his unit, it had been customized to accommodate his needs. From that moment forward, it gave me some new insight into the issues relating to people with disabilities. I truly believe, as I know my colleagues in the Liberal caucus believe, that mobility is critically important, and moving that forward and dealing with those types of issues is something for which we should all strive.

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When we talk about the issue of poverty, we know a higher percentage overall of individuals with disabilities are put into that position, and the government can do something. Through the different levels of government, there is a lot of patchwork, but for the first time we saw the single greatest increase in the budget line last year. Over \$6 billion were committed to a new national program to support Canadians with disabilities.

● (1035)

What really surprises me is the extent to which we are being criticized, that the \$6 billion were not enough. We should be looking at some of the comments that have been put on the record with respect to that. First, establishing the fund recognizes the very real need that has been there not just in the last year or two, but virtually since the beginning of Canada's Confederation in 1870 and even prior, where there were extra needs for people with disabilities.

For the very first time, we actually have a national program, supported by \$6 billion. That is a significant amount of money, and it is money that is well spent. The government has a lot of priorities. I would challenge any member of the House, whether Conservative, New Democrat, Bloc or Green, to show me another government in the last 50 or so years that has been as progressive as this Liberal government has been on a number of different files. Many of those files have a direct benefit for people with disabilities.

When the government commits \$198 billion over 10 years to our national health care plan, certain sectors of our society will benefit more by having that sense of security. Our disability community is one of those sectors, as are seniors. This government has put a high priority on seniors and people with disabilities. We only need to look at where those investments have been made. That is where we will see the priorities. Health care is a big one. That is number one from my perspective and from the perspective of many of my colleagues within the Liberal caucus.

When we think of health care, it also includes the expansion of the dental system. The ones that benefit the most through the dental care program are those individuals with the least amount of money. When New Democratic members talk about individuals who have a disadvantage because of their disability and their ability to get income, not exclusively, but often, those individuals will benefit directly from the dental program. The Conservatives voted against that program.

There was one comment from the minister that I thought was cute, and that was that the Conservatives were worse. I am thinking of a bumper sticker, and that is an absolute. Virtually on every topic, we will find the Conservatives are worse. That should be a good motivator for anyone to keep the Conservatives in opposition indefinitely, based on their history and performance in providing supports for people with disabilities, for any initiative from the national government on supporting people with disabilities, and our seniors.

● (1040)

We can think of the pharmacare program. Here we are, putting in place the groundwork for a national pharmacare program for people who have diabetes. I would suggest that that is just a starting point, along with free contraception. I like to think that there is great po-

tential for things like shingles, and other issues. These are ways to expand a pharmacare program that would help, in particular, people who have economic challenges for a wide spectrum of reasons. However, we have a Conservative Party that opposes even those types of initiatives, although it likes to say that it supports people with disabilities.

With respect to the budgetary measures, I made reference to the \$6-billion clause. By the way, the Conservatives voted against that, but there is also the accessibility fund that was created by the government. Are there any guesses to how the leader of the Conservative Party voted on that? It is no surprise: He and his minions voted against it. At the end of the day, these types of programs make a tangible, real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

● (1045)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I just heard the hon. member refer to members of Parliament in our party as minions. I defer to you, Mr. Speaker, as to whether that is parliamentary language. The level of discourse from this member is descending into name-calling.

The Deputy Speaker: We are all honourable members, and I know the Chair has been very—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I have the chair right now. I have the microphone, and I am suggesting that we all listen for just a moment. The Speaker has made a decision that we call each other by our riding names and that we try to stay away from name-calling, as best we can, in the chamber.

I will ask the hon. member for Winnipeg North to retract that and continue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I retract it. I can assure the member who stood up on the point of order that I was not talking about individuals, but I retract the comment.

I can appreciate that, when truth and facts start to be talked about in the chamber, the Conservatives feel a little uneasy. That is just the way it is. The truth hurts, and at times there are a lot of hurt feelings across the way. That is usually when members—

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make sure that that was a retraction, just a retraction, and not an “I retract, but” statement.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I said the word “but”. If I did say the word “but”, I am so sorry. I ask the Conservatives to please forgive me.

The bottom line is that, at the end of the day, the Government of Canada looks at the issues that are before us and develops programs, whether through legislative measures or budgetary measures, that make a real difference in all regions of Canada. When we focus in on an issue, such as that being proposed in the concurrence motion today, which is the issue of disabilities, I would challenge any member of the House to demonstrate a government, whether it is at the provincial level, and there are a lot of provincial governments out there, or a national level, that has done more and invested more in the interests of people with disabilities in the last 50 years.

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An hon. member: Jim Flaherty.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Did the member say Jim Flaherty?

Mr. Speaker, we legalized it. I do not know where he gets Jim Flaherty as one of the individuals. Maybe the member can explain in his question why he believes that Jim Flaherty has done more.

I was here when Jim Flaherty was Minister of Finance. Maybe if we did a quick Hansard search we would find that it is very lacking in showing support for the disability community. That is the reality. I will wait for the question. Maybe the member will come back with some specific quotes from Jim Flaherty using the word “disability”. I will not hold my breath.

As I was saying, members can take a look at the initiatives. We are not only focused on yesterday, but also on today and the types of initiatives we are taking. I made reference to the enabling accessibility fund, which is broken into a few sections. Let me just give members a sense of the types of things that it deals with. It deals with purchasing para hockey sleds; building raised garden beds in community gardens; providing accessible beach mats and beach wheelchairs; purchasing voice recognition software; building ramps, accessible doors and accessible washrooms; installing screen reader devices and hearing loop systems; constructing a universally designed office; and creating an accessible playground. When we talk about the EAF, members can think about the benefits of a program of this nature.

By the way, the Conservatives voted against this stuff. Anyway, that is beside the point. Members can think in terms of some of the things that have been dealt with, such as ramps, accessible doors, accessible washrooms and elevators. I was at a facility a while back where they were able to put in an elevator, in part, because of the federal support to do that to assist people with disabilities and elders. There are also pool lifts, multi-sensor rooms and stations, accessible playgrounds, accessible parking, accessible—

● (1050)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I recognize that members have quite a bit of latitude in their speeches, but I am rising at this moment because we are just at the outset of what is meant to be a three-hour debate on the Canada disability benefit. The parliamentary secretary has now spent the last several minutes speaking about a completely unrelated fund. I would ask, if this is meant to be a debate about the Canada disability benefit, and we are hearing about money for a ramp from some other fund, whether that would be relevant to the debate at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair does allow a lot of latitude, as long as the hon. member can refer it back to the debate. I will call for a quick relevance and call on the hon. member for Winnipeg North to continue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr Speaker, that is one of the most bizarre points of order I have heard on relevancy. We are talking about the funding and support for people with disabilities, and I am talking about money that is going towards people with disabilities and what it is doing for them. That point of order makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

The member from the Green Party might not like to hear it, but these are the types of financial supports that are going to people

with disabilities that are actually making a difference for them. I would suggest that we should be looking at not only the disability program, which is providing much-needed funds, but also the other types of funding the government has to support people with disabilities. To imagine some world where that is not associated with each other is just absolutely bizarre because—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we are talking about the Canada disability benefit, not every program under the sun.

I would also like to remind members to talk through the Speaker and not directly at members. This is unacceptable to me. We are here talking about the Canada disability benefit.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the intervention. I will remind our learned members here in the chamber to speak through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we can take a look at the type of funding and the legislative actions, virtually from the very beginning, back in 2015, when we saw tax measures to support Canadians, including those for individuals with disabilities, all the way up to the budget in which we announced the creation of the disability program. It was the first-ever national program. That is a program that is helping Canadians with disabilities.

I believe that we would love to be able to see that program continue to grow. One of the concerns we have is with the Conservative Party and its sense of commitment to the national disability program because, when it talks about fixing the budget, that was a \$6-billion commitment that was in the budget line.

Can we have the Conservative Party members stand in their places for questions and comments to make a commitment that they, in no way, will take away from the national program that we created and put into place? I think we need to recognize that the Conservatives have an issue with wanting to cut government expenditures. I would like to hear from them on their commitment to leave this program alone. Will they do that? I know they get the opportunity to ask me some questions, and I hope that, prior to asking those questions, they will make that commitment.

With those few words, I am happy to take questions.

● (1055)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the subject of Jim Flaherty will probably come up over the next three hours. I want to make sure we are clear on a couple of things because the hon. NDP member did not know who he was, and the Liberal member mocked him and his legacy a little in the House. Of course, Minister Flaherty passed away in 2014. He had a son with a developmental disability and was very public about it.

The CBC said, “although Flaherty's legacy may be measured by his effectiveness at keeping the books balanced during one of history's most calamitous economic periods, he was also passionate about improving quality of life for disabled Canadians.” André Picard, of the Globe and Mail, wrote, “Disability community ‘has lost a true champion’ in Jim Flaherty”.

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As we are having the conversation about this important issue, which affects many of us and many of our families, I am just going to make this comment. I am not even going to ask a question. I hope that we can all show some respect in this place and understand that we all want the best for Canadians living with disabilities.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member in that I like to believe that all of us want to support our disability community. All of us want to do that. However, let us remember, prior to the member standing up asking a question, I asked that the Conservative member make a commitment that the finances that we have committed will in no way will be cut by the Conservatives. He is a Conservative, and we did not get that commitment.

I was here when Minister Flaherty was the minister of finance. They can be a strong advocate for disabilities, but at the end of the day, what did Stephen Harper actually do? That is why I challenge the Conservatives when they try to give the impression that the Government of Canada is not moving forward on the issue. The Conservative government did not do anything.

I was asking for tangible—

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe misleading the House is against the rules of the House. The hon. member can look at every single budget from the Conservative years—

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into debate. I know the hon. member does have an opportunity to speak further on down the road on the same issue. That was not a point of order.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary shared that he was surprised by the disability community's reaction to the Canada disability benefit. He is right on one thing: There was deep disappointment.

I will give him a few quotes. Inclusion Canada said, "Our disappointment cannot be overstated". The Quebec intellectual disability society noted that this is worse than any worst-case scenario. Disability Without Poverty stated, "To say we are disappointed is an understatement." Here is why. The government promised four years ago that the Canada disability benefit would lift folks with disabilities out of poverty in the same way the GIS did. The GIS is \$15 billion a year and gives a maximum amount of over \$1,000 a month. This benefit barely lifts anyone out of poverty, only 25,000 people in total.

The second reason for the disappointment is that the government took four years to get it done. The whole way along it kept saying it needed to hear from the disability community to understand more about it. Well, the benefit is nothing that was asked for, being 200 bucks a month that is tied to the disability tax credit, which cuts out a ton of people, and not even starting until July 2025.

Does that help the government understand better why the disability community is so deeply disappointed?

• (1100)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, not to discredit those organizations, but there are many different organizations out there doing a phenomenal job advocating for people with disabilities. I applaud

their efforts. I really and genuinely do. I would expect that they would continue to lobby whatever government is in office.

However, to draw a conclusion about what the federal government did by creating a national program and to say it is a bad program does a disservice to it. In fact, it is the first time we have seen a national program for this. No other line item in the budget had such a substantial increase. Does that mean we cannot grow the program? A good number of us would like to see the program expand. There is no doubt about that.

Everything has to come in time, I would suggest. We will continue to work with the members of the disability community.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, who spoke on the important committee report we are debating this morning. I will be quoting heavily from an amazing organization in my riding called Dynamique des handicapés de Granby et région, which works to address the challenges facing persons with disabilities.

The organization has a very dedicated executive director, Marie-Christine Hon, whom I would like to recognize this morning. She told me something that really struck a chord. She criticized the fact that there may have been a lack of consultation with organizations on the ground. I am going to follow up on the question my colleague asked earlier.

Were organizations on the ground adequately consulted? Will the measures that have been adopted be able to help the largest number of people with disabilities with the greatest needs? Lastly, will the measures we will be putting in place truly meet the needs of these organizations?

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say on this subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think of the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities and the many other non-profit organizations throughout Manitoba, and they are not just limited to Manitoba, obviously. We could talk about the different advocacy groups in every region of the country and the absolutely incredible work they do in representing people with disabilities. I would want and encourage them to continue the excellent advocacy they have been doing for people with disabilities, not only to the federal government but also to provincial governments, municipal governments and other stakeholders. It is not the case that only Ottawa deals with individuals with disabilities.

Ottawa needs to step up to the plate. That is exactly what we have done. We have stepped up to the plate in a very real and tangible way. We are not backing away from the plate.

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Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was probably one of the most ableist speeches I have ever heard: patting people on the back and telling the disability community to keep advocating. The government has an obligation to uphold the human rights of all persons, including those with disabilities, who have indicated very clearly that \$200 a month is inadequate. It is hidden behind the disability tax credit and is at risk of provincial and territorial clawbacks. This is a total failure by the government, and it is shameful that the member is choosing to tell those in the the disability community they should be grateful for having their human rights violated.

Is the member's government willing to raise the amount, to ensure an adequate income that would lift persons with disabilities out of poverty, or is his government prepared to continue violating the human rights of people with disabilities?

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this government does not violate individuals with a disability any more than I have seen in 20-plus years of New Democratic governments in the province of Manitoba. They have done a disgraceful job in things such as housing.

The member opposite likes to take the holy road, believing everything she says is at a high moral standard. However, I would challenge the New Democrats on a number of fronts that have actually worked against individuals in dealing with the issue of poverty. They do not get a gold star for their performance in helping the people who need help. I have lived it, when driving to the Manitoba legislature, for virtually 20 years, through the north end of Winnipeg and the inner city when the New Democrats were the majority government. I saw the disgraceful job they did at protecting the interests of the poor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Winnipeg North was speaking to me directly, screaming at me across the aisle. Perhaps he was put off by my question about his government violating human rights, but I would ask—

The Deputy Speaker: That is continuing the debate. Ultimately, I do want to remind members to try to work through the Chair and keep things in check. I know sometimes these conversations can get very emotional.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I really appreciate your moderation today. It is very refreshing to hear you speak about how we should treat each other in the House. However, when a member begins a statement by accusing another member of being “ableist”, in fact, that is the name-calling that you just called out.

We may have different perspectives on how to get to a better Canada that is fairer and kinder, but we are all here for the same reason. We are here fighting for our communities, fighting for our constituents, and trying to put forward a vision of Canada where people are going to have a fair chance to succeed. I think that when we talk about name-calling, it includes labels like “ableist”.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I did not call the member ableist. I said that was an “ableist speech”, and I will not retract that comment, because it was a very ableist speech.

The Deputy Speaker: We need to remember that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly here in this chamber either. I did call out the member for a statement he made, and I will call that one out as well. We should probably refrain from using those kinds of terms when we are talking here in the chamber. Once again, let us all take a deep breath.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country.

I will be splitting my time today with the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

I will start by correcting the record on some of the information that has been given by NDP and Liberal members here this morning. The first has to do with the voting record of the Conservatives on supporting the Canada disability benefit. I would note that on October 18, 2022, the bill passed second reading, which Conservatives supported. On February 2, 2023, it passed third reading, which Conservatives supported. When the legislation came back from the Senate on June 20, 2023, Parliament unanimously passed Bill C-22. I would like to correct the misinformation stated here this morning.

I would also like to bring up the importance of clawbacks not happening. The NDP interventions in particular today talked about clawbacks. I would note that when Bill C-22 was at the human resources committee, the Conservatives offered an amendment, through the legal department at the House of Commons, to protect persons with disabilities from clawbacks in the bill. That amendment was not supported at committee by the NDP, which the NDP brought up in this morning's interventions. I would note that it was Conservatives who tried to amend this legislation by putting forward good amendments to make it stronger, but unfortunately, they were not supported by the NDP and the Liberals.

I will next go through the timeline of this legislation, just to put it into context. There was an announcement by the government in 2020, in its throne speech, and Bill C-35 was tabled in the House of Commons in June 2021. The bill was nullified when the Liberal government called its unnecessary and expensive 2021 election, which stopped the whole process. After the election occurred, the government brought forward legislation again, which was Bill C-22, the Canada Disability Benefit Act, that then worked its way through Parliament. This legislation has been worked on for years. We heard from various stakeholders that previous to 2020, the government was reaching out to the disability community to gain input. This is something the government has been working on for a long time, and when it finally passed in February 2023, it was implemented.

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However, during that entire time, the Liberal government kept saying it was doing lots of consultation. It made a lot of announcements with a lot of fanfare. Unfortunately, what transpired is a lot of broken promises. A number of individuals and disability groups have come out strongly stating that this is a Liberal broken promise.

With regard to clawbacks, I want to mention it was the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities who promised a red line on clawbacks at the human resources committee on October 31, 2022. Of course, we have seen that that did not occur.

• (1110)

As well, Conservatives really wanted more certainty in the legislation, because it was very vague. A lot was going to be determined behind closed doors with meetings and within the government itself, and we were trying to ensure that there would be more certainty in the legislation. Unfortunately, that was not supported.

Conservatives really believe that persons living with disabilities are some of those most affected by the cost of living crisis, and the cost of living crisis that has occurred over the last number of years is because of the policies and legislation of this Liberal government that have been propped up and supported by the NDP for nine years.

We know that there has been 40-year-high inflation. Housing costs have doubled. Record numbers of people are going to food banks. We had a different study at the human resources committee that had to do with intergenerational volunteerism. We heard at that study really incredible testimony from not-for-profits saying that their donations were down and that they had lost many volunteers, many of them seniors, because they had to go back to work, and that is putting a lot more pressure on the not-for-profit sector because of the cost of living crisis.

The human resources committee is meeting now. I am here in the chamber because this has been brought up, but right now, the human resources committee is finalizing a study. The topic has to do with disability in Canada. I just want to read part of the study because it does tie in to what we are discussing this morning.

Without reading the whole thing, the study says, that the committee expresses “its concern about the progress made towards the goal of a Canada without barriers by 2040”. It goes on: “[to study] the progress towards the goal of a Barrier Free Canada by 2040; [and] that the committee invite the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities”..

Today is the last day of that study. Unfortunately the minister has chosen not to come to committee, even though it is right in the motion to have her come to committee. She is hiding from the committee. We do not know any reason for that. Perhaps the Liberal members who are in the chamber here today can explain why she is hiding from our committee. This is a study that was originally brought forth—

• (1115)

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

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the member opposite's suggestion that a minister is hiding is not appropriate

in the chamber. The committee has the ability to call and request witnesses, but making a reference like that is unparliamentary, and I would ask that she retract that.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the input. I do not think that is anything unparliamentary. I suggest to the hon. member that suggesting that the member does not want to come is fully in.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country has the floor.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, the minister has not come to committee on this particular study. The cost of living crisis is affecting persons with disabilities, which does tie in to the Canada disability benefit, because Canadians, and in particular persons living with disabilities, are in a cost of living crisis.

We did hear a fair amount of testimony over the last couple of weeks on this, and I will quote a couple of witnesses who were at this committee. Mr. Lepofsky was questioned regarding the cost of living crisis and whether it is more difficult for Canadians living with disabilities who may be disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis. His answer was, “When the Parliament, this committee and the Senate held hearings on the Canada disability benefit, you heard over and over how people living with a disability cost more.”

Another witness was just at committee, was asked a similar question. Mr. Janeiro's answer was, “The simple answer is yes. The slightly more complicated answer is yes, definitely.”

As such, we know that persons living with disabilities and those who support them, whether they are family members or other people in the community, do have extra financial challenges, so that is why it is important that we have these discussions. It is unfortunate that the Liberals' broken promises have really let down persons living with disabilities in Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a thing called the Conservative hidden agenda. Conservatives do not want to tell Canadians what they can actually expect if there was a Conservative government, because they know that they would lose a lot of support. Let me give us a good example of this. We made a commitment of \$6 billion to this first-ever national program for people with disabilities.

Is the member prepared to commit? When the Conservatives talk about one of their slogans, that they are going to fix the budget, is she prepared to commit that not one dollar will be taken out of that program?

Will she commit to that today?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned in my intervention, Conservatives supported this legislation all the way through.

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Every time we get close to a federal election, and this has happened for decades now, the Liberals' go-to talking point is hidden agendas. It really is a way to try to divert away from their complete mismanagement and failures. It is a way to divert away from the results of all of their policies and legislation that are leading more people to a food bank, that are creating crime and chaos in our communities. Canadian families are struggling and can barely afford to feed themselves. It is a typical diversion and this member does it quite often.

• (1120)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as usual, I enjoy debate back and forth where the Liberals and Conservatives argue about who is going to provide the most inadequate programs. The question that is actually before us today is not whether you support the existing program by the Liberals. The question that the New Democrats have put on the table is whether you support the original intention of this program, which was to create a benefit that would lift people with disabilities out of poverty.

Are you prepared to commit today that you would support lifting all people with disabilities out of poverty in this country or not?

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, the Speaker cannot make that decision, so I will ask the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, as I had said, Conservatives have supported this legislation from the very beginning. This has been a broken promise by the Liberal government, which has been propped up by the NDP for the last nine years, until recently, when there was a dramatic ripping up of an apparent agreement. The NDP has been supporting the Liberal government right along the way. It is on New Democrats. They are the ones who have been supporting the government. This is just another Liberal broken promise.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what are my hon. colleague's thoughts on the fact that the goal of this motion is to lift people with disabilities out of poverty? What does that really mean to the Conservative Party? Will it commit, here and now, to doing everything in its power to lift people with disabilities out of poverty and prevent them from living in poverty?

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, this motion and this debate are very important. The time when we could have actually put in concrete action would have been when the legislation was coming through Parliament and when we were looking at making recommendations at the committee stage, because we would then have had more in the legislation. That is what Conservatives were trying to do.

Unfortunately, that was not supported by other members opposite. We are left with more policies to be coming out of the regulation part as opposed to being in legislation. That was what we were actually attempting to do at committee and what Conservatives were attempting to do.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the question I heard from the disability community in Waterloo region over the course of the summer on this topic was that they saw that the Conservative Party supported the legislation, Bill C-22. They also recognized, though, that the legislation was devoid of almost every important decision about the benefit, including how much it is going to be, when it is going to be delivered and who is going to be eligible for it.

The member for Kelowna—Lake Country did support Bill C-22 through the committee stage and did seek to improve it at committee stage.

What will the member and the Conservative Party commit to when it comes to lifting the 40% of folks with disabilities living in poverty across the country? What will they do to lift those folks out of poverty, should they be in government one day?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, the member has been a strong advocate, and he did come to our committee as well. He attempted to put some amendments into the legislation. When members from other parties continue to prop the government up, this is what we are left with. We are left with legislation that is very vague. As I mentioned, we tried to put more into the legislation itself. Now it is left at regulations and this is what we are left with.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been known, particularly over the course of the last couple of years, to be pretty tough on the NDP, which is well-deserved and something I have done rightfully so, frankly.

For the last number of years, Canadians have had to watch in the House of Commons actions by the NDP, actions like we are seeing this morning with a debate it has brought forward to express its outrage and disbelief that the Liberals broke their promise. In this case, it has to do with the Canada disability benefit. I cannot count the number of times I have been in the chamber or watched question period and debates where NDP members have stood and been repeatedly frustrated and angry with the Liberals' announcements or the Prime Minister, who is the best at photo ops, and all these word salad feel-good statements and announcements, yet the NDP's follow-through is an abject failure time and time again.

After nine years of the Liberals, I could spend my entire time going through a litany of their broken promises and of Liberals not following through on their word. The part that is most frustrating is the disconnect between the NDP members' talk and their actions. They stand in the House like they do today in disbelief and outraged at the Liberals, who misled them by insisting they pass Bill C-22 to create a Canada disability benefit.

For years, the Liberals said they were consulting, they were thinking about it, they were working on it and they were doing all of this, only to announce something that the NDP is now devastated and jaw-dropped about, which is that the Liberals are not providing more supports for Canadians with disabilities. The Liberals broke their promise.

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Here is the irony, though. For all that outrage, all the debate and all the tough talk by the NDP leader saying that he is fed up with the Liberals, is ripping up the coalition agreement, that people are fed up with the Prime Minister and that he has had enough, here we are at debate today to vote on a motion that is non-binding.

What was binding last week was the question called twice by Conservatives stating that we do not have confidence anymore in the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government after nine years. What did NDP members do? They voted with the Liberals. They voted with the Prime Minister to keep the Liberals in office even longer.

Here we are again with the NDP members pretending and trying to have it both ways. For years and dozens and dozens of times on budgets, confidence votes, public accounts and in committees, including on this bill, they have voted with the Liberals.

When Conservatives tried to get amendments in this legislation that would have ensured we received more details in advance so Canadians would know those details, the Liberals refused to do it. We also tried to amend it so the clawbacks for Canadians with disabilities, who constantly face clawbacks from numerous programs, would be stopped. It was the NDP and Liberals who voted that down, and now the NDP stands in here today pretending to be outraged and stunned that the Liberals did not keep their word. It is because of what those two parties have done together over the course of the last few years.

We talk about how tough life is for Canadians, and it is disproportionately even more difficult for Canadians with disabilities. Two million Canadians a month are visiting food banks, housing prices and costs have doubled and rent has doubled. In Montreal, rent has tripled, as an example. That disproportionately affects Canadians with disabilities even more.

The Liberals put a carbon tax in, and their solution now is to quadruple it. If someone with a disability is struggling to make ends meet, quadrupling the carbon tax, driving up inflation and the cost of living and doubling housing costs, everything the Liberals have done while propped up by the NDP, has made life worse. It has made the financial situation for Canadians with disabilities even worse.

I do not buy the fake outrage by the NDP, which is putting this motion forward and telling Canadians it is doing something about it. At the end of the day, what we could do, and what the NDP should be doing, is voting non-confidence in the government. Let us have a carbon tax election so Canadians can decide on the direction of this country.

• (1125)

Instead, what did NDP members do this summer, which they are known to do well? I will call them out: a news release. It was a big, tough news release from the NDP critic for disability inclusion. She had had enough. She was furious with the Liberals and in disbelief. Here was the tough talk: "New Democrats are calling on the Liberals to stop delaying, listen to the advocates and the disability community, and fix this mess." What would fix this mess? What would stop the delaying? Let us call an election. Let Canadians have their say on what they believe we need to do in this country to get back

on track, get the cost of living crisis under control and make housing and rent more affordable.

The key thing I am proud of is the Conservatives' common-sense priorities. We may have said this a time or two in this House so that it is very clear to Canadians, but we are going to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Those things are very important to any Canadian struggling financially to deal with a disability they have.

NDP members say to fix this mess, but then they turn around when the question gets called. If they have had enough of the Prime Minister, if they have had enough of the broken promises and if they are ripping up the agreement and are fed up with the Liberals, they should not vote confidence in them. However, the NDP did that twice last week.

NDP members need to pick a lane, because Canadians see right through them every time. They cannot stand up here during a debate and be stunned that the Liberals did not keep their word and broke their promises. That has been their legacy for decades. They have been called out for this. The New Democrats propped up the Liberals and voted with them for three years, and they still do.

They stand here today telling the community of Canadians with disabilities that they are outraged, they are not going to take it anymore and they are going to stand up for Canadians. However, the Liberals will not change their ways. They have always been like this. They over-promise and under-deliver. They do not follow through. They say all the word-salad things they need to say, but when it comes to quality of life and affordability for Canadians with disabilities, it has never been worse. The NDP owns that record just as much as the Liberals do.

On this side of the House, my colleagues and I will continue to call out the New Democrats every step of the way, with the virtue signalling, fake outrage and constant surprise. They cannot believe the Liberals did this yet they vote for them time and time again. It is wearing the patience of Canadians pretty thin.

In addition to the common priorities we have stood for in this House, like axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime, I am also proud of our leader specifically for his continued work to make work pay for Canadians with disabilities. However, there are a number of examples in this country of federal and other benefits not working for Canadians.

I will give an example from a Canadian I spoke with last summer. He had a terrible accident on vacation and became quadriplegic. He was an iron worker. When he moved to Toronto and could not work as an iron worker anymore, he went on CPP disability. He then made the determination that he wanted to go to university and become a professor, either at a college or a university. He applied to school, tried to get new employment because he could not do his union iron worker job anymore and was cut off CPP disability. He could not get an education. He could not retrain. So many clawbacks and barriers still exist.

I am proud to be part of a party that does not just talk and talk without delivering, but gives tangible, meaningful ways to help Canadians with disabilities. I am looking forward to the next election. Millions of Canadians are as well. We can give hope to Canadians with disabilities that real change can happen. We can make life more affordable, we can cut down barriers and we can improve the lives of millions of Canadians with disabilities. I look forward to whenever that election will be.

• (1130)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I rise to seek the unanimous consent of the House to give a speech on this debate for 10 minutes, with five minutes of questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1135)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a question that I have asked a number of the member's colleagues. In particular, the critic was not able to give assurances.

Canadians are very much aware that the Conservative Party has what one would classify as a hidden agenda. The hidden agenda is something the Conservatives do not want to share with Canadians, because if Canadians were to find out what their real intentions were, they would not vote for the Conservative Party.

Let us use this as an example. Twice now I have asked a very specific question. There is a substantial budget commitment of just over \$6 billion to provide funds for this program. The Conservative Party has said it is going to fix the budget. Can the member clearly indicate that not one dollar will be cut by the Conservative Party from this disability benefit?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we have already answered that question very clearly. We voted for this legislation to proceed. My colleague just before me outlined that several times. In addition, we talked about the amendments that the Liberals and NDP defeated, amendments to provide more clarity about what the benefits and eligibility were. They passed on that. There was also an amendment to ensure that clawbacks stopped so that if support was provided to someone with a disability who worked to earn extra income, it would not be clawed back. They voted that down.

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We have been clear. We are going to support Canadians with disabilities in many ways. We will axe the carbon tax, build more homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Those are well-known and established common-sense Conservative priorities. We have reiterated them in this House over and over again because that is what we are hearing about across the country. That is how out of touch the Liberals have become after nine years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, folks often say that there are four stages in politics. The saying goes: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.” Judging from my colleague's speech, we are in the third stage.

However, I vividly remember the dark days of Harper's Conservative government. They attacked seniors by forcing them to retire two years later. They attacked veterans by reducing services. They attacked women's groups, scientists and science. Under the Conservatives, there were fewer public services, cuts and more cuts.

Today, thanks to the NDP, seniors and people with disabilities are getting dental care. People are getting pharmacare for contraceptives and diabetes medication.

Can my colleague assure the House that he will keep dental care, pharmacare and the disability benefit?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as the NDP member wants to give analogies and sayings, I note that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. What is the NDP doing? It is outrage about all the things that Canadians need.

Under the Conservative government, people could afford food. People could afford rent and mortgages. Two million people per month were not going to a food bank in this country, many of whom have disabilities and are struggling to make ends meet. Everything the NDP does and has done in the last few years while propping up the Liberals has made life worse for Canadians.

I am proud of the Conservative government record of making life more affordable for Canadians so they can afford food, a house and the cost of living. What do the New Democrats do? In keeping with the definition of insanity, they keep voting with the Liberals despite their outrage at how bad life has gotten for Canadians with disabilities.

The New Democrats have absolutely been complicit in their record in the last few years. They own it just as much as the Liberals do.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I did not really hear an answer to the question my colleague asked earlier. We heard about the grants to women's rights groups that were cut under the Harper government. I could also talk about employment insurance. Today we are talking about benefits for people with disabilities.

If the Conservatives come to power, will they commit to maintaining these gains for people who are in a more precarious situation? That was the question that was asked earlier. The answer is a simple yes or no, but I hope it is a yes. It is a simple answer to give.

● (1140)

[English]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I always have a difficult time when I have to debate in the chamber with Bloc Québécois members because they do not make sense. Here is a separatist party that wants decentralized power from Ottawa, and it is voting and constantly advocating for more money, more taxes and more control by the national government. It is hard to debate them when they are constantly changing their core principles.

To answer the question we have already answered, we voted in favour of this legislation. Our leader and our party have been very clear. We are going to work to make life more affordable for Canadians with disabilities. We are going to make rent, food prices and the cost of living more affordable. We are going to end the clawbacks that are holding Canadians with disabilities back as opposed to them finally getting ahead.

After nine years of the Liberals, propped up by the Bloc and the NDP, happily enough is enough.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Manicouagan.

I feel like taking the debate to another level. I would like to recall in chronological order the events that led to the report being brought back from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The Bloc Québécois held a debate this week on the situation our seniors are in, but people with disabilities also deserve a lot more consideration than what they typically get in our parliamentary debates, where this important issue is so often used to play politics.

I commend my NDP colleague who brought the report back from committee. The report is a motion, actually. It fully validates the work we did in committee when studying Bill C-22. The aim of this bill was to introduce, quite simply, a Canada disability benefit, which would have complemented the measures in place in Quebec and the provinces. It basically emerged from the desire to allow these individuals to become fully contributing members of society. Most of them live in poverty. We must lift them out of poverty so they too can live with dignity. That was the aim of the benefit.

At the time, the Bloc Québécois had raised an objection to the bill. The benefit amount, eligibility criteria and terms of application

were to be defined in regulation, by order in council. The Bloc Québécois introduced an amendment at that point calling for the regulations taken by order in council to be brought before the House for debate. If a benefit amount is decided by order in council and through regulation, that means that any minister may change the benefit amount by regulation and by order in council. For example, one minister might set it at \$5,000 a year, while another might decide by regulation and order in council that it should be set at \$5 a week.

Our amendment calling for the regulation taken by order in council to be brought before the House for debate was one of our major amendments, but it was rejected. The NDP and Liberals voted it down. That being said, it needs to be prescribed by regulation.

When the 2024 budget was introduced, we learned that the disability benefit would be \$2,500 a year, barely \$200 a month. There is also an eligibility criterion based on the tax credit. That raised the ire of most people with disabilities and those who represent them, in both Quebec and Canada. They were unanimous on the matter. They were also unanimous in saying that the benefit, as well as its terms, conditions and eligibility criteria, should be established by and for people with disabilities.

Two things happened. First, here in the House, we called out the amount announced in the budget. Then, when it came time to adopt the motion in committee, we had the minister responsible in to explain the eligibility criteria. We also called out the fact that the amount would not be enough to meet the stated objective, lifting people out of poverty. The goal is to allow people with disabilities to live with dignity. In addition to their disability, these people have multiple needs in terms of caregivers, medications and support.

● (1145)

There is also mention of employment inclusion but, even in that respect, most of these people live on welfare, at least in Quebec. We have made major strides in Quebec in terms of tailoring the amounts in such a way as to allow people to earn sufficient additional income without losing their benefits. That was the goal of the Canada disability benefit.

Now we see what is happening. The regulation was not passed, people were not consulted, and the amount was simply announced. We learned that the benefit would be in the form of a tax credit. The government decided to align eligibility for the Canada disability benefit with the disability tax credit. We know, however, that thousands of people who should have access to this tax credit cannot get it because of administrative reasons. I will not address these because it would take too long, but tax credits involve some administrative tasks. People need to apply and provide supporting documents. Many people were unable to benefit from the tax credit because they were not registered. We raised this question when the matter of the additional amount equivalent to a one-time CERB payment was raised. That is red tape, and that is why we keep hammering on these issues of red tape and wasted money that could otherwise be given to people.

The government refused to submit the eligibility criteria and the amount in an order in council instead of by regulation so that we could discuss them. No one was consulted and, although we now know the amount, the regulation has not yet been adopted. It was presented as a fait accompli, and we supported the NDP's motion that appears in the report we are discussing.

In particular, we want the federal benefit to be accessible, and we want the tax credit to be reviewed. We also questioned the minister responsible for administering this benefit. After the administrative failures we have seen with passports and other things, will we have to get through a mountain of red tape that has nothing to do with the purpose of the benefit?

That is greed or the inability to implement a program that could strengthen Canadian legislation and enhance what already exists. Here we are again. Once again, people with disabilities will be the ones to pay. We will continue to fight to ensure that the initial objective of the bill is fulfilled. These people must be recognized once and for all as full and equal members of our society.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, your province of Nova Scotia and others such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan and my home province of Manitoba, as well as one of the territories, have made it very clear they are not going to have any form of clawback with respect to the national program to ensure that people with disabilities are getting a monthly payment.

The question I have for the member is twofold. First, is she aware of the Province of Quebec's position with respect to guaranteeing it will not attempt any sort of clawback of the services it provides? Second, I would be interested in the member's thoughts on how people with disabilities benefit directly because it is a national program, no matter what province they live in today or might move to tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn the question back to the member.

Routine Proceedings

Did the government take the time to consult Quebec and the provinces before announcing the benefit in the budget? I will answer that. The answer is no.

Did the government undertake to ensure that the benefit complements what is being done in Quebec and the provinces? The answer is yes, it is in the bill. The government is therefore responsible for making sure there are agreements and collaborations, and that people with disabilities are not deprived of their benefits because of red tape. It needs to make sure that the amount is sufficient. That is now the government's responsibility. Its bill must complement what the provinces are doing and not involve any clawbacks. I have no doubt that Quebec will not deprive people with disabilities of anything to which they are already entitled.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague made some really important points, particularly in response to the comments made by the member for Winnipeg North, who said that this is a provincial matter.

However, the reality is that this Liberal government, the most centralizing government in Canada, is still not consulting the provinces and territories before passing major legislation.

How can my colleague continue to support the most centralizing government in Canadian history? How can her party suggest that it cares about the well-being of Quebecers and Canadians?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, if members want to talk about the early history of Canada and the Constitution, then I would say that it is rather interesting to see that the Bloc Québécois is always the one that is forced to defend the provinces' jurisdictions.

It is quite astonishing that we are being forced to remind the Conservatives, the NDP and the Liberals to respect jurisdictions, especially when it comes to health, education and dental care.

However, there are some who could care less about carrying on with centralizing programs. I am not talking here about the Canada disability benefit. At some point, history will speak for itself. We will be happy to be an independent country and govern ourselves as we see fit.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get into a debate over jurisdictions or centralization. I have a lot to say about that and I know that my colleague likes that topic. I like when she defends the Constitution, it is really interesting.

I would like her to talk about the disappointment in the disability community. There was a promise to lift these people out of poverty and the government came up with peanuts. The Liberal government does not keep its promises.

What are the people in her riding telling her about what they had hoped for and the disappointment they are feeling today?

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• (1155)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of the groups we represent in Quebec and Canada are deeply disappointed. They were also hoping for recognition of “by-and-for”. It is a broken promise.

It is a broken promise because they do not understand what happens next. They do not understand the amount. They do not understand how this will apply. They do not understand why they were not fully involved in this debate. There are a lot of questions and a great deal of disappointment.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about a subject that affects every one of us as elected members of the House. We speak for all our constituents, but sometimes we realize that certain issues affect us personally, because we have first-hand experience.

I would like to thank the NDP for tabling this committee report and allowing us to discuss it today. I also want to thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville, who did an outstanding job in committee. She demonstrated a thoroughness and empathy that should inspire us all as members of the House.

I would like to go back to some of the things my colleague said about Bill C-22, which will be implemented by regulation, by order in council. I would like to talk about one of this government's approaches that is clearly harming the public. It is a matter of common sense. That is why we need to talk about the process involved not only in passing this bill, but in implementing it as well. This process penalizes people with disabilities, and I really do not understand the reasoning behind it.

First, as my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville mentioned, the government decided to announce the funding for the benefit in its 2024 budget. That surprised us. It also surprised all the groups that had been closely monitoring developments since the bill's passage.

The government announced an amount without first drafting regulations. The regulations should establish the eligibility criteria, the terms of payment, the amount of the benefit, the method for calculating the amount and the payment periods. Maybe that is how it is done with this bill. It must be done like that with other bills. I think that many members in the House could bear witness to the fact that the government is working backwards.

It announced the amount in a budget. That may have been good for the government's image, but it was only for show. It announced the amount, but we and all the organizations had trouble understanding that amount, because there are no regulations. What calculations did it use to come up with that amount? Ultimately, what everyone wants to know is, how will this amount effectively address the issue of people with disabilities living in precarious circumstances or even poverty?

As I mentioned, the government is doing things backwards, and disability groups are not impressed. It did things backwards in the first step, but in another step as well. It really did everything backwards. It was working backwards when it came to consultations. As my colleagues have said, and I think that my colleague from Shefford mentioned this earlier, organizations in our ridings are wonder-

ing why they were not consulted. These organizations are wondering why nobody consulted them if the goal is truly to lift people with disabilities out of insecurity and poverty. The organizations on the ground know these people and what they need. They cannot understand why nobody is consulting them. They wonder how decisions are being made.

Decisions should be made by and for people with disabilities, but in a possibly patronizing way, the government is deciding what their needs are. That is not what the groups want. They want to be consulted first, before the regulations are drafted. The groups want to be consulted so that their feedback informs the regulations, ensuring that they take into account the needs that these groups and their members know all about.

• (1200)

Then, of course, it can be announced in a budget. I am amazed that I have to explain all this, but I think the general public should know that the government did things completely backwards in this case. It did not follow the normal steps in the process.

As my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville also said, the choice to use regulations is a major issue. The Bloc Québécois opposed the regulatory approach, because it could lead to instability in the granting of the benefits. I would go so far as to say that there could be instability in the future of the benefits themselves, because all the power is in the hands of one person, in this case a minister, for example, not in a bill that would ensure certainty, permanence and, as I said earlier, stability and even security. I think that people want security when it comes to their economic situation, especially when their economic situation is precarious, as I said. Unfortunately, these people often end up living in poverty. That is why we would have preferred an alternative to the regulatory approach.

To sum up quickly, there are two issues. First, the government did things backwards, which hurt the people it is trying to help. At the same time, the approach it chose created an insecurity or instability that could raise doubts about whether the measure is permanent. Second, there may be one final element that is very important and that my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville brought up. She did not say it in so many words, but she mentioned red tape getting in the way of accessing the benefit.

If I may get personal for a moment, I myself have a child with a disability. I must say that, although I am a pretty capable person, the red tape can be nightmare to deal with. My little boy has an autism spectrum disorder and motor difficulties, but he was refused disabled status for a long time. That is only one example among many, but it shows that people often have to fight just to have their disability recognized.

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Not everyone has the same resources and organizations to help them, and it can get discouraging. Some people do not even know about the benefits or tax credits that are available. As my colleague said, if people do not know about the tax credit, how can they access the benefit? They are inextricably linked. These kinds of accessibility barriers do not give me the impression that the government really wants to help people. It seems to find ways to screen people out, to block and delay them from getting the help they really need right now.

Those are all the points I wanted to reiterate. If the government really wants to help people with disabilities, it has to listen to them and address the needs they have articulated. That must then be consistently reflected in the budget, so that they can truly be lifted out of poverty. It must also give them a way to access these benefits by giving them information and maybe not tying benefits to certain prerequisites, which ends up depriving some people of what they are entitled to.

I urge the government not to work backwards, but to work voluntarily, transparently and honestly with disability groups so that people with disabilities in my riding of Manicouagan, in Quebec and in Canada can get support and live with dignity.

• (1205)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am concerned that the Bloc is actually putting its party politics ahead of the interests of people with disabilities in Quebec. I posed the question to the other member in regard to whether she believes that the Province of Quebec should be able to have clawbacks. Instead of making it clear that the Bloc party would not support clawbacks by the Province of Quebec in particular, the member in essence is saying that the Bloc is okay with clawbacks by the Province of Quebec.

Will the member make very clear what the Bloc party's position is in regard to the issue of clawbacks? Does the Bloc party support the disability fund that people with disabilities are receiving in the province of Quebec, or does she believe that the Province of Quebec should have the entitlement to claw back some of that money?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, first of all, I believe my colleague answered my Liberal Party colleague's question earlier when she simply told him that if he has a question for Quebec, he should ask Quebec directly. I think that is his government's responsibility.

Secondly, Quebec will not be told what to do, as I am sure his government knows. Therefore, if his government has questions to ask Quebec or if it wants to know exactly what Quebec's position is, it should do its job. The Bloc Québécois is not Quebec's go-between. We are the party that truly defends the interests of all Quebecers. I would ask his government to do its job.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that the member talked about the implications for people living with disabilities in her constituen-

cy who are being forced into poverty. Can she share today what she is hearing from her constituents about the \$200 a month given through the national disability benefit and whether they feel it is adequate to lift people out of poverty and provide them with the basic human rights they require in order to live with dignity and respect?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I am going to approach this debate from a different angle. As everyone knows, I come from a remote, so-called rural riding, which is vast and where residents face a higher cost of living. This includes the cost of food, clothing, and basic needs like housing, even though the region has no big cities like Toronto or Vancouver. People with disabilities have significant financial needs. While the population's needs may seem high already, for people with disabilities, they are even higher.

Yes, this amount is a pittance. How can a person get by on \$200? It falls miserably short of meeting the needs of Manicouagan's residents.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to point out that the Bloc Québécois supported the Canada disability benefit bill at all stages. Even though it was a bare-bones bill, the Bloc Québécois used its power to improve it, especially the member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

I have a question for the member for Manicouagan and the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc Québécois has made two demands of the minority government in exchange for its support to avoid an election, but neither of these demands had to do with increasing and implementing the Canada disability benefit.

Why not? Can that change?

• (1210)

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, the two demands that the Bloc Québécois has made a priority are already the subject of two bills that are currently being studied and that will soon be completed. We want to speed up the passage of these two bills because this government could fall at any time.

We have other priorities as well, but we cannot get them all addressed as fast as we would like.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

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With the cost of living crisis soaring in our country, many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. For Canadians with a disability, who have higher living costs, those costs are disproportionate. In addition to the surging costs of essentials like groceries, fuel, housing and home heating, persons with disabilities also face extra costs for their personal care needs above and beyond other Canadians.

The ever-deepening affordability crisis is unmanageable. All Canadians deserve the opportunity to live full lives and participate fully in society.

The creation of a Canada disability benefit had the potential to significantly improve the financial security and overall well-being of persons with disabilities. The potential was understood across this chamber, and that is why this bill saw cross-partisan support. Any delays in the passage of the bill was at the hands of the Liberal government itself, whether that was the COVID election or its own management, or mismanagement, of the government calendar.

When the Liberals put forward Bill C-22, they proudly boasted repeatedly that the Canada disability benefit would be a once in a generation opportunity to lift hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. Shamefully, the then-minister for disability inclusion was simply making grandiose promises to Canadians with disabilities that the Liberals simply did not keep. Instead of taking accountability for their broken promises, they are still going around patting themselves on the back.

The 20th report from the human resources committee calls on the Liberal government to address very specific issues around this benefit: that it ensure the benefit will not result in clawbacks of provincial benefits and takes into account its relationship with existing entitlements, including federal ones; that the benefit will be adequate; that it take into consideration the heightened cost of living crisis faced by persons with disabilities; that it will be accessible to those who need it and should be eligible; and that the government will collaborate. All this needs to be said or asked for because it was simply not in Bill C-22.

The Liberal government tabled in Parliament what it had dubbed “framework legislation”. Ultimately, it is legislation that allows Liberals to establish the most important details behind closed doors without the scrutiny of Parliament. By design, they chose to determine all the details of the benefit during the regulatory process, making that a more cumbersome process completely lacking in transparency. That is why Bill C-22 saw so many amendments in the human resource committee and also in the Senate, which the coalition government rejected.

When Bill C-22 received royal assent, the most critical details of the bill were still unknown. Who would be eligible for the benefit? What would the application process be? How would this benefit interact with other provincial programs? All those details were unknown because the government refused to present them. The Liberals wanted to do it all behind closed doors at a snail's pace. These are really pertinent and critical details.

At the time that Bill C-22 was being considered, the then-minister of disability inclusion made statements that the clawbacks of provincial supports would be a red line in her negotiations with the

provinces, but there is no legislative guarantee to that. A Conservative amendment that would have prevented clawbacks at the federal level was rejected by the Liberal government members.

● (1215)

The Conservatives put forward amendments to increase transparency in the regulatory process, amendments like broadening consultation requirements and increasing transparency in negotiations between the federal government and the provincial governments. The Liberal government rejected these amendments and, with the help of its NDP coalition, omitted all substantive elements of the benefit from the legislation.

This approach of framework legislation expects us, as parliamentarians, to put our trust in the minister and the Liberal government. However, more important, it expects Canadians with disabilities and advocates to put their trust in the Liberal Government. Of course, we know now with great certainty that the trust was not warranted. It is those who cannot afford it the least who are most impacted by the Liberal government's broken promises.

The Liberal government's aversion to timelines, parameters and scrutiny offers little confidence in it and its aspirations. As I speak, the human resources committee is hearing from witnesses on the government's progress toward its goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. What we have heard in this study affirms what we heard more than six years ago when the committee was studying Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act. Witness after witness told the committee that the Accessible Canada Act had great intentions and set really nice goals and ideas, but that the bill itself was devoid of any assurances that it would be enforced or implemented efficiently or, quite frankly, even at all.

The Accessible Canada Act received royal assent more than five years ago, but progress toward a barrier-free Canada by 2040 has been minimal, at best. Witnesses are saying that federally regulated entities are unsure of their responsibilities and requirements. To date, there is only one single legal regulatory obligation, which is to provide an accessibility plan, a plan that does not require timelines or accountability.

We are not going to see progress toward an inclusive and barrier-free Canada with half measures. There needs to be realistic goals established. The expectations on federally regulated entities need to be in plain language. Parliament needs to lead by example. We should not have barriers preventing persons with disabilities from testifying as witnesses in Parliament, but the reality is that we do.

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The Accessible Canada Act was an example of the Liberal government making nice promises that sounded great, but when persons with disabilities gave it feedback and pleaded for changes to the bill, they were told to trust the government and then, subsequently, were ignored. The disability benefit is the exact same song and dance just a few short years later.

The disability benefit is not set to be rolled out until July 2025. This means that it will have taken the coalition government five years to decide to provide up to a maximum of \$200 a month for recipients who have a valid disability tax credit certificate. The asks in the report from the HUMA committee are certainly not being met by the government. More important, the needs of the disability community are not being met or even heard in a way that is meaningful.

The Prime Minister and the Liberal government have repeatedly broken promises that they have made by failing to live up to the expectation they set for themselves. The cost of living crisis in our country is unmanageable and the costly coalition's harmful policies continue to make everything more expensive. Every Canadian should be able to participate fully in society. They should be able to clothe, house and feed themselves. However, we know that for far too many Canadians that is not the reality, especially those with disabilities.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Stephen Harper government promised a national disability act and it failed to deliver it.

At the end of the day, we will find that Conservatives have a hidden agenda when they talk about fixing the budget. They do not want to tell Canadians what they really would do if they were to take power. If they did that, they know they would lose a lot of support.

My question for her is the same question I put to a couple of her colleagues, who did not have the courage to tell Canadians. Will that member guarantee that not one dollar in a reduction will go toward the disability benefit? Is she prepared to give that commitment, unlike her previous colleagues who would not give that commitment?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, the irony of this is that his own minister at the time could not guarantee this. We know that for nine years, the Liberal government has been propped up by the NDP. It is very ironic that the New Democrats have brought this forward today. Those members have voted at every single step to support the Liberals. We know the Liberals have broken promise after promise. At the end of the day, it is fake consultation. When we had advocates, stakeholders and those with disabilities at committee, the Liberals did not listen to them at all. They did not heed any of their warnings or any of their pleas. Frankly, it is fake consultation and broken promises from across the way.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for the work that she does on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I say that

because I am especially grateful for the work that this committee did on Bill C-319. I also want to thank her for supporting fairness for seniors. She asked me questions when I appeared before the committee, and I commend her for her work on this file.

Now, I am going to come back to the subject of the report on the Canada disability benefit. As I mentioned, in my riding, there are organizations, like Dynamique des handicap s de Granby et R gion, that represent people with disabilities. In the beginning, these people criticized the fact that they had not been consulted. Then they criticized the fact that, when the bill was introduced and they tried to get more information from the department, they did not get any answers. Another one of their criticisms is that it is not easy to keep track of all these credits. People are often unfamiliar with the tax credit and find it difficult to access. It is not getting to all of the people who really need it.

What are my colleague's thoughts on the challenges of making sure that people are aware of the disability tax credits, specifically?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, we are hearing this right now in real time at the HUMA committee, since we are doing a study on a Canada without barriers. There are so many invisible barriers. A lot of times when Canadians hear of a barrier, they think of a sidewalk, or a stairwell or a lack of a ramp. What about the red tape or the language that is not plain and easily read, understood and accessible? These are things for the departments and government. I am surprised the government is not mandating to ensure the departments are providing service in minimal plain language for those with disabilities so they can access these programs and not have barriers.

● (1225)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with a lot of what the member said. I could not help but reflect on how the member could look constituents in the eye and tell them that a Conservative government would do any better, when the leader of the Conservative Party has clearly stated that he would cut pharmacare and dental care, and that he would make cuts to a national school food program.

When the Conservatives were in power, they made cuts to pensions and child care. How can the member say that they would do any better for people living with disabilities?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I am surprised that member can look her constituents in the eye, when she voted and supported at committee the benefit we have today. There were no amendments with regulation, timelines or accountability. I would ask her to look in the mirror.

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Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been very interesting to listen to the debate today. Obviously, folks are passionate about this issue on all sides. As I reflect on this, I think about the university presentations I get a chance to do. I do a lot of presentations talking about, basically, how we define normal. I share stories of my son's life with autism and video clips that we have had a chance to make over the years, where he is being included in musical theatre in school, working in the school library and those kinds of things.

It is interesting; some of the universities I visit are not in the most Conservative places in the country. I can think of some in the GTA where I am not sure how many Conservatives there would be among 500 students. There are probably more today than there have been in the past. Once in a while, they comment on how they do not automatically think of the Conservative Party when they think about those issues. They ask me to explain that a little bit. I explain it by saying that, in this place, we are human beings before our party affiliation, regardless of our party. We all want the best for people with disabilities.

Based on some of the words we hear today, some people would like folks to believe that one party or another party does not care. The reality is that we all care about creating the best opportunities and the best Canada for people with disabilities. Sometimes, we just have different thoughts on how to get there.

I look at the timeline on the bill. It is important, given the tenor of the debate today, to highlight that, first of all, this idea came up in the 2020 throne speech first. It then came to the House, I think, as Bill C-35 in 2021. Of course, the priority for the government of the day, at that point in time, was an election in the summer of 2021. Everything was shut down while we spent \$600,000 or \$700,000 on the election, or whatever amount of money it was. It was hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars with all of our parties. It was \$600 million, not thousands.

Obviously, it was money that could have been spent on other things. We fought that election, and then the government brought back the legislation as Bill C-22. It went through over the course of time. It was not a high priority. It took two and a half years to get it passed. It is really important to point out that, when it did pass, it passed unanimously in the House of Commons.

There is nobody in the House, regardless of what some members want people to believe, who did not support Bill C-22, who did not support the Canada disability benefit. This is a really important fact. On our side, we were concerned about a significant lack of clarity. We have said this over and over again.

There was less information in this piece of legislation than in almost any piece of legislation I have seen, with more left up to the future regulatory process in terms of what that would look like. In this debate today, we are seeing the consequences of that lack of clarity.

Another thing that is really clear right now is that what the Liberals were promising, the expectation that they were creating, was dramatically higher than the reality that came to be when the Canada disability benefit was delivered. I suspect that this is largely because of the issue of priorities. This is the highest-spending gov-

ernment in the history of our country by far, with double the amount of spending of any other government. The amount of debt we have run up is unparalleled. I think the bottom line is that the Liberals are running out of money; even for the things that they say are important, they do not have the money to fund it.

It is also really important to note that, as we are having the debate, we have a situation where the NDP is criticizing the government relentlessly, day in and day out, about everything. Again, everybody in the House is on the same side in terms of the importance of getting things right for Canadians living with disability and the operation of that, in a sense, in terms of the way that it winds up being in the House.

It is not just the Canada disability benefit. It is everything else. I think it would be right for Canadians listening in on this debate to ask this: If this is so important to the NDP, how in the world did they not negotiate what they wanted in their deal with the Liberals?

● (1230)

This has been one of the longest-serving minority Parliaments since the twenties or thirties, maybe in the history of the country. The NDP vote with the Liberals, to support the Liberals, every single day in the House. They endorse the Liberals with their positions and their votes. At any point in time, the NDP could have said that something is the line in the sand. They could have used their leverage to get whatever they want out of the Liberal Party. On this issue, obviously, it was not a priority at the negotiating table for the NDP. We just have to take that context into consideration as Canadians listen to this debate.

One thing I would like to focus on is outcomes. We talk a lot about dollar amounts, with big dollar amounts for some programs. The Liberal defence today has involved talking about how much money the program costs. However, we have to take a look at outcomes.

I think about the outcomes that I want for my son Jaden, who is now 28, Canadians like my son, and people around the world like my son. He was 10 when I was first elected; he will turn 29 in November. He was two and a half years old when he was diagnosed in 1998. We want timely diagnoses for things that can be diagnosed. Obviously, in the disability world, it is not all about diagnosis. We want early help for people when they need it in those early years. We want to make sure that we have an education system that includes people to the maximum. Obviously, this is mostly in the provincial jurisdiction. We want to make sure we have proper housing, employment opportunities, skills development and those kinds of things.

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Of course, as parents, we often think about what happens when we are gone. One thing I consider when I think about Jaden and people like him across the country is that we want to make sure we have good programs now. We want to make sure that Jaden and other Canadians who are vulnerable have the supports they need right now. We are also concerned about the future. We want to make sure that the same supports, or better supports, are there for our loved ones when we are gone.

Right now, I am very concerned about the level of government spending overall, at the dramatic record-setting levels of spending we have seen from the Liberal-NDP government, which has recently been supported by the Bloc. When Jaden was diagnosed in 1998, provinces across the country were having difficulty funding diagnosis and early help for people with autism. One reason they were having trouble was that the Liberal government had initiated a 32% cut in 1995. This was a generation after the massive deficits run up by the Trudeau government in the seventies and eighties. It was a real cut, not the fake type of cut that members often allude to, in transfers to the provinces for health, social services and education. I think it was in the \$35-billion range overall. This was just gone because of a fiscal situation brought on by the massive debt and deficit run up in the seventies and eighties. I feel as though we are going down that road right now.

I think the people who are most hurt by the inflationary policies of the government in the current circumstances are the most vulnerable people in Canada, including Canadians with disabilities. They are living on fixed incomes. Those populations will be the ones hurt down the road when the real crisis hits because of the fiscal situation the government has created.

I look forward to questions. I hope we can come up with some ideas in this place about how we could actually create better outcomes for Canadians living with disabilities.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member wholeheartedly about one issue: I believe that every member of the House of Commons is, in fact, understanding and sympathetic and wanting to do right by people who have disabilities. I would not exclude anyone from that.

Having said that, one issue surrounding the legislation, as well as the rollout of the program throughout the country, is ensuring that provinces do not use any form of clawback that will take away from people with disabilities. A number of provinces have still not given that public commitment; in western Canada, for example, there is the province of Alberta.

Could he provide his thoughts in regard to clawbacks?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, when we introduced an amendment to deal with clawbacks, they voted against it. On the other topic, what I said was that we want the same thing. We want to help people. However, I also talked about outcomes; I hope he did not miss that part. The reality is that the outcomes we are achieving are not what our country wants right now.

In fact, we are achieving the worst outcomes for vulnerable people in the entire developed world. Life is becoming harder and

harder for Canadians with disabilities. I do not have time to read the quote right now, but if members want to check, they can look into what Inclusion Canada had to say. It is at the point where it is easier for Canadians to choose death through medical assistance in dying than it is for Canadians living with disabilities to live. That is shameful. We need to get to a place where that situation does not exist.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that speech, which was both sensible and sensitive. I clearly remember the dark days of the Harper government. The Conservatives cut services to the public, to the poorest and most vulnerable. They cut everything from services for veterans and the unemployed to public services.

The NDP made dental care for people with disabilities a reality, and they have been able to enrol in the program since June. We made real strides for the disability community.

Will my colleague commit, here and now, to maintaining dental care for people with disabilities and to maintaining and enhancing the disability benefit?

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the NDP has brought up the Harper record multiple times today. The Harper government increased health transfers by 6% every single year we were in government. With Jim Flaherty as finance minister, we introduced the registered disability savings plan; Ready, Willing and Able; and Employment Works. We launched a Canadian autism partnership and funded Special Olympics. We got the Abilities Centre built in Whitby, and we introduced the working income tax benefit. I could go on.

Jim Flaherty and the Conservative government were seen as champions for the disability community, notwithstanding what NDP members might be saying today.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank our colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for the tone and substance of his speech; it reminds me of a time, a few years ago here, when we worked together on a letter to push the government to move forward with Bill C-22. We need more of that, as we have seen in recent days, and a different tone in this place.

I think it is fair to ask about what a future Conservative government might do. We know, for example, that the Canada carbon rebate would be taken away. The Conservatives have made that very clear. However, they have not been clear about whether they would fix and deliver the Canada disability benefit at an adequate income level. I know it is something that he cares about.

If there is not a commitment in place already, can he share about what he can do to ensure that a commitment is in place in the near future?

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• (1240)

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I have mentioned this a couple of times. The number one thing we can do for vulnerable Canadians, whatever the vulnerability might be, is to fix the budget and to fix our spending problem in this country. Ultimately, the most vulnerable always pay the price. They pay the price in the present because their incomes do not go up with inflation. They pay the price in the future because future governments cannot afford to fund new innovative programs; they do not have the budget to do it.

We need to get on top of the budget and Canada's fiscal crisis exactly for the most vulnerable—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to have the opportunity to speak today. I would like to point out that I will be sharing my time with the incredible member for Winnipeg Centre.

I cannot help but notice that the Conservative member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, who just finished his speech, did not answer my question. Nor did he answer the question from the member for Kitchener Centre, who asked whether the Canada disability benefit would be maintained if, by some misfortune, a Conservative government were elected in the next election.

If the Conservatives feel it is inadequate, will they enhance it? Will they maintain pharmacare? Will they maintain the dental care program for seniors and people with disabilities? They are not giving any answers or commitments. All the Conservatives want to do is make cuts, yet they will not tell us what they want to cut. I hope citizens will not have to wait for an election campaign to hear what their platform is.

Right now there is no way of knowing where they will get the savings they need if they are truly interested in reducing the budget and public spending. I am deeply troubled by the attitude of both the leader of the official opposition and the Conservative members in the House, which consists in systematically refusing to answer very clear questions on subjects that will affect the lives of millions of Canadians.

I would like it said, noted and recognized that there is absolutely no response or clear commitment on the part of the Conservatives in the House. I think that at some point they will have to be transparent with people, reveal who they truly are and lay their cards on the table, so that people can make fully informed decisions. We, for our part, have a record of achievement.

For two and a half years we have forced the minority government to do things they had never agreed to do in the past. Examples include the anti-scab bill, sick leave and the basis for a drug plan to reimburse contraceptives as well as drugs for nine million diabetes patients in Canada. There is also the dental care program that has already benefited 700,000 Canadians, including a large majority of seniors.

Let us return to the debate before us today. I commend my NDP colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam on moving this motion to adopt the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in order to discuss an issue of great concern for all of our communities. It affects millions of people and, in particular, one million persons with disabilities who also live in poverty.

I would now like to take the time to read the Committee's recommendation, because no one has done so since this morning and I think it is worth it. It reads as follows:

In the opinion of the committee, the government should safeguard the Canada Disability Benefit from any potential clawbacks and engage in comprehensive consultations with the disability community to ensure the effective implementation of the Canada Disability Benefit by:

- (i) ensuring that the Canada Disability Benefit is adequate to lift people living with disabilities out of poverty,
- (ii) ensuring that the Canada Disability Benefit is accessible through the reconsideration of the Disability Tax Credit as a barrier to access, and establishing a more equitable and accessible enrolment method,
- (iii) acknowledging the multitude of unseen expenses associated with living with a disability, which exacerbates financial strain, particularly amidst escalating costs of living and inflation crises,
- (iv) recognizing the adverse impact of benefit entitlement reductions as families earn higher taxable incomes, perpetuating cycles of poverty among lower-income households,
- (v) collaborating with provinces and territories to fortify support systems for individuals with disabilities, thereby fostering inclusive and supportive communities across the country.

And the Committee report this to the House.

This is an excellent recommendation, and I am glad that we can discuss it in the House, because it could really fix the mistakes made by the Liberal government. It could also address the broken promise in the legislation resulting from Bill C-22, which is woefully inadequate. The Liberals have been promising concrete measures to lift people with disabilities out of poverty since 2015, but this reminds me of the story about the mountain that laboured and brought forth a mouse. Instead of really strong measures to lift people out of poverty, what did they get? They got 200 bucks a month, which is peanuts. That is nothing. It is more like giving people a few crumbs and telling them they have to make do with it, when what we wanted was a meaningful measure that would lift one million people out of poverty, people who are living in extreme hardship every day.

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• (1245)

I wanted to talk about this because for people like myself and many others who do not live with disabilities, it is hard to imagine what life must be like for those who must rely on a wheelchair. This is a rather ordinary example. What I am saying is not terribly original, but over the years, as I worked with groups in my riding, I have learned how much everything we consider normal and easy and take for granted can be difficult and painful—finding a job, for example. Indeed, unemployment among persons with disabilities, an already vulnerable group, is far higher than the overall average. It is harder for them to access the job market. They are less likely to be hired than other groups of people in society, which contributes to their financial difficulties and makes them more prone to poverty.

Special needs housing is expensive. Small things like going to the grocery store, returning home and making something to eat when the person's home has not been adapted for their situation, whether they have to use a wheelchair or are living with other disabilities, are no easy tasks. Small things we do not even think of drive up the cost of special needs housing, and subsidies are not always available. This creates problems. People become dependent on their family, friends and neighbours. Every little activity of daily living becomes more difficult. It costs a massive amount of money to address this issue.

The Liberals had promised to help these people avoid hardship in their daily lives, but no, the problems remain. They have an haphazard, piecemeal approach. They say the promise was kept, but it is all smoke and mirrors, and it will not benefit the people in need. The groups are disappointed. Persons with disabilities are disappointed, angry and frustrated because their needs are not being met.

Another need in the daily lives of persons with disabilities is transportation. Not everyone can afford a car, especially the poor. The measure is insufficient to ensure the availability of adapted public transit. The schedule is a problem because buses do not come often enough. People often have to hire a taxi because the bus or paratransit is unavailable or has broken down, or cannot get there for another three hours, when the person might have a doctor's appointment in 15 minutes and needs to get there fast.

We may not necessarily think of all these small costs and charges. I represent a Montreal riding that includes a handful of subway stations equipped with elevators. Universal access is not a given. Getting into the subway station is one thing, but getting out is another. Sometimes, people have to travel three or four subway stations past their destination just to get to an elevator. Then what? They wait for a bus that takes forever to come.

All these little things add up to make persons with disabilities more vulnerable. We thought that the Liberal government would recognize that, but no. The relevant word here is “disappointment”.

I was talking about that disappointment with groups in my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, which I am very proud to represent here. There are a dozen or so of them, namely, the Association d'aide et de loisirs pour personnes à autonomie réduite, or ALPAR; the Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées; the Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées du Québec; Compagnons de Montréal; Giant Steps Autism Centre; the Association des Par-

ents pour la déficience intellectuelle, or PARDI; the Regroupement pour la trisomie 21; DéfPhys sans limite—

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the member. It seems the interpretation is not working.

The problem has been resolved.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has 30 seconds to wrap up.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I would like to again list the local organizations that do truly incredible work in the community and that I have the pleasure and honour of representing here.

The list includes the Association d'aide et de loisirs pour personnes à autonomie réduite, or ALPAR; the Regroupement des organismes spécialisés pour l'emploi des personnes handicapées; the Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées du Québec; Compagnons de Montréal; Giant Steps Autism Centre; the Association des Parents pour la déficience intellectuelle, or PARDI; the Regroupement pour la trisomie 21; DéfPhys sans limite—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member because we need to move on to questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Canada disability benefit program is one of a number of national programs that have been put into place by this government. As a budgetary line, it had the largest increase, at just over \$6 billion. I believe it is a good, solid first step.

We came up with \$6 billion. How much money would the NDP have budgeted for this particular line?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, we will budget whatever amount is needed to lift people out of poverty. It is as simple as that. That is vital. In any case, that money will come back to the community and stimulate spending in our local economy. It will be good for everyone. It will be good for these people, as well as for local businesses.

Earlier today, the member for Winnipeg North said that his party would like to be able to do this. I would remind him that he is in government.

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[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about disappointment in the Liberal government. I will remind him that he supported all those measures through the Liberals. He supported quadrupling the carbon tax on home heating bills. He supported the housing crisis. He supported the cost of living crisis that we have in Canada right now. He supported the crime problems we have on our streets, which directly impact people living in poverty.

The member talked about disappointment. I wonder if the people of Montreal he represents are disappointed in him for supporting the Liberal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, things are going very well in Montreal. I thank the member for his concern, but he does not have to worry about me, because I have a lot of support.

I would like to ask the Conservatives a question. During the dark years under Stephen Harper, cuts were made to public services and direct services to the public. Are the Conservatives prepared to commit today to maintaining the gains that the NDP made to help seniors, to help workers, to provide pharmacare, to provide dental care to seniors and to provide a benefit to people with disabilities, even if it is minimal? Will they commit to maintaining these programs, which provide direct assistance to millions of people, or will they abolish them again?

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member can share with us the dangers of a Conservative government, noting not just what Conservative governments have done historically, but what one would look like moving forward. The leader of the Conservative Party has outright said that he would cut a school food program, cut dental care and cut pharmacare. We know that he does not support child care. We know that he wants to increase the pension age from 65 to 67, as his former government did. There is a history here. He is also talking about cutting the exact services that people living with disabilities need and deserve.

Can the member speak to how important it is for us to truly lift up people living with disabilities and not just have talking points like the Conservatives, who have no record to show that they would make a difference?

● (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question from my NDP colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I would point out that most economists agree that eliminating the poverty associated with having a disability would reduce overall poverty in Canada by 40%. That is significant. I repeat, 40% of poverty would be eliminated if we had a serious measure.

The member is asking a great question. When the Conservatives say they are going to fix the budget, what does that mean, beyond their silly slogan? I can interpret that for everyone. It means making cuts. It means cutting programs for people with disabilities. It

means cutting programs for pensioners. It means cutting programs for unemployed workers and veterans. That is the danger. That is what happened during the dark years under Stephen Harper.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by commending my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam for putting forward the debate. It is a debate that is long overdue. I spent the morning listening to the debate, particularly the Liberals' blaming poverty on one's disability instead of on the Liberals' failed systems and their failure to provide adequate programs to ensure that we can end legislated poverty in this country once and for all, something that is absolutely ableist.

I know that real offence was taken this morning to my calling a speech ableist rhetoric. That speech likened the poverty of the disability community to their disability. I stand by that because the reason we are in this crisis today is legislated poverty against indigenous people. We know that the disability benefit is totally inadequate and needs to be fixed.

We know the Liberals broke their promise to the disability community. The Liberals' decision is to underfund the benefit, even though they are claiming that this is a good start. It is a \$200 benefit at a time of an inflationary crisis and a cost and affordability crisis. This is unacceptable.

The benefit in its current form will leave over one million people in poverty. That is unacceptable. The Liberal government has tried to put off putting in place the disability benefit, requesting consultation after consultation. We have had enough consultation. The Liberals have certainly run out of the excuse that they need to consult more.

We know it needs to be done, and we know it needs to be done now. We know that almost one million persons with disabilities live in poverty in Canada. We know it has gotten worse with the rising costs of food, rent and housing. We know that it is becoming more difficult for everybody, particularly the disability community, which often has extra costs related to disability. It has been made even worse.

This has happened over decades of consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments. We know what Conservative governments do. I certainly saw it in Manitoba. They cut, cut, cut. They cut health care. They cut education. The current leader of the Conservative Party has said he will cut the school food program, the dental care program and the pharmacare program. I do not ever count on the Conservatives to ensure the human rights of all peoples in this country. In fact, they constantly push and vote against measures to ensure the human rights and dignity of all people, including the disability community.

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We know that the current disability support programs have been further eroded by the current affordability crisis. We cannot afford cuts and we cannot afford anymore a Liberal government that turns a blind eye to its willful human rights violations against the disability community and then gets angered when it is called out for it. It gets defensive when it gets called out for it. This is especially true because both the Conservatives and the Liberals have had no shortage of subsidizing their rich CEO friends and rich corporations, whether it be Loblaw and the campaign manager, Jenni Byrne, running the show, or spending \$12 million on fridges.

New Democrats will continue to fight for benefits. New Democrats will continue to fight to improve the material conditions of all people. That is exactly what I tried to do with the guaranteed livable basic income, which was supported by disability groups from across the country, in addition to current and future government supports and services.

• (1300)

Guess what happened. The Conservatives and Liberals voted against it, a guaranteed livable basic income that would have lifted the disability community out of poverty in addition to current and future supports meant to meet their specific and special needs. What do Conservatives and Liberals do at every turn? They vote against measures to lift people out of poverty.

There are persons with disabilities receiving provincial and territorial disability income supports who, with the new benefit, are at risk of clawbacks from provincial and municipal programs. Also, the way that it is set up even makes it hard for many people in the community to qualify.

We want to get the benefit in the pockets of people in 2024, not by 2025 like the Liberals are promising, after the next election or 20 years from now. There are grandiose announcements but nothing is getting out the door. The NDP will continue to fight to make sure that all people living across Canada live above the poverty line. If it were not for the Liberals and Conservatives, we could have done that with a guaranteed livable basic income, something that the Conservatives laughed at and the Liberals threw out the door.

We want all low-income persons with disabilities to be automatically enrolled in provincial and territorial disability support programs, and we want the government to work with provinces and territories to secure a commitment that no clawbacks will occur should anybody receive the benefit. Nonetheless, we wait on the Liberal government in spite of overwhelming outrage that has occurred. We continue to wait for the Liberal government to do the right thing.

I will share some of the outrage. Disability Without Poverty said, “We have a crisis of poverty in this country. Over 41% of people impacted are people with disabilities. This cannot be ignored anymore in a country like ours”. Bea Bruske, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, said, “From barriers to employment to affordable housing—

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth with the question on the motion now before the House.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am just verifying that the hon. member for Kitchener Centre will be allowed to speak.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kitchener Centre has the floor.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to participate in the debate. I want to start by sharing why the debate is so important. Across the country, 1.5 million folks with disabilities are living in poverty. That is about 40% of the people living in poverty across the country.

This summer, I was at St. John's Kitchen, operated by The Working Centre right in downtown Kitchener. It is a gathering place for diverse folks across our community, a lot of whom are living in poverty, might be living unsheltered or are at risk of homelessness. Time and again I would be chatting with folks and I felt like I had the same conversation over and over. I would learn that someone is living on the Ontario disability support program, and they would share with me how difficult life is living in poverty.

I would start to share with them a bit about the new Canada disability benefit. However, as I did so, they would learn that it is a maximum of only \$200 a month, that it is not starting until July of next year and that to access it, they had to apply for the disability tax credit if they did not have it already.

What is involved in applying for the disability tax credit? There is an 18-page form. How do they get that form? They need to find a way to print it and then find a doctor who is willing to complete 16 pages of the 18-page form. They try to find a doctor who might have done it before, because it often the case that if the doctor has not done it before, they are either unwilling or would not know how to complete it. Time and again, I just felt exhausted realizing that these are people who have been provided with a process designed for them to fail.

How did we get here? It was a commitment from the Liberals in their platform in 2021. Their platform stated, “this new benefit will reduce poverty among persons with disabilities in the same manner as the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Canada Child Benefit.” The minister at the time would later say that this was going to be a generational benefit, the sleeper legacy piece if they were to do it right.

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Community pressure from the disability community, and letters both in the House and in the Senate, led to Bill C-22's getting introduced. It was then improved at committee. I am glad to have worked with colleagues to secure five improvements that came from the disability community. This included requiring that the benefit be indexed to inflation and that the disability community be meaningfully engaged in the regulations process, which almost every important decision was left to, including one that would require that the benefit application process be barrier-free.

Sadly, we also attempted to extend the benefit for those over the age of 65, but that was ruled out of order. It continues to be a significant point of contention that a person's disability does not end at 65 and neither should the Canada disability benefit.

As I mentioned earlier, almost every important decision was left to the regulations. That is what we learned just a few months ago when we learned, in the budget, that the governing party was proposing only a maximum of \$200 a month for the disability tax credit, and not until July of next year. At the time, I shared in this place that it just felt so unserious. It felt to me like the government was playing politics with the lives of people who have been marginalized for a very long time.

With the rest of my time, I would like to provide solutions with respect to what we could still do with the remaining time in this Parliament to fix the Canada disability benefit. It is included in the regulation I submitted a few weeks ago. There are seven specific items that could be addressed in the Canada disability benefit, all of which come directly from the disability community.

The first is to just remove the barriers to the application process by automatically enrolling folks who are already on provincial, territorial and federal programs, including CPPD, and get rid of the barrier that is the disability tax credit.

Catherine, a person with a disability, shared this with me this summer that "requiring those who may be eligible for the CDB to apply or reapply for the benefit will put significant strain on the already overworked health care professionals who have patient loads so large that paperwork issues are frequently placed as a last priority item by these professionals and will cause significant delays in the delivery of the benefit to those who [need it the most]."

Catherine is right. Here are the stats. The CRA reports that in 2022 alone, it received over 133,000 phone calls from folks having issues accessing the disability tax credit, and only 600 of those calls got redirected to navigators who could help the person.

● (1310)

If the DTC is to be used at all, it should only be used as another method of getting access, an optional item in addition to provincial programs, such as the ODSP, and federal programs, such as the CPPD.

Second is to remove the second barrier, which is another new application process, so that a person does not need to apply a second time for the DTC. In fact, the regulations state that this is going to be an additional application for those who have the DTC, which would need to be repeated if the person were ever needing to reapply for the DTC. We should just get rid of that application altogether

and have it as an opt-out so folks with disabilities who have already been assessed through other programs, whether federal or provincial, would directly have access to the Canada disability benefit.

Third, and really important, is that we should supporting the independence and dignity of an individual person with a disability by means-testing to the individual's income and not family income, as the regulations currently propose. Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region, an organization serving folks with disabilities in my community, referred to this measure as "dehumanizing" in its June letter to the minister.

Michael, from my community, who lives with a disability, shared with me, "one of the many issues for disabled people is that they often get trapped in abusive relationships due to income levels. One cannot escape and set up an independent life free of abuse when they have no, or extremely limited, income of their own. Expecting a person's spouse/partner to completely support them not only adds stress to the relationship, but gives an abusive partner a way to trap and control them." The federal government should acknowledge that folks with disabilities should have the independence of means testing to their individual income alone.

Fourth, and probably one of the most important, is to increase the maximum amount to actually lift people above the poverty line. Here are the numbers we have already: StatsCan reports the low-income measure for the after-tax threshold is just over \$28,000 for an individual and over \$40,000 for a couple. In Waterloo region, my community, the market basket measure is over \$26,000 for an individual and \$37,000 for a couple. ODSP in Ontario, for example, is just over \$1,300 a month, or less than \$16,000 a year. There is not a single provincial or territorial program for folks with disabilities that, when we add \$200 from the CDB, even if a person qualifies for the maximum amount, would lift that person above the poverty line.

These words were shared with me by Chad this summer: "\$200 a month...isn't going to do much for disabled Canadians". It is clear that the maximum benefit amount is insufficient and should be the true supplement originally proposed, which, with provincial and territorial programs, would lift someone above the poverty line.

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Fifth is to raise the income threshold. As it stands right now, when a person makes more than \$23,000 a year, which is below the poverty line, the CDB is going to get rolled back. That amount should obviously be above the poverty line, ideally taking into account the additional costs that a person with a disability incurs.

Sixth, we need to fast-track the benefit. Many folks in the disability community called out that the government moved quickly on CERB, and it could do it again here. The disability community has called it the “disability emergency response benefit,” and the government needs to move quicker with a benefit of some kind. The government could move quicker with the Canada disability benefit and put it into force more quickly as well.

To close, I would like to say to colleagues from all parties that we have a moment here when this could still be addressed. The governing party members could use this as a moment to demonstrate to Canadians that this is a signature priority of theirs, in either the fall economic statement or the budget. My colleagues in other parties could demand this of the governing party for their support in this minority Parliament. As Greens, we are going to continue to prioritize it because the fact is that the disability community has been unwavering in telling the government what it must do. Now is our chance to listen.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that the government has this as a signature priority issue. For the very first time ever, we actually have a national program. Over \$6 billion was allocated for it. That is the single-largest budget increase on a line.

When we talk about \$200 a month, and we had a clear indication that this is a good, solid first step, how much money does the member believe we should be providing a month? He inferred it should be \$1,000. Does he have a tangible amount that he could provide so we could take that back to get some sort of a cost analysis done?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, at minimum, the government should follow through with what it promised to do, which was to model it after the guaranteed income supplement, a \$15-billion- or \$16-billion-a-year program. The \$6 billion we hear cited by the governing party is over six years, so it is only \$1 billion a year. The amount, as I mentioned in my speech, should be enough to supplement provincial and territorial programs so that they are above the poverty line. If it is taking, for example, the market basket measure in Waterloo region, it would amount to just over \$1,000 a month or so, and we summed that up in a way that ends up being a significant generational program.

The Liberals could find the money for it if they did not give billions of dollars for carbon capture and storage and billions to fossil fuel companies across the country. Those are the dollars we could be getting to folks with disabilities, who need it the most.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government made a big deal about doing something for the disabled, but instead of listening to the disabled community, which was asking for \$1,300 a month, they brought forward a benefit that is \$200 a month. At the same time, they jacked up the carbon tax so that groceries cost \$700 more per year and the cost of

housing was doubled under the government. Essentially, disabled people are now even worse off, and Liberals seem to not be doing anything about it.

Does the member agree that Liberals have made things worse, not better?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I want to recognize that the member for Sarnia—Lambton was one of the very first to sign the letter I mentioned, for which we initiated a number of parliamentarians early on in this session to ensure MPs from all parties were advocating for this. The Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc, the NDP and the Green Party joined in that letter, and she was a really critical part of that.

If we are going to be honest, though, about the rising cost of living, I have to be clear. Corporate profits are the main element of it. I know the member likes talking about removing the carbon rebates, but there are no rebates on the gouging of the oil and gas industry. When we look at the price at the pumps for folks in our communities, while the carbon tax went up two cents a litre, the profits of the industry were 18¢ a litre.

If we want to make life more affordable, that is where we should be focusing our time. We should be getting those dollars to folks with disabilities and others living in poverty, who need it the most.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his very interesting speech. We see that he is very interested in the issue and he takes it seriously. It is nice to see that even when people are not members of committees they can still be interested in certain files and get to the heart of the matter. I think that the comments he shared with the House are very constructive, very pragmatic and also very concrete. They could help improve the lives of people living with disabilities.

My son lives with a disability, so this debate affects me, personally. I am not looking for sympathy, but I hope that the government will be more ambitious and more generous, because the people who have children with disabilities lead very difficult lives and have to make a lot of sacrifices. They do not feel like having to constantly fight with the government to be recognized. They need help and they need to have some quality of life, like all of us here do.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères for his comments.

Routine Proceedings

What I would say to him is that this is an opportunity for all of us to use our power here to do more. The Bloc Québécois has supported Bill C-22 at every stage. It now has the power to make demands of the government, which is a minority government. Among other things, the Bloc Québécois can demand that the government fix the Canada disability benefit.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth with the question on the motion now before the House.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 45(8), I request that the recorded division be deferred until Monday, October 7, following the time provided for Oral Questions.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, October 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the first petition I am going to table today is about the environment. Scientific assessments have shown that environmental crises are ramping up. I am talking about climate change, the collapse of biodiversity, pollution, resource depletion and the most severe long-term form of environmental damage, ecocide.

Domestic ecocide legislation has been proposed in Brazil, Scotland, Chile, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and other countries, and the European Union recently agreed to include comparable crimes in its revised Environmental Crime Directive.

The petitioners are calling for ecocide to be added to the crimes recognized in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and for this Parliament to publicly declare its support for the recognition of the international crime of ecocide.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition I would like to present has to do with women and parental leave under the Employment Insurance Act.

Under this act, women, who are already at a disadvantage in the labour market due to injustices and inequity, are still the ones to assume more family responsibilities. It is women who take nearly all the weeks of parental leave following the birth of a child. However, under the act, as currently written, if they lose their job during or very shortly after maternity leave, they are denied regular employment insurance benefits.

This inequity affects some 3,000 women a year. It would be fairly easy to fix by amending the Employment Insurance Act so that the benchmark is extended over a longer period of time to ensure that these individuals, the vast majority of them women, are not penalized by the current legislation. That is what the hundreds of people who signed this petition are calling for.

• (1325)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 47th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The community of Swan River is overwhelmed by the extreme levels of crime because of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, such as Bill C-5 and Bill C-75.

Jail has become a revolving door of repeat offenders, as Bill C-75 allows violent offenders to be in jail in the morning and back on the street the same day, and Bill C-5 allows criminals to serve their sentences from home. The people of Swan River see crime in the streets every day, and that is why they are calling for jail, not bail, for violent, repeat offenders.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions I would like to table today.

The first calls upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

CANADA SOCIAL TRANSFER

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition calls on the Government of Canada to make each province and territory that receives a social transfer payment from the federal government accountable for how it spends the money and how much the disabled people receive each month, and make them accountable for making sure that the people intended to receive this money get their fair share and that it is not being spent on something other than social programs.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, finally, the third petition calls upon the Government of Canada to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those with mental illness.

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of my constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands who are deeply concerned about the perilous state of old-growth forests throughout British Columbia. In fact, of the high-productivity old-growth forests of British Columbia, only 2.7% remain; of that 2.7%, petitioners point out that 75% is slated for logging.

The petitioners recognize the close relationship between the indigenous peoples of British Columbia, particularly of Vancouver Island, and the old-growth forests, the close connection for many that is traditionally ceremonial, spiritual and, in fact, for harvesting and subsistence lifestyles.

The petitioners therefore call on the government to work with the provinces and first nations to halt old-growth logging throughout these endangered ecosystems; to fund the protection of old growth in collaboration with indigenous peoples, particularly noting the climate benefits of maintaining old growth; to support value-added initiatives for forests, particularly by banning the export of raw logs; and to end the practice of using whole trees in wood pellet biofuel production.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to present a number of petitions to the House today.

In the first petition, the petitioners, of their own accord, have noted that after nine years, it is clear that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

The petitioners further note that the failed Prime Minister and his failed NDP-Liberal government have increased the cost of everything and failed to take responsibility for their failures and that crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are filling our streets due to the failed policies of the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government.

Therefore, these petitioners call on the Government of Canada to axe the tax, build the homes, fix—

• (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The rules are clear that members cannot read the petition. The member is clearly reading the petition.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We definitely have that rule. I am sorry; I was distracted.

The member could give us a brief summary of the petition.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do understand this is a sensitive matter for members of the government.

Just to summarize, this petition is asking the House to axe the tax, build the homes, fix—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That is what it says, Madam Speaker: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. It fur-

Routine Proceedings

ther calls for an immediate vote of non-confidence in the government and for a carbon tax election.

I will commend the petition to the House for consideration. I assure members it was a non-partisan association of citizens in my riding that put the petition together.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my next petition is in support of an excellent private member's bill that I put forward, Bill C-257.

The petitioners ask the House to recognize that political discrimination is a serious problem in this country, and that our human rights legislation provides protection for people from various kinds of discrimination but does not protect people from discrimination on the basis of political views or activity. The petitioners note that Bill C-257 would make that simple change, to protect people from discrimination on the basis of their political views.

The petitioners call on the House to support Bill C-257 and, further, to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling in the House deals with policies of the government with respect to natural health products.

The petitioners are opposed to changes that have been made by the government. They are supportive of a private member's bill by my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe that would seek to restore the freedoms that existed previously.

The petitioners note that Liberals are threatening access to natural health products through new rules that would mean higher costs and fewer products available on store shelves. They call on the Government of Canada to reverse the changes that were made in the last Liberal budget with respect to natural health products.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition in support of Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

The petitioners note that sexually explicit material, including de-meaning and violent sexual material, can be easily accessed on the Internet by young persons. A significant portion of the sexually explicit material accessed online is made available for commercial purposes and is not protected by any effective age verification technology.

The petitioners also note that online age verification technology is increasingly sophisticated and can now effectively ascertain the age of a user without in any way breaching their privacy rights. These recommendations have been made by stakeholders in a 2017 study presented to the Standing Committee on Health and are reflected in Bill S-210.

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Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to adopt Bill S-210 as quickly as possible.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition deals with proposals we have seen for the legalization of euthanasia for children in Canada. In particular, petitioners note a proposal from Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians and surgeons. It is a recommendation to allow euthanasia for “babies from birth to one year of age”.

Obviously, this would take place without the consent of the individuals being killed. Petitioners are deeply troubled by and opposed to this proposal. They believe the killing of children is always wrong and call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize euthanasia for minors.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling deals with the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners note that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation exercises and moral teaching based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

The petition outlines the history of persecution against Falun Gong practitioners as well as the work done by various eminent Canadians in bringing attention to this issue and how their leadership led to the passage of a private member's bill finally banning any Canadian complicity in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

Petitioners call for stronger measures from Parliament and from the government to respond to the horrific ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. They want to see the House pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crimes of systemically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

• (1335)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition responds to a proposal from the last Liberal platform to apply political criteria, ideological criteria, to the charitable status determination process. In particular, the Liberal platform in the last election proposed to deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion that the Liberal Party views as dishonest.

Petitioners note that this proposal would jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do work widely recognized to be good work, simply because of the personal convictions of the organization and those involved in it.

Petitioners say this would involve the creation of a values test associated with charitable status, similar to what we saw applied by the government to the Canada summer jobs program. Petitioners believe that charities and other non-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views or religious values and should not be subject to a politicized values test,

and that all Canadians have a right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to freedom of expression without discrimination.

Petitioners therefore call on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination, and further, they want to see the House affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN ERITREA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling deals with the human rights situation in Eritrea, as well as political interference in Canadian affairs that petitioners say is the result of actions and decisions by the Eritrean government. This is a lengthy petition, but I will summarize it. Petitioners note that Eritrea has been ruled by an authoritarian, brutal dictator under a totalitarian system for the last 30 years without a constitution and with no elections, no parliament, no freedom of the press, and no freedom of movement and association; that Eritreans continue to flee indefinite military conscription and religious persecution; that about 30% of Eritrea's population has fled to escape from severe human rights violations; and that those who do flee are still subject to potential violence and intimidation when they have left.

Petitioners note as well that many human rights activists have started working to ensure that community events organized as proxies for the Eritrean embassy are recognized for what they are. They raise concern about Eritrean foreign interference as well as the Eritrean dictator's overt alignment with Vladimir Putin and his assistance of the Russian government with its advancement of its strategic goals in Africa.

Petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to engage Eritrean political and human rights activists and pro-democracy groups to take a leadership role among western allies to challenge the Eritrean dictator's malicious actions, including his collaboration with Vladimir Putin.

They call for an investigation into Eritrean foreign interference in Canada and enforcement of Canada's asylum laws against supporters of the regime, and they also highlight a number of political prisoners whose names I have listed before. I do not think I have time to read them off today, but a number of political prisoners, including Dawit Isaac and 11 imprisoned—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are done with petitions.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 2 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, last night I was talking about the reason we are here today, which is the government's refusal to hand over documents ordered by Parliament, by all three parties on this side of the House, regarding the green funding scandal. Of course, people are asking which green funding scandal, because only the Liberal government can be so corrupt that it actually has subsets of its scandals. We have three ongoing right now.

There is the Environment Canada grants and contributions audit scandal, where they list off a lack of governance issues, ineligible grants given, including to such companies as Rio Tinto. It is a fine Canadian company, but it has been noted for a lot of environmental concerns. It is also worth \$220 billion U.S., yet this government is giving it millions. There are other companies. LaFarge cement received billions. Another one, Holcim Group, which is worth \$30 billion, has received millions from the government.

Of course, there is also the other scandal around the green accelerator fund that the Auditor General pointed out. One of the issues is that companies received funding without showing what they were going to do to reduce greenhouse gases. Also, the Auditor General noted ineligible companies; no due diligence was done before \$8 billion was given out.

These are some of the companies that the AG noted did not have proper paperwork, and possibly would not even be eligible for the funding, but still received some of that \$8 billion from the Liberal government: Algoma Steel, which is worth \$2 billion, received \$200 million; ArcelorMittal, a foreign company worth \$329 billion, got \$400 million; FCA Canada (Stellantis), on top of the billions it receives for batteries, is worth \$55 billion and got half a billion more under the net-zero accelerator. It goes on and on. Pratt & Whitney, which is worth a quarter of a trillion dollars, received \$61 million. Eight companies worth over a trillion dollars received funding from the government they were probably ineligible for.

I want to point out a line from the net-zero accelerator report by the Auditor General. Keep in mind, again, the Auditor General pointed out this money was given out without proper due diligence. This money, billions from Canadian taxpayers, was given out without companies, or even the government, figuring out if they were going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The line is from page 8, for those wanting to follow along at home: "A project of more

Privilege

than \$50 million also requires Treasury Board approval, concurrence letters from ministers of other concerned departments, and Cabinet approval, [but it] can be fast-tracked with a letter to the Prime Minister."

Eight companies are noted that received funding up to \$8 billion that were probably not eligible. The Auditor General herself stated due diligence was not done. Companies that were not eligible received money. Companies applied and received money despite showing no plan to reduce GHG emissions, but a project could be fast-tracked by the Prime Minister if it was above \$50 million. Algoma Steel was above \$50 million. Stellantis was above \$50 million. NextStar Energy, also Stellantis, was above \$50 million. General Motors, which is worth \$70 billion, was also above \$50 million.

I have to ask, what was cabinet's role? What was the Prime Minister's role? Was the Prime Minister involved in fast-tracking? I have to ask that, and I would probably answer "yes" because it is clear from the government's own rules that these companies were not eligible, yet somehow they got fast-tracked to receive the money through the Treasury Board, through cabinet and through the Prime Minister. Two million Canadians are lining up at food banks, including veterans having to rely on the Veterans Association's food bank in Edmonton, yet \$8 billion was fast-tracked by the Treasury Board, cabinet and probably the Prime Minister himself. Taxpayers' money went to large, profitable corporations worth a trillion dollars that probably were not even eligible.

● (1340)

Of course, we also have the green slush fund. The Auditor General has pointed out that the Liberals turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders, with \$53 million given to 10 ineligible projects, which seems like small peanuts compared to the accelerator scandal. A quarter of a billion dollars was given out in 186 cases to projects where board members held a conflict of interest. Some \$58 million was given to projects without ensuring that contribution agreements were met. This is a recurring issue with the government, and it is the same issue with the contribution agreements at Environment Canada.

We have the House, the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP all demanding that documents related to the green slush fund be turned over to the RCMP. For those trying to keep track at home on their scorecards, it is the third one related to sustainable development funding. Parliament has supreme privilege in this case. The government and bureaucrats do not get to decide what can be released when Parliament demands it.

Privilege

The government is covering this up and refusing to hand over the documents despite the will of the majority of the House. The government must learn that Parliament is supreme, not the Prime Minister's Office, not the Prime Minister and not Liberal members of Parliament. It is time for the Liberals to stop the cover-up and hand over the documents.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us think of the Conservative Party's corruption, and this is just a short list: anti-terrorism scandal, Phoenix scandal, G8 spending scandal, the ETS scandal, the F-35 scandal, the Senate scandal and the election scandals, plural. Members might find this hard to believe, but not once did the Conservatives ever go around collecting all the data and then shift it right from their offices to the RCMP. Instead, they took the approach of burying it as far as they could underground.

Conservative Party members believe they are better investigators than the RCMP. They are saying to gather the information and shift it over to the RCMP. Who cares about the Constitution and charter rights?

Where was the enthusiasm, when the Conservatives were in government, to get to the bottom of the huge number of scandals, of which I just cited a few?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, here we have the most corrupt government probably in the history of Canada, and what is its response to billions of dollars given to its friends? It is Harper's fault. Why did Harper not do more about it? This is a disgraceful response from the member, who has been here long enough to know better.

I am going to quote Michel Bédard, who is the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons. He said:

There is no limit to the right of the House of Commons and of its committee to order the production of documents, providing that the documents are available in paper or electronic format and are in Canada. This power is subject only to the exceptions and limits explicitly stipulated by Parliament....

It is very clear that Parliament has asked for these documents. It is Parliament that decides, not the member for Winnipeg North, nor the PMO. Parliament wants to get to the bottom of this scandal. The government needs to comply with the order of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam President, I thank my hon. colleague. I have the pleasure of sitting with him on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. He knows that the government's lack of transparency and lack of responsibility when it comes to Crown corporations are important to me. I think this is a subject that interests him as well.

When the government puts money into Crown corporations, they can do practically whatever they want. In the case of the Sustainable Development Technology Canada foundation, that is more or less the problem. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada shirked all its responsibilities and obligations for accountability in this matter. That is truly unfortunate, because this is tax-

payer money. Nearly one billion dollars was invested in this, and much of it is known to have been misused and mismanaged.

What does my colleague think of this?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my colleague from the public accounts committee has done a fine job of fighting for transparency from the government.

It is clear from all the witnesses we have heard, including the whistle-blower, that the Minister of Industry was aware, the government was aware and Liberal MPs were aware, yet at every point we could have brought the information forward, the Liberal government suppressed it. The government has to come clean.

It makes us wonder. The Liberals are allowing days of their agenda to be sidelined to protect the government from releasing this information. What are they trying to hide that they are willing to sacrifice days and days of their legislation being debated in the House to cover it up? Are they protecting the Minister of Industry? Are they protecting the Liberal government? Why are the Liberals not doing their job to protect Canadians and taxpayers instead?

● (1350)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the decision of former industry minister Navdeep Bains to appoint a chair of the SDTC who was clearly in conflict, having received funds from that same program. Did anyone warn former minister Bains at the time that there could be a conflict of interest? If those warnings were given, what did he do with that information?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope could have just reached over and asked this question, but I am glad we put it on the record.

This is not a new program; SDTC has been around for decades. Not surprisingly, knowing the current government, it got a clean bill of health from the Auditor General until about the time the Liberals took over. Navdeep Bains fired the board that provided excellent governance and that gave SDTC a clean bill of health, and he appointed Liberal cronies. There was push-back and warnings from the existing board members that this would be an issue. Instead, Mr. Bains turned his back on the advice, turned his back on governance and turned his back on taxpayers and opened up the trough for Liberal insiders. That is what we are trying to get to the bottom of with this green slush fund scandal.

Privilege

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague's historical reminder that this program was indeed around for decades and had a fine track record. It was created under former prime minister Jean Chrétien and was extremely well managed in the former administration of Stephen Harper. I say that recognizing that my predecessor as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Gary Lunn, was the minister of natural resources and quite frequently trotted out the impressive statistics showing that there was a significant multiplier factor. Money given through SDTC was more than government money because it prompted other private sector investments in cutting-edge technology. It is a tragedy that the program skidded into what is clearly a wreaking scandal.

My hon. colleague suggested some responses, but what do we do to fix it? It was a good program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for recognizing my friend, former minister Gary Lunn. I used to work with him when I was in Victoria. He is a wonderful gentleman.

There is a clear answer to fixing this corruption. It is to fire the Liberal government and install a Conservative government, which would fix SDTC and have it performing as it was before.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is right when he says that Parliament has the supreme authority to make the requests it has. The issue is the Charter of Rights. The Liberal Party, or the Government of Canada, does not believe we should be walking over individuals' rights. We should not, on a whim, be using the notwithstanding clause. Members of the Conservative Party seem to feel they do not have to worry about the Charter of Rights.

Why are the Conservatives today putting a fog over judicial independence because of their behaviour? By the way, they are making the Auditor General and the RCMP institution uncomfortable with what they are doing.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, the hypocrisy of this gentleman is stunning.

A gentleman that the members' government persecuted, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, was one of the most respected members of our military. In January 2017, he was suspended from his position without explanation. He was suspended because he was against a purchasing decision that was to benefit the Irving family, who are great friends of the Liberal Party. He was suspended on January 27.

In April 2017, the Prime Minister told reporters that Mark Norman would likely end up before the courts. Less than a year later, the Prime Minister said again, in a town hall, that the Mark Norman issue would inevitably lead to court processes.

Why was the member not standing up for a brave Canadian servant like Mark Norman? It was because he was busy spouting hypocrisies in this House. He should be ashamed of his comments today.

• (1355)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, there seems to be a pattern of behaviour with the government. It is corruption and cover-up. We saw that with the Winnipeg lab and we have seen it in numerous instances.

Can the member elaborate on the pattern of behaviour that he has seen?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, where there is smoke there is fire, and there is more smoke with the corruption of the government than we saw over Jasper this summer.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a pleasure to stand in the House on behalf of my constituents to call for common sense, in this case from the government. We as common-sense Conservatives have been calling on the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada and the Auditor General to hand over to the RCMP all documents relating to the Prime Minister's green slush fund. This matter was decided in the House of Commons by a vote.

One of the privileges of parliamentarians is to call for the production of papers, to demand papers from the government. As we know, right now we are in a privilege debate because the Speaker has determined that there is a prima facie case, that on the face of it, it appears as though the government has violated the privileges of members of Parliament. That is why we are now days into a discussion about the Prime Minister's refusal to comply with a direct order of the House. The government's refusal to comply with an order of the House violates each and every one of our privileges, as is evidenced by the fact that, as the Speaker said, no other business may take place until this matter is disposed of.

When the collective or individual rights of members are violated, it is so serious that the House must stop all other business. All other business goes to the bottom of the pile until we have addressed this issue. This is as serious as it gets for Parliament. There are no government bills and no private members' bills being debated because this is the most important issue to deal with, and it is all because the government has refused to comply with a lawful order of the House of Commons.

After question period, I will be happy to continue to talk about the pattern of corruption and the ignoring of the will of Parliament that the Liberal government, enabled by its friends in the NDP, has undertaken. This is a serious matter. Our collective rights as a House of Commons have been threatened. The Speaker has said there is a prima facie case for this to be discussed and considered and that it must take precedence over every other matter before the House.

I look forward to resuming this discussion about the government's breach of the privileges of members of this place.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

[English]

KEN TOBIAS

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a well-known singer-songwriter from New Brunswick has sadly passed away after losing his battle with brain cancer. Ken Tobias was born in Saint John and brought joy and beauty to the world for more than 60 years with his music. He wrote multiple chart-topping hits like *Stay Awhile*, which sold more than two million copies worldwide, and was written for the Bells, and *Dream No. 2*, which he recorded himself. He duetted with Anne Murray and was honoured with numerous awards during his career, including five SOCAN classic awards for 100,000 airplays of a given song.

Music is what can unite us all and Ken was a shining example of that. We will be forever grateful for his contribution to Canadian music. His legacy and his music will live on.

My condolences to his family, friends and fans. He will be sorely missed.

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[Translation]

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF LORETTEVILLE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 60th anniversary of Conseil Montcalm 5529, better known as the Loretteville Knights of Columbus. This charitable group plays a major role in our community and helps the most vulnerable among us. We can always count on the Knights of Columbus when people are in need and could use a helping hand. For nearly 40 years, the Knights of Columbus have held their famous flea market, which attracts thousands of people to the Loretteville arena. Every year, they have raised close to \$60,000 and distributed it to those who really needed it. Over the past 60 years, thousands of volunteers have provided a true and much needed sense of solidarity and community.

I want to pay tribute to a dearly departed former grand knight, Alphonse Lacasse, who, along with his family, welcomed my family when they moved to Château-d'Eau in 1962.

Happy 60th anniversary to the Loretteville Knights of Columbus. Here is to the next 60 years.

* * *

[English]

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Autism Awareness Month in Canada, a time that reminds us of the lived realities of Canadians living with autism and families supporting them.

Recently, our government tabled the framework for autism that outlines the principles and best practices to guide national autism policy, programs and activities in Canada. The Public Health Agen-

cy has also launched Canada's autism strategy, which is a multi-year action plan to implement that framework. We are also launching a process to create a national autism network that will bring together the skills and resources of autism organizations and stakeholders, including people living with experience, to support implementation of activities guided by that framework and strategy.

While the work we are doing is crucial, we know that families need more help from those who deliver health care in the country. It is time for the provinces to step up and do their part to support families, so they can give their loved ones the best possible care.

* * *

[Translation]

DANIEL PINARD

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Quebec lost a free man. Daniel Pinard passed away, and Quebec is greatly indebted to him.

He changed the relationship that Quebecers have with food through his now legendary cooking show, *Ciel! mon Pinard*. With his deft touch, a tomato, some salt and a slice of bread became a gourmet meal. He did not worry about following an exact recipe, and he encouraged his thousands of viewers not to worry but to let their imaginations and tastebuds run wild.

We watched as Daniel Pinard laughed, raved, raged and rhapsodized over his food. He was a man who knew how to live. His two recipe books, *Pinardises*, told a story and encouraged readers to develop a zest for life. Daniel Pinard was a hedonist with gourmet tastes, but he also had a keen social conscience and was concerned about social injustice and inequality.

Daniel Pinard was a sociologist, a democrat and a humanist, who taught people how to make eating an enjoyable experience.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to extend my condolences to the enormous list of people who loved him.

* * *

FRANÇOIS GIGUÈRE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, we were saddened to learn of the passing of François Giguère, a paragon of community involvement and tenant rights advocacy. Mr. Giguère spent years campaigning for everyone to have a roof over their head. More than that, he put words into action with initiatives such as SOLIDES, an organization that buys aging apartment buildings, renovates them and makes them available for rent at prices tenants can afford.

Mr. Giguère and I crossed paths several times, including during election campaigns. He made sure that all the candidates were well aware of their demands. He helped Châteauguay set the bar for social and affordable housing initiatives. This is a great loss for our community.

I extend my deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, colleagues and friends.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Liberal government's reckless approach to public safety has unleashed chaos, crime, drugs and disorder in our communities.

Under the Liberal government's justice laws, violent offenders are released back on the streets. This catch-and-release system strains our police services and puts the men and women in uniform who dedicate their lives to serve and protect our communities at risk.

Just last week, Constable Jim Peters, a Barrie police officer, was stabbed while on duty by a repeat violent offender who was on probation at the time of the stabbing. Thankfully, Jim is recovering.

Over the past two years, this accused individual has been arrested and released 17 times and has had over 100 interactions with the Barrie Police Service. This rampant crime and chaos must end. My Conservative colleagues and I will continue to advocate for strict bail rules that ensure repeat offenders remain behind bars.

Canada's Conservatives want to thank all police and peace officers across our country for their hard work and dedication in keeping our communities safe.

* * *

SIKH MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the Sikh Motorcycle Club of British Columbia and one of its remarkable leaders, Mr. Avtar Singh Dhillon.

Mr. Dhillon immigrated to Canada in 1970 and, as a baptized Sikh, he could not obtain a motorcycle licence because of his turban. Backed by the support of the local Sikh community, Mr. Dhillon filed a complaint and, in 1999, the Human Rights Commission ordered the B.C. government to amend the helmet laws to accommodate riders with turbans.

Due to Mr. Dhillon's tireless advocacy, members of the Sikh community can be seen riding proudly with their faith intact. I thank Mr. Avtar Singh Dhillon and all the members of the Sikh Motorcycle Club for their continued dedication, activism and service to the community.

Statements by Members

KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month, I was thrilled to present the King Charles III Coronation Medal to 20 deserving individuals who have made significant contributions to their communities and to Canada.

Commemorating the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and his lifetime of committed service, these medals recognize outstanding Canadians of all ages, abilities and from all walks of life for their dedicated service to bettering their communities and the lives of others.

With so much negativity in the world today, it is important that we take time to celebrate the accomplishments of others and the positive impacts they make to their communities, our country and, in many cases, the world. These individuals truly exemplify the values of service and selflessness, professionalism and commitment.

I congratulate all the deserving recipients of this honour. Our country is better because of them.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberal failures, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Just weeks after the U.S. slapped Canada with a 14.5% tariff, the Prime Minister dismissed his failures on softwood lumber as a "small" issue. The doubling of softwood lumber tariffs puts thousands of Canadian jobs at risk.

Forestry is New Brunswick's largest industry. It contributes \$1.5 billion to the New Brunswick economy and employs 24,000 workers.

Over the past nine years, and three U.S. presidents, the Prime Minister has failed to get a deal for Canadian forestry workers that former Conservative Prime Minister Harper did in his first 80 days. A common-sense Conservative government will get a deal done with our American neighbours to bring home powerful paycheques for our Canadian forestry workers.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Small Business Month, and with over 19,000 businesses in Vaughan, our city's entrepreneurial spirit is second to none. We see it from family-run businesses like Sweet Boutique to innovators like Summer Fresh Salads and dedicated visionaries like Quality Cheese, all in Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Vaughan is York Region's economic engine, fuelled by its entrepreneurs. They have everything Canada needs, and I will always have their backs.

Statements by Members

To help Canadian businesses thrive, we have invested in them through the Canada summer jobs and my main street programs. We lowered the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%, saving businesses \$6 billion every year.

By this year end, we will be delivering to them \$2.5 billion through the Canada carbon rebate for small businesses and cutting credit card transaction fees by up to 27%, or \$1 billion over five years.

This is what real leadership and commitment to economic growth and prosperity for small businesses looks like.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as expected, the Bloc Québécois motion was rejected by the Liberal government yesterday, proving once again that everything they said over the past few weeks was meaningless.

What is the point of the Bloc Québécois? Spending is higher than ever and there are more public servants than ever before, all paid for with Quebecers' money.

What is the Bloc Québécois's objective today? They voted with the Liberals and the NDP to keep this government in place. This is a government that is always infringing on provincial jurisdictions.

The Bloc Québécois had the chance to work with the future Conservative government to bring down the current government, or at least to negotiate on behalf of Quebecers on the woodland caribou issue. The Bloc must be the worst negotiator in history. The Bloc Québécois is selling its soul to the Liberals and getting nothing for Quebec. The Bloc Québécois now wants people to believe that it will bring down the government on October 29.

Does the Bloc not realize that all Canadians, including Quebecers, want an election?

People can rest assured that once the election is called, the Conservatives will be there to stand up for Canadians and bring home common sense.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

This punitive and ineffective carbon tax is hurting New Brunswickers, whether it is our seniors trying to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living while on a fixed income, young families trying to make ends meet, or those who keep our land, and grow and haul our food. They are all suffering under the weight of this cumbersome and burdensome tax so much so that New Brunswick's courageous and common-sense Premier Blaine Higgs is fed up and has announced that he will be launching a legal chal-

lenge against the Liberals' quadrupling of the carbon tax. We could not support him more.

Premier Higgs, alongside seven out of 10 premiers across the country, is saying enough is enough. We simply can no longer afford this costly coalition. However, I have hope that help is on the way. I hear a train a-coming, and under the leadership of our great conductor, we will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Let us bring it home.

* * *

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns about foreign interference. The CBC reported over the summer that "A report from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) says there were two instance of alleged interference by China in Conservative Party of Canada leadership races."

This begs the question: Why is it that the far-right leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get the security clearance that is necessary?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, Statements By Members is an important standing order in this place for us to be able to speak to our constituencies or to offer messages that each member has designed.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills to not take the floor until he is recognized so that members can make their statements without interruption.

I will invite the hon. member for Winnipeg North to start from the top.

● (1415)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about foreign interference.

Over the summer, we had an interesting report from CBC, which said that "A report from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) says there were two instance of alleged interference by China in Conservative Party of Canada leadership races."

I wonder why the leader of the far-right Conservative Party today does not want to get the security clearance in order to get to the bottom of security issues dealing with foreign interference. It got me thinking whether there was something about the past from the leader of the Conservative Party that he believes will disqualify him from getting the clearance.

Why will the leader of the Conservative Party today not get the security clearance so that he can get a better understanding of what the reality of foreign interference is really about?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: After asking one member to please not raise their voice, I am going to ask the hon. member for Niagara Falls to please not do so as well, as well as all other members. There are several tools available to the Speaker to ensure order, and it would be a real regret to have to use them.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

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MEMBER FOR ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to rise for the first time as the new MP for the riding of Elmwood—Transcona. I humbly thank the voters for sending me here to be their voice in the chamber. I want to thank the volunteers and the great campaign team for their dedication and hard work. I would not be here without their help. From the bottom of my heart, I thank them.

Elmwood—Transcona has been my home for my whole life, and I am proud to say I love my community. I assure the people of Elmwood—Transcona that I will dedicate myself to fighting for the issues that matter to them day in and day out.

For the past 25 years, I have worked to create connections with community and to support and build local programs that improve the lives of my neighbours. As the new member of Parliament, I will continue to do that on their behalf.

* * *

[Translation]

UNION DES PRODUCTEURS AGRICOLES DU QUÉBEC

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec marked its 100th anniversary this week. It is celebrating 100 years of solidarity, 100 years of pooling resources, 100 years of standing together, because we are stronger together, and 100 years of providing inspiration.

I want to thank and congratulate the organization for all these years of hard work to help our regions and communities grow. Solidarity is a guarantee of success, and most importantly, it is a guarantee that the fruits of that success will be shared along every link in the chain. That is really wonderful because it allows the people who feed us to make a decent living.

The Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec has fought many battles over its history, with many more to come. The group's strength will ensure its continued success. Happy 100th anniversary.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up for the endless corruption and stonewalling. The Liberals are so desperate now that they have ground the House to a halt all because they refuse to turn over all documents to the RCMP to fully investigate their latest scandal involving Liberal insiders.

Oral Questions

Let us be clear about the magnitude of this corruption. The Auditor General found \$400 million in taxpayer money either for projects that were not eligible or for conflict of interest cases, where Liberal insiders were approving millions of dollars to their own businesses. Zero dollars have been returned to the Canadian taxpayer. All of this is while millions of Canadians suffer under the cost of living crisis caused by the Liberal-NDP government. There are 24 million people using a food bank every year and thousands of encampments in the country.

The Liberals are putting insiders before Canadians who are suffering. It is like the sponsorship scandal that defeated the last government. It is time for an election for Canadians to do the same thing again.

* * *

● (1420)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply troubled by the recent series of harassing and Islamophobic phone calls made to a Winnipeg mosque over the past several weeks. Places of worship should always be spaces of peace, safety and community. The targeting of any religious group is an attack on all of us, and we must be united in denouncing such hatred.

I stand with Winnipeg's Muslim community and, indeed, all communities facing hate speech during these challenging international times and conflicts worldwide.

Our government recently launched our action plan on combatting hate, which includes helping communities prevent and address hate, while protecting vulnerable individuals and raising public awareness. Together, we all have a responsibility to promote unity and understanding and build a more inclusive society where everyone is free to practise their faith without fear.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the most centralizing and costly government in our history. This government is bad for Quebec. It has broken the immigration system, doubled the cost of housing and doubled the debt.

That is why it is so bizarre that the Bloc Québécois leader has become the worst negotiator in Canadian history. Twice he has decided to vote confidence in the government to keep it in power, without getting anything for farmers or seniors.

Would the government like to thank the Bloc Québécois leader for his generosity?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader was calling something bizarre. Let me tell him what is bizarre.

So far, 2.4 million seniors in Canada have received their Canadian dental care plan card, including 800,000 in Quebec. Hundreds of thousands of people have already been able to receive affordable and accessible dental care, some of them for the first time in years. What is bizarre is that the Conservative leader says the Canadian dental care plan does not exist.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament's work has ground to a halt because the Prime Minister is violating your ruling ordering him to hand over evidence to the RCMP concerning another Liberal scandal. The scandal involves Liberal-appointed executives who gave their own companies \$400 million in at least 184 cases of conflict of interest, according to the Auditor General.

Why is the Prime Minister violating your ruling to cover up the criminal evidence of another Liberal scandal?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is completely false.

What the Conservatives are doing right now is trying to end rights protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms using the extraordinary powers of the House. They want to end police independence in our society, and they have no idea what a dangerous precedent they are setting.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament is paralyzed, unable to work on the problem of doubling housing costs or two million people at the food bank, because the government is refusing to respect the Speaker's ruling to turn over evidence in the criminal investigation of the latest Liberal scandal. At issue is that Liberal appointees directed \$400 million to companies they own, involving 184 conflicts of interest, according to the Auditor General.

Why is the Prime Minister breaking the Speaker's ruling to cover up criminal evidence in the latest Liberal scandal?

● (1425)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition is neglecting to tell the whole truth to Canadians. The Conservatives are trying to use the extraordinary powers of this place to circumvent the judicial requirement of police to protect the charter rights of Canadians.

I want to believe that the Leader of the Opposition does not understand what he is doing, but I am even more concerned that he does understand and the charter rights of Canadians are not important to him.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it should be no surprise that Liberals believe that white-collar criminals can hand over \$400 million to their own companies, because we see the case of the dirtbag Tibor Organa who shot a police officer in the stomach yesterday while he was out on bail, after having been arrested for two dozen offences he committed while he was out on probation.

Let us get this straight. He was out on probation for many crimes, he gets arrested for violating probation, so he gets released on bail and shoots a police officer.

When will the government finally accept that its hug-a-thug catch-or-release system is putting our people at risk?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the police officer. No police officer should be hurt in the line of duty. However, what is extremely concerning is what the Leader of the Opposition is doing in the House today. He is trampling the charter rights of Canadians. Whether it is in the House or whether it is outside, Canadians need to be extremely alarmed about the fact that when it comes to their rights, his first instinct is to trample over them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals think people have a charter right to get released after two dozen offences while they are already on probation and shoot a police officer in the stomach. I am more worried about the charter rights of the police officer who is recovering from the gunshot wound.

This is what the police officer said, "Almost everyone we arrest is out on bail. No one stays in jail where they belong....The city and the feds just don't care, it just doesn't bother them, it doesn't matter how many die or if a cop gets shot."

What is wrong with you people?

The Speaker: I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, as well as all members of Parliament, that all questions and answers should be directed through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the men and women in uniform in my city of Toronto or right across the country are harmed in the course of their work, they deserve our absolute respect and solidarity, which we always provide to them.

In terms of decisions made about bail, these are important considerations and considerations where we have made amendments to the bail regime. What happens after amendments are made at the federal Parliament is the ball turns over to the provinces.

We need to ask genuine questions about who is making decisions about granting or denying bail, about provincially appointed JPs, about provincial Crowns who are making decisions about whether to review bail and what kinds of conditions to impose. Those are questions that need to be asked, because we—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brantford—Brant will not take the floor until he is recognized, please.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the will of the House is clear. Yesterday, it demanded that the government grant a royal recommendation for Bill C-319, which increases old age security by 10% for people aged 65 to 74. This would permanently end the two separate classes of seniors.

The Liberals have a choice. They can respect the will of elected representatives, or they can learn the hard way that voters will side with seniors.

Will they grant a royal recommendation for Bill C-319, or are they going to start brushing up their résumés?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is something very important on the member for La Prairie's résumé. He voted against the new federal Canadian dental care plan that 6,900 people in the riding of La Prairie have signed up for.

Every time we come up with ways to help Quebec seniors, the Bloc Québécois votes no.

• (1430)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister surely knows that in his riding alone, in Gatineau, 30,000 seniors 65 and up are being denied access to the 10% increase in old age security. He is responsible for all that. He is the Minister of Seniors. He and his pals are the ones who created two classes of seniors and who are now fighting to maintain this injustice, contrary to the will of the House.

Can he explain to these 30,000 seniors that he would rather not give them a penny more and end up in an election?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 30,000 seniors in Gatineau, like all seniors in Quebec, like all seniors in Canada, are amazed by the Liberal Party of Canada's record, especially when it comes to targeting and helping the most vulnerable seniors in society.

When we improved the guaranteed income supplement, when we brought in dental services for seniors, when we invested in housing, the Bloc was against that.

The Liberal Party of Canada was there for the 30,000 seniors of Gatineau and seniors across Canada.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I would like to remind the members for Rivière-du-Nord and New Westminster—Burnaby that they are not to speak until they are recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is raging across the country. Rents have doubled under the Liberals. People cannot find housing they can afford.

The Conservatives want us to believe they hold the solution, but they are part of the problem. When the Conservative leader was the minister responsible for housing, he built six housing units. He let big developers snap up 800,000 homes so they could get rich off ordinary folks.

The Liberals and Conservatives created this crisis. Why should we trust them to solve it?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, whom I hold in high esteem, has been too generous to the Conservative Party leader.

During his entire career as minister responsible for housing, he built six affordable housing units across the country. However, that does not stop the Conservative leader from telling Quebec municipalities they are incompetent even though they are building 8,000 affordable housing units.

On top of that, he said that Quebec's seniors are living in Soviet-style conditions if they live in low-income housing, co-op housing or non-profit housing. He says social housing is Soviet-style housing.

* * *

[*English*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to violate the human rights of persons with disabilities.

Even while it is getting sued by its own accessibility commissioner, the government continues to propose an inadequate and inaccessible Canada disability benefit. This is cruel and callous. The government has received over 10,000 pieces of input through consultation, and the cabinet needs to act on it.

Will the Liberals finally listen to the disability community, increase the benefit, unlock it from behind the inaccessible disability tax credit and get it out to people now?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has done more than any other government when it comes to supporting and building a more accessible Canada. Once again, our government is stepping up and delivering a new historic support in the Canada disability benefit, which is going to help over 600,000 Canadians with disabilities.

Oral Questions

While the NDP and the Conservatives are focused on their own political ambitions, we are focused on delivering for some of the most vulnerable in our communities. We are on track to deliver this benefit next July.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bad news keeps rolling in from credible financial experts.

This week's Economist says, "Were Canada's ten provinces and three territories an American state, they would have gone from being slightly richer than Montana, America's ninth-poorest state, to being a bit worse off than Alabama, the fourth poorest."

To fix a problem, one has to admit that it exists. Will the government admit that, under its policies, Canada is now poorer than Alabama, America's fourth-poorest state?

● (1435)

Hon. Terry Beech (Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are very particular about what statistics they choose to share.

If they want to compare us to the United States, we might start with health care or dental care or pharmacare or child care. However, if they want to focus on the economy, they might focus on the fact that we have a lower deficit, that we have lower debt-servicing costs and that we pay lower interest rates than America does, as well as that we have higher forecasted economic growth.

Unfortunately, because of the dangerous promises of the Leader of the Opposition, they do not want Canadians to hear about that. This is why Conservatives are promising to cancel the CBC.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the data, these statistics, are not coming from Conservatives. They are coming from credible financial experts at the Financial Times of London and The Economist, two organizations for which the finance minister once worked. Surely, the government is not suggesting these organizations are biased.

Again, to fix a problem, one has to admit that it exists. Will the government admit that, under its spending, its budgets and its plans, Canada is now poorer than Alabama, America's fourth-poorest state?

Hon. Terry Beech (Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is saying is ridiculous.

The truth is that the Leader of the Opposition offers Canadians no viable solutions. On housing, they want to add 5%—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister, from the top, please.

Hon. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, they do not want to hear this information.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to add 5% tax on apartment construction. On affordability, he does not support dental care,

pharmacare or child care. He does not support the tax cuts that we gave the middle class or the tax cuts we gave for small business.

Worst of all, he does not want anybody to hear about this. This is why he wants to cancel the CBC and take that away from Canadians as well.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Financial Times wrote one year ago that, if current trends continued, Canadian living standards would continue to decline. After a year, it has gotten worse.

This week, The Economist said that Canada is now "poorer than Alabama".

Will any minister over there admit that Canadian living standards are in decline?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is now the second member to admire Alabama and say that Alabama is doing better than Canada. I think Canada is the greatest nation on earth. I am really proud of this country and what we are doing. I am proud of our health care system.

When we take a look at the Conservatives filibustering a study of privatizing health care in committee right now, no wonder they have an admiration of the American model. They want to clear-cut our health care system. Talk about not acknowledging a problem. They have no solutions for the gaps we have in care. We do. We are delivering. We are going to keep doing it.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister wants Canadians to believe that they have never had it so good, but here is what Canadians are actually experiencing: the worst housing inflation, the worst mortgage debt, the worst consumer debt in the G7 and income per person today that is lower than it was 10 years ago. Now the OECD says that Canada's real GDP growth will be last among its member nations until 2060.

Will the Liberals finally admit that, under their leadership, Canadian living standards are declining?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nobody is denying that there are challenges in every corner of the globe. Members can cherry-pick statistics here or there, but the question is this: What do we do as a country to meet the challenging moments we are in? The Conservatives' answer is to provide a slogan and no plan. I just invite people to pull back the curtain, as in *The Wizard of Oz*, and see what is back there. There is not a single thing. In contrast, we have a plan. Since I last spoke in the House, we have gained 50,000 people in dental care. That is 800,000 people getting care on something Conservatives will not even admit exists. This is about doing hard work and doing the right thing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government came to power nine years ago on the strength of false promises that were never kept. Canada is completely broken.

The government has spent like a drunken sailor and has also tabled deficit budgets year after year. As a result, the debt doubled during that time. This Prime Minister has increased the debt more than all other prime ministers combined.

The OECD predicts that Canada will have the worst economic growth of all its member states for the next three decades. Canadians deserve better.

Will the government do the only honourable thing left and call an election?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that has increased in recent years, it is the Canadian government's investment in affordable housing.

Before the member's arrival in the House of Commons, her Conservative leader, the chief insult-hurler, created a total of six affordable housing units during his entire time in office. In contrast, in her riding alone, 305 affordable housing units have been built in the past few months, with many more to come under the historic \$1.8-billion agreement that we signed with the Government of Quebec.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Canada has fallen behind our trading partner and neighbour, the United States, in terms of economic growth and productivity in particular. Why does Texas have a more robust economy than all Canadian provinces combined, when it has 10 million fewer people?

The current government's reckless spending and lack of fiscal restraint have taken their toll on the Canadian and Quebec economies. Canadians want change. They want to regain control over their lives. The only way to do that is to call an election.

Will you do that?

The Speaker: Once again, as I mentioned earlier, all questions should be directed through the Chair. I am sure the hon. member did not mean to ask me that question.

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague and all Quebeckers that the last time the Conservatives were in power, the Harper government did not balance budgets in this country. Not only did it run deficits year after year, but it also lowered taxes for the wealthiest Canadians and cut services for everyone else. Quebeckers remember that.

They also remember all the cuts the Conservatives made to science. The census comes to mind, for example. Mr. Harper decided the census was no longer needed to provide services to the public. Quebeckers will not forget these examples. The Conservatives are a one-trick pony. The only thing they know how to do is austerity.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the House has spoken. Yesterday, it demanded that old age security be increased for people 65 to 74. It demanded that the government give a royal recommendation to Bill C-319. This bill is the only way to permanently protect all seniors' income. It is also the only way to permanently abolish the age discrimination that seniors are experiencing.

Will the government finally listen to the will of the House, listen to the will of seniors and give a royal recommendation to Bill C-319?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Townships are one of the most beautiful regions in Quebec, if not Canada. We are proud to say that in the riding of Shefford alone, in Granby and the surrounding area, 13,300 Canadians have signed up for the Canadian dental care plan. They are very happy about it. My colleague voted against that. Why?

• (1445)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Seniors has spent the week lecturing all and sundry, but he is in no position to lecture anyone. He is the one depriving almost 30,000 people in his own riding of a 10% increase in their OAS. He, the Minister of Labour and Seniors, is the one leading the Liberal fight against the will of the House to support people aged 65 to 74. He is even willing to risk an election to avoid having to improve pensions.

Will he look the 30,000 seniors in his riding in the eye and explain why he believes they do not deserve a penny more?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are not 30,000 people aged 65 to 74 in Gatineau, but never mind. The seniors who live in Gatineau are very happy, because when it came time to support them during the pandemic, when it came time to support the most vulnerable seniors in Gatineau and elsewhere, the Liberal government was there for them with the necessary support measures. We will continue to do so. The Bloc Québécois will continue to vote against them.

Oral Questions

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is that what the Quebec Liberals are really about? They get all worked up when delivering their speeches about seniors in Ottawa, but in reality, they are abandoning the seniors in their communities. The Minister of Labour and Seniors is depriving nearly 30,000 retirees in his riding of Gatineau of a 10% increase in their old age security pension. Similarly, the Quebec lieutenant is abandoning nearly 15,000 seniors in his riding of Qu bec, while the Prime Minister is withholding income from nearly 10,000 seniors in his Montreal riding.

Frankly, with members like that, would it not be better to call an election?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members will recall that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to do what was necessary in the House. We had to provide support measures such as boosting the GST/HST credit, enhancing measures for seniors and improving health care. We had to spend money to support seniors. Members will recall who it was who supported Canada's seniors. It was the Quebec members of the Liberal Party of Canada, not the Bloc Qu b cois.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and corruption is way up.

Here is what we know so far. The Liberals stacked the SDTC board with their close friends. That board makes decisions as to which companies get grants worth millions in tax dollars. The Auditor General uncovered a massive scandal. The Liberal insiders funnelled almost \$400 million to their own companies. They got rich and taxpayers got the bill.

Now the government is refusing to hand over the documents to the RCMP for a potential criminal investigation. What does it have to hide?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the House leader for the Conservatives is completely false in what he is stating in this place.

What is true is that the Conservatives have put forward a motion that would blur the line between the independence of the legislative and judicial branches of government. Both the RCMP and the Auditor General have raised their extreme concern with what the Conservatives have put forward. Every Canadian should be concerned about the fact that the first instinct of Conservatives is to suspend the charter rights of Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the charter is there to protect people from the government, not to protect the government from accountability by the people. While millions of Canadians are suffering from higher taxes, higher prices and doubled housing costs, all caused by the government, the Speaker has ordered that the House of Commons can deal with no other business until the corruption motion is dealt with. It still will not hand over the documents, preferring that Parliament grind to a halt.

While millions of Canadians are lining up at food banks, Liberal insiders are lining their own pockets. When will the government hand over the documents, and when will the government get Canadians their tax dollars back?

• (1450)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague's erratic and unhinged behaviour is because he knows that he is being completely false in what he is putting forward to this place. What the Conservatives are putting forward is to trample the charter rights of Canadians.

Both the RCMP and the Auditor General have raised their extreme discomfort, and every single Canadian should be extremely alarmed by the behaviour of the Conservative members of Parliament who would put their own political interests ahead of the rights of Canadians.

The Speaker: I just want to remind all members to make sure their language does not skate too close to the line. I made this point yesterday during question period as well when the question was asked from the other side.

The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets has the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and conflict of interest is up at the Liberal green slush fund. The Auditor General found that 82% of the transactions approved by Liberal insiders went to their own companies, totalling almost \$400 million. The House demanded that the government turn over the documents to the RCMP, and the Prime Minister is refusing.

How many more millions of misappropriated tax dollars is the Prime Minister hiding by refusing to turn over the documents?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not want to share the uncomfortable truth that they are trying to use the extraordinary powers of this place to circumvent the judicial oversight that is required by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to protect Canadians. The only thing they are interested in doing is pursuing their naked pursuit for partisan gain while they trample the charter rights of Canadians. Every Canadian citizen and resident should be extremely alarmed that, instead of protecting their rights, the Conservatives are looking for their own political gain.

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since Orange Shirt Day, there have been countless examples of residential school denialism, including from Conservative candidates in both New Brunswick and B.C. We know that the leader of the Conservative Party supports this kind of rhetoric, having fundraised with residential school denying think tanks.

Survivors have a right to be protected from hate speech. Will the government support my bill and protect survivors from residential school denialism once and for all?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for her work in bringing forward the bill that would recognize residential school denialism as a hate crime. I look forward to working with her.

We know that as we marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, it was a painful reminder that we need to do better to educate Canadians on the impacts of residential schools, as well as on the hurtful acts of denialism that take place in many parts of the country.

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MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been three years since the tugboat *Ingenika* sank, killing Troy Pearson and Charley Cragg, and it has been two years and three transport ministers since the government promised strengthened marine personnel regulations to protect workers like Troy and Charley. Every single day, workers are going to sea without the protections that the government promised.

How can the minister justify continued delays when workers' lives are on the line?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, safety is always our top priority. When the Transportation Safety Board issues a report, we always carefully consider its recommendations. This in fact was also the case with the MV *Ingenika*.

We are working now to implement recommendations and strengthen safety measures. We are working every step of the way with industry, with unions and with experts.

* * *

● (1455)

JUSTICE

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was International Wrongful Conviction Day. In grade 7, I wrote a paper on David Milgaard, a prairie kid who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The injustice of his case was appalling. Immortalized through the Tragically Hip song *Wheat Kings*, it captured the attention of the nation.

Too many innocent people have suffered over the years. In fact, just today again in my hometown of Winnipeg, a wrongfully convicted man was exonerated. As Gord Downie reminded us, we “can't be fond of living in the past”.

Can the Minister of Justice explain how Bill C-40 would help strengthen our legal system to protect against wrongful convictions in the future?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thoughts are with Clarence Woodhouse and the suffering he has endured unjustly for decades, and I want to recognize the suffering of all of those people who have endured an injustice.

The bill that the member is referencing, David and Joyce Milgaard's law, would create real change. It would create an independent commission to review potential miscarriages of justice. It would revolutionize access to justice in Canada.

For all innocent people who have been wrongfully convicted and are still awaiting justice, help is on the way. I am sorry for all of Clarence's suffering. His story proves why we need to work harder for a better, fairer and more equitable justice system for all.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon tax Carney took on a role as the de facto finance minister for the NDP-Liberals and almost immediately got \$2 million for his buddy who owns Telesat. Then he landed discussions for his trillion-dollar company Brookfield to get its hands on \$10 billion of Canadians' pension money, and then he started sending fundraising letters for the Liberals. After nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up for their corruption.

Will the Liberals simply co-operate with an investigation by the lobbying commissioner?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives continue to try to smear a Canadian who is recognized around the world for his work, I want to go back to their weird admiration of Alabama.

Do members know that Alabama has the third-lowest life expectancy in the United States? Do members know that the life expectancy in Alabama is a full decade lower than in Canada? Do members know that Alabama has some of the most restrictive rules around a woman's getting access to an abortion or contraceptives? Is that what the Conservatives admire about Alabama? Is that why they are talking about upping Alabama and are saying that it is better than Canada? I wonder why they are so interested in Alabama.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we have been hearing about unhinged responses today, and there is one.

Oral Questions

We can check Hansard. There was nothing about Alabama in there, but we could see it from noted Liberal strategist and commentator Trevor Tombe, who did make the comparison.

However, when we are making comparisons, we can make many between banana republics and the corruption under the NDP-Liberal government, with the Prime Minister himself twice found guilty of breaking ethics laws. The government is absolutely out of touch after nine years, and now it has put Mark “conflict of interest” Carney in charge of its economic policy.

Why can we not just have a carbon tax election?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member opposite is getting a little riled up, because there are some uncomfortable truths that are being put forward here. While the Conservatives continue to talk down Canadians and talk down our country, the bigger concern is what they are trying to do in this place, where they are overriding the charter rights of Canadians.

When it comes to privacy rights and, indeed, when it comes to a woman's right to choose, we know that the first inclination of Conservative members of Parliament is to take them away.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a trillion-dollar everything corporation that is currently asking for billions of tax dollars recently faced shareholder calls for transparency after a scathing report raised questions about whether Brookfield engages in tax avoidance strategies when it comes to paying Canadian tax.

The Liberals just appointed Brookfield's board chair, carbon tax-promoting Mr. Carney, to craft Canada's economic policy. The Liberals will not say whether they cleared this with the lobbying commissioner. Are the concerns Brookfield's shareholders had about tax transparency the reason why?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is another typical attack from the Conservatives against Canadians who do not support their vision for Canada. We have seen this over the last nine years. I guess it is hurtful for them when it is people they appointed to important positions who come forward and do not actually agree with their vision of Canada. What do they do? They attack them. They bring them down. They are not open to debate or to criticism, and their only inclination is to attack fellow Canadians.

• (1500)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is another typical Liberal scandal. The Conflict of Interest Act prohibits ministers from furthering interests of their friends, which is why the act requires ministers to declare close friendships with people who lobby.

The finance minister has frequently mentioned her close personal friendship with the chair of Brookfield, who now holds a senior Liberal economic advisory position. In describing her relationship with carbon tax-promoting Mr. Carney, the minister said things like “Mark is a personal friend of mine, of very long standing” and “I speak with Mark often, he's actually my son's godfather.”

Has the minister declared her friendship with the world's—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again this is just a simple personal attack because the Conservatives are sad or disappointed that there are eminent Canadians who do not support their dangerous vision of Canada, to be honest. There is a reason why Canadians who have global recognition are working to support a progressive vision of this country, but what we see from the Conservatives is that when Canadians or organizations do not support them, all they do is attack.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals do not want to fall by October 29, they had better start standing up for farmers.

Bill C-282, which has just one clause and protects supply management, has been stuck in the Senate for more than a year. Why? It is because Peter Boehm and Peter Harder, two unelected wannabe kings, both appointed to the Senate by the Liberals, are deliberately blocking a bill supported by the majority in the House.

Will the Liberals ensure that the senators respect democracy and pass Bill C-282?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has always supported supply management in Canada. It was actually a Liberal government that brought in supply management many years ago. We have always stood behind farmers. We also voted in favour of the bill on supply management.

Senators know that they are independent, but they also know that they must do their job and carefully consider the House's point of view as they decide whether to support farmers in Quebec and across the country.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all of the parties should be furious that senators are obstructing the will of the House. We cannot allow two unelected senators—emphasis on “unelected”—to decide, between naps, to threaten Quebec agriculture.

They do not care about democracy or farmers. They do not care about the 6,000 businesses or the 100,000 jobs in Quebec. They do not care about Quebecers. Enough is enough.

I am calling on all parties. Farmers are listening. Will they pick up the phone and tell their senators to respect democracy and pass the bill?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already spoke a few moments ago about how the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, has always supported supply management to protect farmers in Quebec and across the country.

We have demonstrated that support on many occasions, including during the difficult negotiations with President Trump. We stood our ground. We were insistent. We won out against President Trump and succeeded in protecting the interests of farmers in Quebec and across the country.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, supported by the Bloc Québécois, Liberal corruption has taken over the House of Commons. Once again, the Prime Minister will do anything to protect his cronies who follow his lead and violate ethics and conflicts of interest rules. There were 186 conflicts of interest in the Liberal green fund, involving \$330 million of public money. That is seven times more money than the sponsorship scandal.

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to hand over all the documents requested by the House to the RCMP? What is so corrupt about this that he would once again violate an order of the House?

• (1505)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative members are not giving Canadians accurate information. Conservative members are the ones violating Canadians' charter rights. Canadians should be extremely concerned about what the Conservative members are doing. The Conservatives are compromising the independence of the legislative and judicial branches. That is very troubling.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' right to know is more important than this government's right to hide.

To be clear, the Liberals can shut down debate on the question of privilege by being open and transparent and by providing the House with the documents it has requested right now. The Conservatives proved that parliamentarians' privileges were violated. The Auditor General of Canada found that the Prime Minister created a slush fund for Liberal insiders. Liberal ministers knew about it and allowed their friends at SDTC to engage in corruption. The House is overflowing with Liberal corruption.

When will Canadians get their money back?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague is saying is completely false. The Auditor General and the RCMP have said that they are extremely concerned about the Conservatives' motion because it violates Canadians' rights. It is the privilege of the House to do so, but—

[*English*]

I am sorry, I am not sure—

The Speaker: I apologize. Unfortunately, I only looked at the clock, and the clock is incorrect. I am going to ask the hon. minister to start her question from the top. This one is on me, dear colleagues, and I apologize, but we will make sure that the clock starts at the right time.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague said is completely false. The Auditor General and the RCMP have said that they are extremely concerned about the fact that the Conservatives are moving this motion in the House because it limits Canadians' Charter rights. I know Conservatives care about Canadians' rights and, of course, Quebecers' rights, but they are the ones who are not respecting those rights in hopes of scoring political points. That is terrible.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable has had two opportunities to ask his questions. I am sure he will have others, if his colleagues are willing. I would therefore ask him not to speak until it is his turn.

The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned from the Auditor General that the Prime Minister broke the Conflict of Interest Act by using the green fund managed by Sustainable Development Technology Canada to give gifts to his friends. The Liberals have refused the Conservative Party's legitimate request to hand over the documents related to this slush fund to the RCMP so that it can conduct its investigation. These Liberal secrets represent 184 conflicts of interest for a total of nearly \$400 million in taxpayers' money.

When will we get that money back?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has already answered that question several times.

The member spoke about secrets. One thing that should not be kept secret is that, in his riding, 11,900 seniors have received their membership card for the new Canadian dental care plan. Meanwhile, his leader is saying that he cannot tell us why he is against the Canadian dental care plan because it does not exist.

How will my colleague explain to the 11,900 seniors in his riding that the card they have received does not exist?

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2021, we committed to strengthening and modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act in order to better protect the environment and the health of Canadians. With the passage of Bill S-5, Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act, we have kept our promise.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change give us an update on the implementation of this new law?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and all his work on environmental issues. Yesterday, our government announced additional measures to protect the public from the harmful effects of pollution, particularly forever chemicals.

We know that the Conservative Party of Canada's environmental priority is giving big polluters a free pass. They want to give the oil and gas companies the green light to pollute as much as they want, for free. They are turning their backs on the work of experts and scientists and choosing instead to listen to conspiracy theories, like Premier Danielle Smith in Alberta is doing, and promote disinformation.

* * *

• (1510)

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the shady business partner of the Minister of Employment testified that the Randy in the text messages implicated in a half-million-dollar shakedown is someone other than the minister. However, surprise, surprise, when he was ordered by the ethics committee to identify this so-called other Randy, he refused to do so. Everyone knows why. Will the Minister just stand in his place and admit that it is him?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: For the second, and I hope the last, time, I am going to ask the hon. member for Brantford—Brant to please not take the floor unless he is recognized by the Chair.

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

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, when witnesses testify before committees, they are obliged to provide the information that is asked of them.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, where is Randy?

Speaking of not being forthcoming at committee, the minister testified that he had absolutely no communications with his shady business partner at or around the time of the half-million-dollar shakedown. However, now that phone records have proven otherwise, the minister has been forced to admit that he phoned and texted his shady business partner at the very same time.

If the minister is not Randy in the text messages, then why did he hide this material fact from committee?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, if a witness is asked to provide information to a committee, we expect that they provide it.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Now, the government is no stranger to the bait and switch. It was the Prime Minister himself who said that sunlight is the best disinfectant, yet all Canadians have received is fraud and corruption.

I was happy to see that the procurement ombud is going to undertake a study of the bait and switch practices of the government, but why does it always take another hand to force the government to do the right thing?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would actually turn that question around on my hon. colleagues who have decided to abuse the power of this place and to use their powers to upend and override the charter rights of Canadians.

If Conservative Party members want to ask themselves how they can do the right thing, it is to make sure that they do not abuse the powers of this place and protect the charter rights of Canadians.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this fall, thousands of young Canadians are starting their post-secondary journey, including those at UBC in my riding in Vancouver Quadra.

These students are our future, and our government recognizes that we have a role to play in helping them with the cost of living. They should not be stressed out about paying tuition and rent, but rather they should be able to focus on their classes.

Will the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development please tell the House just what our government is doing to support students right across the country?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Quadra for her question, and I thank the Conservative members in the House for congratulating us for all the work we are doing to make life easier for students. Whether it is taking off federal interest on student loans or doubling those student loans, we are making sure that apprentices are trained from coast to coast to coast. We have increased student loans. We have taken off the federal student debt. Why did we do that? It is because we are there to support students every step of the way.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are heckling us every step of the way. We are supporting students to build Canada and make sure we have an economy that is fair for every generation.

• (1515)

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years, working families in my home province of Manitoba suffered from Conservative cuts to the health care system and social programs. Under the government, the cost of rent and food has shot up. That is why the NDP has fought to deliver dental care and pharmacare, help lower costs for Canadians, and bring in anti-scab legislation to empower workers for better wages.

While the NDP fights for measures to help people, why does the government refuse to crack down on corporate greed and stop ripping off the hard-working members of Elmwood—Transcona?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to the House. I look forward to her contribution.

We may disagree on how we get to solutions, but it is really wonderful to work with parties that are focused on solutions. We have parties that are really interested in finding common ground, like with dental care, which has seen 800,000 people get care, and finding solutions like affordable medicine.

We then have a party obsessed with slogans that have nothing behind them. It will not even admit it has no plan whatsoever for a senior who needs dental care or a person who needs essential medicine. The Conservatives' message is that people are on their own, but they have a fun slogan.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, this year in my community, we have already lost 64 people to poisoned drugs. The federal government has a \$359-million program to support prevention, harm reduction, and treatment initiatives called SUAP. The government has previously funded programs in Waterloo region, but this year, while multiple organizations submitted applications, zero SUAP dollars have been committed to any programming in my community to date.

Will the minister commit to reviewing SUAP funding decisions to ensure hot spots, such as Waterloo region, are not left unfunded?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is a strong advocate for his community. I also know he has recently had exchanges with our department and that another meeting has been scheduled to discuss this further.

We know that all communities across Canada are impacted by substance use, including in the Kitchener and Waterloo region, and that is why we have invested in more than 400 projects through the SUAP program, making a real difference in Canadians' lives.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

One thing we want to acknowledge, as you have said on numerous occasions, is the importance of words, but along with the importance of words is a demonstration of consistency. I bring this up

Oral Questions

in the most positive way I can. The leader of the Conservative Party used the word “wacko” and was not told that it was inappropriate, whereas the word “unhinged” was used and you stood up in your place. We suggest that words matter, and we want to follow and abide by what the Speaker is saying.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary.

As I mentioned, the formulation of the words was correct. I was pointing out to members, as I pointed out yesterday, that we were skating close to the line, and I was asking members to take great care in how they express themselves. As to the first example the hon. member used, that comment was clearly considered unparliamentary and was dealt with at the time.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this has to do with unparliamentary language. I have to admit that I would appreciate your help, because I imagine that once I open my mouth, it may be hard to continue.

The leader of the official opposition used the word “dirtbag” in relation to someone accused of a crime who was out on bail. I think we all need to watch our language carefully and think of the case of Umar Zameer, who was accused of homicide in the death of a police officer, only to find after examination that he was accused wrongfully. Being out on bail does not mean that someone has done something wrong. It means a judge has assessed that conditions allow them to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1520)

The Speaker: I am going to allow the hon. member to continue. If members do not appreciate the point of order, I invite them, at their turn, to rise on a point of order. Otherwise, I invite them to allow the Chair to listen, uninterrupted, to the member.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your assistance.

Business of the House

I know that this is a difficult topic. Everyone here is grateful to police officers across this country and grateful and vastly relieved that the police officer in Toronto is recovering well and is reported to be in good spirits. No one would wish a police officer to come to harm, but for those involved in altercations with the police, especially when they are still under investigation by the Special Investigations Unit, we should not in this place jump to conclusions, as the hon. leader of the official opposition has done, and attribute a term like “dirtbag” to them when we know nothing about their lives and know nothing about their circumstances. We know that something has occurred, which is most unfortunate, but we must not treat people who are out on bail as though they are subhuman or we demean our own humanity.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for Indigenous Services is rising on the same point of order. The Chair has heard some good conversations about this and will come back on it, so I would ask the hon. member to be brief and to the point.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

I have noticed over the last several months a decline in the tenor of the House. It is disturbing to me as a member of Parliament to hear other members of Parliament use names and slurs toward constituents. These are Canadians we are talking about. When we are calling each other names and calling constituents names, we can do better. I am the member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, and I am immensely proud of the citizens of my riding, and I would never, ever consider calling any of them a name.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill is rising on the same point of order. The Chair has heard a fair bit of comment, and I know that members have important work to continue, so I will ask the hon. member, just as I asked the hon. minister, to be brief and to the point.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to put on the record that I am very comfortable with calling a cop killer a dirtbag.

The Speaker: Colleagues, thank you for your input. I appreciate what you have raised.

The Chair, on a number of occasions, and not only this Chair but previous people who have held this position, has raised the importance of using language that is befitting of this place and the people who sent us here.

[*Translation*]

I always encourage members to exercise some restraint when talking about people who are not in the House to defend their point of view. That said, as I mentioned last week, public figures can face political criticism here in the House.

[*English*]

Nonetheless, again, it is important for us to use language that is befitting of the people who sent us here, and I encourage all members to do so.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the government House leader's attention to the following passage from page 95 of Eugene Forsey's “The Question of Confidence in Responsible Government”, which is considered to be the Canadian bible on the confidence convention: “A Ministry which could not control the House sufficiently to carry Supply and essential business would have to be dismissed if it did not resign or seek a new House by dissolution.”

This morning, after reading the projected order of business, published by the House, I noticed the House leader had not bothered to schedule any government business. Since last week, she has been struggling to propose her ways and means motion regarding the small business and middle class tax hikes and the capital gains tax changes, a signature piece of her government's financial agenda. Has she abandoned that initiative? Has she abandoned those tax hikes? Has the minister conceded that she has effectively lost control of the House?

The government prefers to have Parliament ground to a halt rather than handing over the documents that the House lawfully ordered to be produced and transmitted to the RCMP. It would rather keep the House seized with this corruption motion rather than simply complying with the production order and living up to basic expectations of transparency.

If she is going to refuse to comply with the House order and is unable to bring forward any other business to the House, will she at the very least encourage the Prime Minister to dissolve the House so that Canadians can have their say in a carbon tax election?

• (1525)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was cute, and I saw that the Conservative House leader was having a hard time not laughing at how ridiculous his statement was.

[*Translation*]

As the fourth week of fall in the House of Commons approaches, we have made good progress. For one thing, we passed Bill C-76 to give Jasper the tools it needs to rebuild.

We also debated bills that are important to Canadians, such as Bill C-71, which extends citizenship by descent beyond the first generation in an inclusive way, protects the value of Canadian citizenship and restores citizenship to Canadians who lost or never acquired it because of outdated provisions under a previous citizenship act.

We debated Bill C-66, which recognizes that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are always there to protect Canada's security and that we have a duty to protect them from harassment and inappropriate behaviour. This landmark legislation would transform military justice in Canada and respond to outside recommendations by former justices Arbour and Fish of the Supreme Court of Canada.

We also debated Bill C-63 on online harms, which seeks to provide stronger protection to children online and better protect Canadians from online hate and other types of harmful content.

[English]

I would like to thank members of Parliament who have been working constructively to advance these bills. The Conservatives, on the other hand, continue to do everything they can to block the important work of the House and prevent debate on legislation that will help Canadians. They have offered nothing constructive and instead have focused on cheap political stunts and obstruction for the sake of obstruction. They have lost two confidence votes already and continue to paralyze the business of the House.

The government supports debates on the privilege motions concluding quickly so that we can get back to the important work of the House. I extend my hand to any party that wants to work constructively to advance legislation that will help Canadians. Once debate has concluded on both privilege motions, our priority will be resuming debate on the bills I have listed.

The Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, because the government House leader was trying to impute motives to my Thursday statement, I believe it would be fair for me to point out that there is nothing “cute” about Liberal insiders funnelling \$400 million to their own companies.

The Speaker: I am afraid that is debate.

I wish to inform the House that the volume of the earpieces will now be reset. Members using their earpieces at this time will have to readjust the volume.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

● (1530)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to read into the record some information on parliamentary privilege from the ourcommons.ca website, which indicates:

Parliamentary privilege refers to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its members, as representatives of the electorate, to fulfill their functions. It also refers to the powers possessed by the House to protect itself, its members and its procedures from undue interference so that they can carry out effectively their principal functions which are to legislate, deliberate and hold the government to account. Parliamentary privileges were first claimed centuries ago when the English House of Commons was struggling to establish a distinct role for itself within Parliament. These privileges were necessary to protect the House of Commons and its members from the power and interference of the King and the House of Lords. The privileges enjoyed by the House and its members are part of the Constitution and are vital to the proper functioning of Parliament. This is as true today as it was centuries ago when the English House of Commons first fought to secure these privileges and rights.

Privilege

That puts into perspective here that this is a very serious matter, that any time we are talking about the privileges of the House of Commons, we are talking about a serious matter. That, again, as I said before question period, is why no other business can take place, because protecting the privileges of this House is deemed to be the most important thing that we can do.

That is why the Speaker took the opportunity to deliver a ruling saying that he believed that on the face of it, it was a breach of the privileges of the members of this House, and indeed of this House itself, that the government had refused to turn over documents after a lawful order from the House of Commons. That is what we are discussing today.

All of the bluster and blarney that we heard from the government during question period about how this is somehow about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is absolute nonsense. This is about the privileges of the House of Commons, the privileges that we have to uphold the rule of law, the privileges that we have to demand documents of the government.

It might seem like a quaint thing to refer back to the King and the House of Lords, but without protecting the privileges of this House, we have no authority. We would have a government that could run roughshod over the will of the elected House of Commons, which is what it is trying to do right now.

This is a lawful order, not just from the Conservative Party and the official opposition but from the majority of the House of Commons. The majority of this House has demanded documents, and has done so legally and after consulting with the legal counsel of the House. The government has no authority to redact the documents, to hand over some of them, or in the case of the Privy Council Office, to tell departments to ignore the request of the House of Commons. That is a breach of our privileges. That is why we are discussing this, instead of things like millions of Canadians lining up at the food bank for the first time.

As we heard in question period today, while Canadians are lining up at the food bank, Liberals are lining their pockets. It is a good time to be a Liberal insider. That is what we found under the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, where 186 times, the board was found to have been in a conflict. It made decisions on money based on a conflict of interest. That is why the Auditor General has gotten involved. Nearly \$400 million of funds from the government have gone to Liberal insiders or have been questioned by the government.

Privilege

• (1535)

That is why the House of Commons, not the Conservative Party, has demanded that the Auditor General and the government hand over the documents to the RCMP. The RCMP will do with them what they will, but that is not a decision for the government to make. An order has been given from this House to produce the documents and to give them to the RCMP, and it can use those documents to form its own opinions. We cannot have a situation where a lawful order of this House is ignored, amended or changed on the whim of the Prime Minister, his office and his bureaucracy in the PCO. That is not how the House of Commons works. The government, I believe, has violated the privileges, not only of individual members, but of the House itself.

The document I referred to goes on to talk about the structure of privileges. It says:

The privileges of members of the House of Commons provide the absolute immunity they require to perform their parliamentary work, while the collective or corporate rights of the House are the necessary means by which the House effectively discharges its functions. These rights are enjoyed both by individual members of Parliament—because the House cannot perform its functions without its members—and by the House, as a whole, for the protection of its members, as well as its own authority and dignity.

It goes on to list the individual rights and immunities: “Freedom of speech in the House of Commons and committee; Freedom from arrest in civil actions; Exemption from jury duty; Exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness; Freedom from obstruction, interference and intimidation”.

It then talks about the collective rights of the House of Commons: “To discipline those found in breach of privilege or in contempt and to remove Members for misconduct; To regulate its own internal affairs, including its debates, agenda and facilities; To maintain the attendance and service of its Members; To institute inquiries and demand papers”.

It is very clear that, when our rights are violated, when we are not able to demand papers or our lawful demand for papers is ignored, the rights of the House have been violated, and that is why we are here today. It is because we cannot stand idly by while the government arbitrarily decides that it is above the elected House of Commons and that what it believes is right supersedes what the House of Commons has voted on and has determined is the right thing to do.

If we allow this to happen, if the government can just ignore all of the rules and all of the votes of the House of Commons, where will we be? What if Canadian citizens took the same approach and were able to simply ignore the work that is done here in the House of Commons? That would not be a system that any of us would want to live under, so it is hard to overstate the seriousness of a matter, when the rights and privileges of Parliament are under threat, as they are today.

However, it is not the first time that this government has done something of this nature when it has been faced with a ruling or a decision of the House that it did not like. We will recall in June 2021, when the Liberal government took the Liberal Speaker of the House of Commons to court to block the release of unredacted records about fired scientists under the Winnipeg lab scandal. This had never been done before in the history of Canada. It was so

afraid of what would be revealed there and so afraid to allow the will of the House of Commons to be followed that it was going to go to court to undermine the privileges of the House.

If I read through any of the news articles on that matter, one says, “The Speaker's Office will defend the rights of this House. That is something I take very seriously ... The legal system does not have any jurisdiction over the operations of the House. We are our own jurisdiction. That is something we will fight tooth and nail to protect and we will continue to do that.” That was from the former Speaker of the House. Mr. Dufresne, the former law clerk of the House “said the House 'has exclusive authority' when it comes to matters that fall under parliamentary privilege.”

• (1540)

The government has gone to extreme lengths before, and it is doing it again, to protect itself and Liberal insiders from having their secrets revealed and tabling documents that have been lawfully ordered by this House, as required.

We know that the Liberals do not have much time for this House. It is a nuisance. It is not something they value or honour. We saw this with Bill Morneau during COVID, when this House was shut down. Bill Morneau tried to circumvent the rights of members of Parliament to examine and vote on budget matters for two years. He tried to circumvent the rights of this House. Luckily, it was the leader of the opposition at the time, the finance critic, who found that little nugget buried away, called it out and put a stop to it. That is where the Liberals' minds are. Wherever they can, they will undermine Parliament for their own benefit.

I do not know if this breach of privilege will be dealt with by this House anytime soon. Many of us have things that to say about that. The government, of course, could end this today by complying with the lawful order of the House of Commons. If it releases the documents that the House of Commons has demanded it release to the RCMP, this could all be over this afternoon, but we know that is not the inclination of the Liberals because they believe that they know best and that they do not have to abide by the rules. They are putting that on display.

In the meantime, there is yet another question of privilege waiting in the wings. The next item of business after this one is yet another question of privilege because the government failed to comply with the wishes of the elected members of the House of Commons. We have seen time and time again where the government has broken its promises.

In 2015, in the election that brought them to power, the Prime Minister said it was time to “shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it is meant to serve;” that “government and its information must be open by default”; that data paid for by Canadians belongs to Canadians; that the government will restore trust in our democracy, and that begins with trusting Canadians. He said he would not resort to “legislative tricks” to avoid scrutiny and he would not use prorogation to avoid difficult political circumstances. Of course, he used prorogation in August 2020 to shut down investigations on the WE Charity scandal, and the Information Commissioner has warned that access to information has deteriorated to the point where it no longer serves its intended purposes and no longer meets the expectations or the needs of Canadians.

The Liberals hold in contempt the defined privilege of the House of Commons to call for the production of papers. They have said they do not recognize the authority of the House and they serve a higher authority, which is the Prime Minister of Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada is supposed to be a servant of this House, not its master, and should not be directing the House of Commons to violate the motion that was duly passed by the majority of members of the House of Commons, yet that is exactly what the Prime Minister has done. He has ordered the PMO and the PCO to ignore the lawful order of the House of Commons because he believes he knows best. It is the House that knows best. It is the House that has to exercise its rights. If we do not protect those rights, they will continue to be eroded under the Liberal government that does not care about them at all.

Conservatives would love to be discussing things like the failed Liberal bail policies that allowed a violent repeat offender to shoot a police officer in Toronto yesterday. We would love to be talking about ways we can make that better. We would love to have a debate about whether it is a bad thing to call the offender names when he is a known violent repeat offender who just shot a police officer. The Liberal government and others are propping them up, decrying the language used to describe those individuals. We would be happy to have that debate.

• (1545)

However, today we have to debate to protect the rights and privileges of the House of Commons. The government can make this go away today by complying with the lawful order of this place. If it does not, Conservatives will continue to stand up for these rights and privileges because we were sent here by Canadians to do the people's business. This place must continue to be held in the highest regard and be the highest authority when it comes to the people's business. The rights and privileges of this place must be respected by the government if we are to continue to hold the government to account.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP wrote to the law clerk of the House of Commons in July, stating that it cannot use any records it obtains through this process because this would affect the charter rights of the suspect. The end goal is that anybody who has done something criminally wrong should be prosecuted. However, the process that we are debating here and that the member is asking for is not going to achieve that.

Privilege

Very simply, does the hon. member think the RCMP has no other process to obtain these documents legally so that it can use them to the fullest extent in prosecuting anybody who has done anything wrong?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I find it troubling that the member would imply that a lawful House order or that sending documents to the RCMP to do what it wants with is somehow illegal. We have seen this before with the government. For instance, after the arrive scam scandal, the director of the CBSA sent documents directly to the RCMP. The government has not chosen to do that in this case.

We believe that a House order is lawful. The RCMP will do what it wants with the information. However, it should receive the unredacted information from the House of Commons. We have the right to request this, which is what we have done; the government should listen to this.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the role of the opposition in any government, but particularly a minority government, is not to oppose simply for the sake of it, which is not constructive. It is also, and above all, to ensure that the public gets a better, more complete view of the realities we face. This ensures better representation of the public in the House.

That said, trust also underpins the power of this Parliament. Refusing to hand over documents suggests or raises suspicions that there is something to hide. At the same time, it undermines public trust. For a government, especially a minority government, refusing to hand over documents amounts to shooting itself in the foot.

Is it a question of the appointment process, is it a question of letting organizations manage funds without obligations, or is it a bit of both?

• (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague: The longer the government fights this matter by refusing to hand over the documents, the more it looks like it has something to hide. Clearly there was something wrong with the appointment process when it came to the board of the SDTC. We saw that the former minister, Navdeep Bains, was made aware that it would be a massive problem if he appointed Liberal-connected insiders who had been receiving money from this fund; there would be inevitable conflicts of interest. He was told that repeatedly, as was the Prime Minister's office and the PCO. It was all ignored.

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Now we have a situation where \$400 million was awarded to companies that have a connection to Liberal insiders. The number I heard quoted by the member for South Shore—St. Margarets was that there had been an impact on 82% of the contracts in one way or another, and they were under a cloud of suspicion. That is the record of the current government. A program that operated just fine under the previous Conservative government was turned into a Liberal slush fund by the Liberal government, and they did it on purpose.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is said that Canadians will only support our democratic system if they know in their hearts that the rules of our democracy are followed in this place and that we can all represent them. It is a little wild to think that some of us represent over 120,000 people. We are one vote for 120,000 people, and the only way that carries any weight is if the rules of this place are followed. My colleague spoke about the importance of parliamentary supremacy, the right of Parliament to do so many things, and our privilege as parliamentarians.

Can he speak to what happens when the government does not allow this place to function? What is the impact on Canadians' faith in democracy?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, my colleague hit the nail on the head. If Canadians do not have confidence in their democratic institutions, they will not have confidence in the government to deliver services or in the laws that we pass in this place. The whole system breaks down if the House of Commons is not supreme, if our rights and privileges are not upheld. That is why this is taken so seriously. That is why the Speaker has said that nothing else can happen until this matter is dealt with. It is the most important thing that we can deal with; if the privileges and rights of the House of Commons are undermined, then our democratic institutions are undermined. It seems hyperbolic to say that, but this is at the foundation of this debate.

If the government can simply ignore the will of the supreme law-making body in this country, if they can just brush that aside, what does that say about our democratic institutions? What does that say about our democracy? It says that it does not matter. It says that the government can do whatever it wants; there is nobody to hold them to account. The official opposition, the common-sense Conservatives, will continue to hold the government to account by ensuring that the rights and privileges of the members of Parliament and the House of Commons are respected.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to listen to the hon. member talk about the rights and privileges of this place and say that the rule of this place must be held supreme. In fact, we know that the Conservative Party of Canada did exactly the same thing as the former government. It actively refused to let the House to learn about a number of scandals, such as a \$3.1 billion anti-terrorism funding scandal or the \$50-million G8 summit slush fund. The list is quite extensive. New Democrats have talked about this before. We absolutely want this investigated. We want to ensure that scandals are not allowed or accepted, whether they happen on the Liberal side or on the Conservative side.

How can the member stand in this place and be so adamant about upholding laws when the former government was as complicit as the current government?

• (1555)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that old habits die hard. It is tough for the NDP to stop defending the Liberal government, even though they have supposedly ripped up their confidence and supply agreement. Of course, they have continued to support their governance of this country in several votes over the last couple of weeks, keeping the Liberal government in power.

I reject any comparison between what happened under the former Harper government and what is happening right now with this wilful decision to ignore a lawful order of the House of Commons. That did not happen under former prime minister Stephen Harper. When these sorts of matters come up, we will call them out.

I know that the member may want to live in the past and not hold the government to account, as they have not done for the last nine years, but we will do our job. We will hold the government to account, even if the NDP wants to continue to support the corrupt Liberal government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I hate to alert my hon. colleague that I will ask a question that challenges something he said, but I want to put on the record, first, that I agree with virtually everything he said.

I also want to thank the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets because, from corridor conversations, I am quite aware that he seems to have done a whole lot of late-night, red-eyed reading through a lot of documents I have not had the time to read.

What we have here is a very large and important issue. I look forward to speaking to it later in debate today. I am very concerned with charter rights, but I fail to see a charter right being infringed here. I am open to debate to understand how the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons sees a charter right infringement; however, to me, the right of the House to see documents and convey them to the RCMP does not raise a charter issue.

The quibble I have with my hon. friend, the member for Chilliwack—Hope, is just because I like to see things corrected on the record. I was here during the debates that we had right at the beginning of COVID. It was on March 23, actually. The hon. leader of the official opposition now was the finance critic for the Conservative Party back then. I would like to say how much fun we had working together. We did, actually. The hon. leader, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, the hon. Bloc Québécois critic for finance and I met regularly with former finance minister Bill Morneau. The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby was the New Democrat finance critic at the time.

We had astonishing levels of agreement, but it was not the now official opposition leader who spotted the little nugget. Everybody spotted it. As the leader of the Green Party, I promise that I spotted it. We went against parliamentary tradition because of COVID. Draft government legislation was shared with us before first reading. We all saw it. The parliamentary budget office flagged it. The former finance minister could not give himself the right to approve budgets several budgets in advance, so it never came to the House.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the current Leader of the Opposition absolutely did flag it. That is why the matter was deleted from the draft legislation. I do not know what role the member herself played, but I was the whip at the time. On our side, it was flagged by our current leader because he read through that document and was not willing to let the finance minister at the time undermine Parliament, which was the intention of the draft legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding to the next speaker, I just want to make people aware that the point of order has been resolved with the hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents have written to me asking, “Why is the Liberal government grinding the business of Parliament to a halt?” They have seen reports of the Liberal government doing this. I will break down what is happening here today, why it is so crazy that the Liberal government is allowing this and then what Parliament should be doing in response.

What is happening here? We are debating a motion. This whole process of how we got here started on June 10, when the House of Commons adopted a motion calling for the production of various documents related to SDTC to be turned over to the RCMP for review. For people who might not be familiar with what this means, I will summarize it briefly, and then give a little bit more information afterwards.

On Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, the Leader of the Opposition summarized the problem very succinctly in a question yesterday when he said that a top government executive took \$400 million of other people's money and then gave it to their own companies, which is problematic. My colleague for South Shore—St. Margarets and members of the industry committee and the ethics committee have been pulling at the threads of this scandal for over a year now, and they have uncovered a massive conflict of interest that the RCMP should be looking at.

This is what happened: Parliament passed a motion to send documents related to the scandal to the RCMP. Parliament passed the motion, so it is essentially law that the documents that Parliament ordered be sent to the RCMP, and Parliament is supreme. In response to that motion, which was adopted by the House, government departments either outright refused the House order or redacted the documents that they turned over, citing various provisions. However, they actually ignored what the House order said to do.

Again, to re-emphasize it, this was a duly passed motion of the House of Commons. This was not some random demand, but a motion that was debated in the House of Commons and passed by the House of Commons, so it is essentially law. The motion was to

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force these government departments to submit these documents over. However, what did they do? They flipped the bird at Parliament, saying, “Uh-uh, we're not sending this over”, which raises a whole host of questions about why government departments would not be sending incriminating documents over to the RCMP. Anybody who is watching this should understand that this is highly problematic. It is also problematic because it breaches members' privileges here. Essentially, the government is saying no to Parliament.

When parliamentarians understood what had happened, the Conservative House leader raised something called a question of privilege. He essentially was asserting that the House's privilege had been breached because the government had not complied with the previous House order, which was the motion that was passed to compel those documents.

Why is this important? It is important because what the government did here was to say that it would not turn over incriminating documents to the RCMP on a major scandal, in spite of the House voting to do so. However, the Conservative House leader then said that the privileges of this place, or the rights that we have when we are all representing people, in my case, roughly 120,000, were violated because the order of the House was not complied with.

For somebody who might find that this sounds too technical, it is basically like looking at something in the Criminal Code and saying, “Well, I'm going to do that anyway, and you can't punish me.” With that question of privilege, the Speaker ruled that privilege had indeed been breached and that this was a problem, which is a good thing, and where we are today.

● (1600)

We have a motion in front of the House as a result of this whole rigmarole. Just to be perfectly clear, the government could have prevented all of this, this entire waste of resources. We can think about how much time has been wasted in trying to force the government to do something that it should have done already. How could it fix this? It could just hand the documents over. It could hand the documents over, per the law that was passed in this place. However, no, here we are today. We are now debating a motion that would refer this whole matter to a standing committee for review.

Essentially, what the Liberals are trying to do here is rag the puck on handing over incriminating documents that the House has already ordered them to turn over. The other thing that is absolutely bananas and ludicrous to me, completely bonkers crackers time, is that the government is trying to say that this is somehow a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights. However, other colleagues in this place have done a masterful job of explaining that Parliament is supreme. By that, I mean that Parliament makes the laws in this place. We have legislative authority in this place.

Privilege

If we back up, I looked through the record to read some of the arguments that happened during that debate, and there is a reason the House had this production of documents ordered. Why is that? It is because there is a big scandal going on, and we want transparency for our constituents. We want the process that led to this scandal to be fixed. We want to ensure that anybody who was involved in perpetrating the scandal faces consequences. Why? There are several reasons.

As legislators, we have fiduciary responsibilities for tax dollars. This was a giant debacle that wasted tax dollars. Also, when somebody breaks the rules or breaks the law, that should be examined and they should face consequences. However, here, the Liberal government is preventing that process from happening. Why is that? I think we all know why. It is because something in those documents probably points the finger directly back at the government ministers or, likely, the Prime Minister's Office.

Where have we seen this movie before? I have seen this movie before. I think Canadians have seen this movie several times before. As other colleagues in this place have mentioned, this is not the first time the Liberal government has been found to have violated the privilege of the House by withholding documents.

As mentioned, there was a huge scandal that happened in early 2021 about two employees of the level 4 biohazard lab in Winnipeg. When I say this, it sounds so crazy, but it is true. They were alleged to have, and found to have had, transferred samples of viruses back to China. These two people were in a biohazard lab where some of the world's most deadly viruses were, such as Ebola and Marburg, and they transferred samples of said viruses back to China.

The House ordered the production of documents around that issue. Again, in that situation, the government flipped the bird to Parliament and said it was not handing those documents over, no way, no how. It actually went so far as to sue your office, Mr. Speaker. The government actually sued the Speaker of the House of Commons to delay the transfer of these documents.

What ended up happening with these documents? Just to refresh everybody's memories, instead of handing the documents over, the Prime Minister called an early election in 2021, which wiped the table of Parliament at that point. It bought him time. The point here is that the government has a pattern of completely dismissing the privileges that we hold in the House of Commons.

● (1605)

Over my time in Parliament, I have learned a lot of tough lessons, but there has been one guiding principle through all of this for me, and that is that my power comes from nowhere else than from the people who I represent, combined with the rules and sanctity of this place, particularly through privilege.

Therefore, when my privilege as a parliamentarian is violated, so are all the privileges of my constituents. That is why it is so important for us to push on these issues. If we live in a world where the government can just willfully ignore the duly instructed outcomes of a legislative body, where all of us are duly elected and have responsibilities to our constituents, if the government can just ignore us, then this is not a democracy but a dictatorship. We are not far

from that at this point. It is not hyperbole to say that, by the government delaying the will of Parliament, it is eroding and weakening democracy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I hear grumbles on the other side, but it has to be said.

Mr. Speaker, we either respect the rules of this place, the privileges of parliamentarians and the will of Parliament, or we live in a state that is not a democracy. Again, the Liberal government has repeatedly done this. It has repeatedly refused the will of Parliament. Also, frankly, we have had people called to the bar of this place to be admonished for carrying out the will of the government and obfuscating the will of Parliament, which is unprecedented. I think it happened maybe over 100 years ago.

When I talk about my power and my privileges and where those come from, they come from the people I represent and the rules of this place. I have to remind members of the governing party who do not hold a government position, a position in the executive, that it is their role to also hold the government to account. I understand partisanship, and I understand party whips, but there is a point at which people have to look up the food chain and have constructive dissent to say that something is not right and it is not the will of their constituents. They need to say that they are here to uphold their constituents' interests. I have done that from time to time in this place because I know where my power comes from, and I will not cede that power in any way, shape or form.

It is very disappointing for me to watch members of the governing party, who have been here for a hot minute, as they were elected in 2015, but who have never had to challenge their party in any meaningful way. This is a critical juncture, when they are behind a feckless leader who cannot tell right from wrong in any circumstance. He is literally just trying to find a better job, which he is not going to find. That is why he is clinging to power so desperately. At that point in time, that caucus should be challenging him on everything that he does because he has led his party into a state of moral oblivion.

It is the moral responsibility of the members of the governing party, as the backbenchers in that party, to say that they are not doing this, and at the very least, to do it on this issue. I hear members literally reading off the PMO-approved questions for the day to try to suggest that carrying out the will of Parliament is somehow a charter violation. Come on. It is also their privilege that was breached, by the way, and all of their constituents' privileges that were breached. This is why they will lose their seats in the next election. Why is that? It is because their constituents are losing the sense that they are willing to stand up for them no matter what the PMO says, no matter what the party leader says, and they see they do not have that sense of right from wrong.

This is a pretty clear case of right and wrong. It really is. We have people from very disparate political backgrounds in this place, from the left of the spectrum to the right of the spectrum, saying that we might not agree on policy, and we might not agree on how to deal with an emergent issue, but we are going to agree on one thing, which is that, if this country is supposed to carry out its business to live in a peaceful pluralism, then the rules of this place have to function. They absolutely have to function, and they are not functioning.

• (1610)

That is why we are debating the motion that is before us today. It has been encouraging to hear members of different political stripes say that we can disagree on much but that they are going to agree to uphold the rules of this place. The question then becomes this: At what point do other members of this place stop propping up a government that continues, time and again, day in and day out, to ignore the rules? The government just says that they do not apply to it. It does not even look for ways out or for loopholes; it just ignores the rules of this place. Again, this is not the first time; it is one of countless instances. I have given only two here.

The Prime Minister has breached ethics violations. Members filibuster privilege motions just so they cannot move forward. It is in those moments that the number one priority for all of us who do not hold a government appointment and are not part of the executive branch of government is to hold the government to account. That might be in a caucus meeting or whatnot, but at some point in time we have to say “no, not today, you guys”.

I am hoping there will be members of the Liberal backbench who, at the very least, would do one of two things: abstain on the motion if they cannot find the courage to vote for it, or at least not ask questions that have been repeated by the government House leader. I like to see women in strong roles in the House of Commons; I think it inspires other women to do the same. However, I do not like to hear them repeat the talking points of a feckless man who clearly has lost the moral authority to govern. It is disappointing to me. I also hope that some of the cabinet ministers will think, will look within their heart and will say that they are tired of doing this and that they will not do it anymore.

I have said why it is so important for us to vote in favour of the motion. However, I also understand, as so many people in this place have said, that because we are having to debate another instance of the government's flagrantly dismissing the privileges of the people in this place, we are not debating the business of making life more affordable for Canadians, making it more safe for Canadians to live within their homes and trying to find homes for Canadians. Many do not have a home. There was a report today that said that within eight years the rent in Montreal for, I think, a two-bedroom apartment would be close to \$5,000. That would be the average rent in under a decade.

We are on a course of abject failure in this country, but we cannot address any of the issues and have a constructive debate if the rules of this place are not being followed. Therefore I ask the government to end this today by handing the documents over, obeying the will of this place and respecting our democracy so we can move on, on behalf of our constituents.

Privilege

• (1615)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party believes that it is better at investigations dealing with the bringing forward of criminal charges than our judicial system is, specifically the RCMP, which has expressed extreme discomfort with what the Conservatives are doing. The member is upset because I repeat it. If it is the truth and it is being repeated, one would think it would eventually sink in.

What is the Conservative Party doing with respect to the RCMP's thoughts? To use the Conservative member's term, it is flipping them the bird. Quite frankly, where was its attitude on violating the potential charter rights of individuals when it came to the many scandals the Conservative Party had, whether it was the anti-terrorism scandal, the Phoenix scandal, the G8 spending scandal, the ETS scandal, the F-35 scandal, the Senate scandal and the election scandals? The Conservative Party has a pretty shady record. Never did it go around saying that it was going to collect information even if it violated the charter, in order to give assistance to the RCMP. Why is there a change in attitude and a disregard for the RCMP?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, let me do something that I do not do on a regular basis, which is to quote the leader of the Green Party, who said the same thing that many other people have said in the House of Commons today, which is that she did not find any intellectual basis for the constitutional argument. That is because there is none.

It is such a stretch to argue that it is truth because the government that is trying to hide the documents says it is truth. I know that the member opposite has served for a long time in my home province of Manitoba's legislature. He has, I believe, a daughter who has served for a long time as well in the legislature. At some point, I hope he looks inside and says that he cannot support the PMO and the party leader.

I hope that in that moment, instead of coming in here and saying those sorts of ridiculous things, he has some self-respect and perhaps buys himself a nice lunch instead of coming here to try to say things and convince us of things that we know in our hearts are not true.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to our role as parliamentarians. Our role is to adopt legislation that is useful to the public, that is good for the public.

We are being held back in our role by a refusal to produce documents. This refusal is hampering us in two ways: in our role as legislators who adopt measures that are good for the public and reject those that are not; and in our role as parliamentarians who analyze situations that have the potential of being problematic so as to improve the processes.

What does my colleague think of all that and the trust that is being asked of us in the face of this refusal?

*Privilege**[English]*

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just underlined the importance of this place and the importance of respecting the rules of this place. In that, I wholeheartedly agree. She and I may vehemently disagree on approaches to public policy, but the reality is that we each have the duly elected right bestowed upon us by all of our constituents to raise our voice on the issues we may disagree with in order to come up with public policy that is in the best interest of Canadians.

However, we can do that, as she said, only when our privileges are respected, when we can get the documents that this place has ordered, when we can examine the government's activities and hold the government to account and when the rules of this place are upheld. When we have an executive government, a branch of government, led by a Prime Minister who has frequently, abjectly and completely ignored and, yes, flipped the bird to this place, then we have a duty to end the government and move on to elect a new government that will not do all of the things that he has done and which have led to the erosion of Canadian democracy over the last decade.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the testimony and the words that we have been hearing over the last few days have just been mind-boggling. The scandal just keeps growing. I would like to just bring up a comment that was made in committee by an employee of SDTC. I am going to read it specifically. I would like to know the comments from the member for Calgary Nose Hill. The quote from the employee was:

I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.

Could the member please comment on those comments, an exact quote made by an employee of SDTC at committee?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, first, I offer my condolences for having to serve under one of the worst prime ministers in Canadian history. Second, I think I will deal with the question obliquely, by saying that the whole goal of SDTC, the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, was to promote technologies that were homegrown so that the intellectual property could stay in Canada. What else was its goal? It was also to address environmental challenges like climate change. The government has done nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and now it is literally allowing one of its main funds for the issue to be subject to potential malfeasance. How disheartening is that?

Not only are the Liberals not meeting their climate objectives but they are also allowing scandal, waste and fraud to permeate a company filled with people who just want to do good. How disheartening is that?

That is why, as my colleague said, the motion is before us. I think there is a lot of agreement in this place, except from the governing party, the Liberals, for us to move on. I wish for and implore the governing Liberals to just produce the documents so we can move on with life and, as my colleague rightly brought up, perhaps re-inspire the hope of that former employee of SDTC.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing that Parliament is supreme. I agree, but in the Constitution of the Canadian system of government, there is the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judiciary branch. Each has its own powers and responsibilities. That is something many of us seem to forget.

With respect to this specific debate, the RCMP wrote to the law clerk of the House of Commons in July, saying that any records obtained through the process cannot be used in its investigative work. Therefore why are we still insisting? Can the member explain to me whether there is anything that prevents the RCMP from getting whatever records and whatever documents it needs if and when there is an investigation?

• (1625)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, there absolutely is something that prevents the RCMP from getting the documents. It is the Liberal Party of Canada, and that is why we moved the motion in this place to compel the documents. The member's party has completely blocked justice in this sense, and that is why we are doing this today.

It was actually the member opposite, who just raised the question, whom I was referring to in my earlier remarks, saying that members like him who do not hold a government position, though I guess he kind of does, need to look inside and say that they will not do the dirty work of the government anymore and will not be complicit in this. When the member keeps standing up and raising talking points that are just patently false, he is not being true to himself or to his constituents, who brought him here to uphold the rules and to respect their rights and privileges.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is tremendous at explaining the policy and procedure that folks at home are sometimes not quite following or understanding, and I guess she has been here for quite a while. She has sat in government. She has sat on the other side of the House. If she could explain to folks watching at home how dire the situation truly is and what it actually means for democracy and for the future of Canadians, that would be great.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I did hold a cabinet position. It was an economic position that was responsible for various grants and contributions, and every step of the way, I changed terms of funding. I called for proposal models so everything would be as fair and as just as possible so no one could ever accuse our government of not spending money wisely or of enriching our friends.

It is corporate fiduciary responsibility that the current government has lost because it does not have ministerial accountability anymore. I think that is so sad, and I look forward to a government led by the current Leader of the Opposition where that accountability is restored.

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

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

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

October 3, 2024

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the schedule to this letter on the 3rd day of October, 2024, at 3:28 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop
Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts—Chapter 20 and Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act—Chapter 21.

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 Kelowna—Lake Country, Housing; the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, Carbon Pricing; and the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Government Accountability.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1630)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to the Speaker's ruling regarding the Liberal government's refusal to comply with a binding House order to produce documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or better known to Canadians as the Liberal green slush fund.

It is like *Groundhog Day* here in Parliament. We are once again debating another Liberal scandal instead of legislation, but the Lib-

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erals have done this to themselves. They are clearly trying to hide the details of yet more corruption. I have a prediction: These documents will eventually prove that the Liberals have wasted taxpayer money and helped their friends. Why else would they go to such great lengths to keep them so secret?

It is simply astounding and, frankly, infuriating to me and to the people I represent that the Liberal government has become so complacent and so careless that it is willing to let millions of tax dollars be wasted and does not even want an investigation into how or why. We are not just talking about numbers on a balance sheet here; we are talking about the hard-earned tax dollars of everyday Canadians. It is reasonable for them to loathe the waste and corruption they have seen under the Liberal government.

The sheer audacity of the Prime Minister to sidestep a binding House order and to cloak himself in secrecy is nothing short of outrageous. Make no mistake, his stonewalling is not just irresponsible; it is a betrayal of the trust of the very people he, and everyone in this place, was elected to serve. We owe it to Canadians to demand answers, to hold the Prime Minister accountable and to ensure taxpayer money is not being funnelled into the hands of his friends, Liberal insiders.

To demonstrate why we must find the Liberal government in breach of parliamentary privilege by ignoring the will of this House, we must examine the pattern of appalling evasion and secrecy habits from the government. As a bit of a refresher on previous Liberal failures to be open and transparent, beyond the matter before us, let us not forget the SNC-Lavalin scandal. This was when the Prime Minister decided to fire Jody Wilson-Raybould for refusing to go along with his nefarious plan to change the law to protect himself and, of course, his friends. The Prime Minister was then repeatedly asked to waive cabinet confidence to let Ms. Wilson-Raybould speak, and he refused time and time again. He did everything he could to make sure that no one, including and especially the RCMP, could even get access to evidence to properly investigate the matter.

Now, let us fast-forward to the Winnipeg lab documents the Prime Minister refused to hand over, once again defying the will of Parliament in the process. When the previous Speaker ruled that he and his government must hand over the documents, the Speaker said:

The [powers] in question, like all those enjoyed by the House collectively and by members individually, are essential to the performance of their duties. The House has the power, and indeed the duty, to reaffirm them when obstruction or interference impedes its deliberations. As guardian of these rights and privileges, that is precisely what the House has asked me to do today by ordering the Speaker to reprimand you for the Public Health Agency of Canada's contempt in refusing to submit the required documents.

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This all sounds a little familiar to today's debate, of course. What did the Prime Minister do in that instance? He was callous enough to let the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada take the fall. It was cruel that he decided to make a public servant take the fall for his failures of leadership and his own political objectives. A long time ago, it feels like forever, nine long, miserable years ago or so, the Liberal Prime Minister promised that government would be open by default. I do not know if the Prime Minister believed himself then, or if he just drank too much of his own Kool-Aid, but his record does not match that empty rhetoric.

In politics, we should not be judged by our words; we should be measured against our actions. Words are cheap, and without following through, they are not worth anything. I do not blame Canadians for being upset with the Prime Minister, not just for this scandal but broadly speaking, because he is anything but open and transparent. The fact we are here debating this again today is yet another proof point of that.

● (1635)

However, the reason this motion is so important is that it transcends mere procedural oversight. It speaks directly to the integrity of our democracy and the accountability we owe to the people each one of us represents in this place. This issue is not just about a handful of documents. It reflects a broader principle of good government, one that is essential for maintaining public trust, something the Prime Minister lost some time ago.

Let us revisit the timeline and the facts that have brought us here today. On June 10, the House passed a motion demanding specific documents that are critical to our oversight of government operations. We set a reasonable deadline of 30 days to comply, yet what followed was far from satisfactory. It was extremely disappointing, but perhaps not surprising given the Liberals' track record. The reports submitted to the Speaker by the law clerk indicated partial disclosures and numerous redactions. In some cases, we faced outright refusal from various government departments. This is not merely a technical breach. It constitutes a dismissal of Parliament's authority. The actions of the Liberal government convey the troubling message that it simply prioritizes convenience over accountability. This is not how government is meant to function.

Let us take a moment to reflect on the importance of parliamentary privilege. The Speaker has in the past noted the absolute nature of the powers to order the production of documents. This is no trivial matter; it is a cornerstone of our democratic process. Parliamentary privilege allows us to demand transparency, ensuring that the government is held accountable to the people it serves or, at least, should serve. This House has the unequivocal right to request any information necessary for us to fulfill those parliamentary duties.

The Prime Minister must recognize that he is not above the rules that govern this place because it operates under the scrutiny of the House and, by extension, the very people of Canada we are here to represent. To stress that point, let us reflect on some historical precedents. Speaker Milliken affirmed the House's unwavering right to order the production of documents, asserting that no exceptions should be made for any category of government documents. This principle is enshrined in our procedural traditions and under-

scores the fundamental duty of Parliament to oversee the actions of the government of the day.

As for why we are taking this somewhat extraordinary step, it is because what we uncovered regarding this green slush fund scandal is nothing short of appalling. It directly undermines the fundamental tenet of responsible governance: that taxpayer dollars should be directed toward their intended purposes and, better yet, they should achieve outcomes of those purposes. We discovered that the Liberals appointed a board of directors with individuals closely aligned with Liberal interests and with deep-seated conflicts of interest. This board then made decisions that funnelled taxpayer money to companies that, as the Auditor General pointed out, have no verifiable environmental benefits. The Liberal government has tried to spin a yarn about how this was using tax dollars on green projects; instead, it was mired with conflicts of interest and ineligible project applications.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to my many hard-working Conservative colleagues, particularly the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, who have dedicated countless hours to find the truth. They have done exemplary work on behalf of Canadians by digging deep to get to the bottom of this mess. The member for South Shore—St. Margarets exposed this green slush fund for what it truly was, a mechanism for companies to cash in for projects that were not even eligible or simply to enrich themselves.

I am particularly troubled by the notion of the board of directors allocating taxpayer money to companies in which they have a vested interest. This is a profound betrayal of the public trust. This is why this production order is so critical and why the government's defiance of such a serious breach of parliamentary privilege is so appalling. In my view, it is imperative that any member of this House who has any desire for accountability must support this motion.

● (1640)

For those watching at home, I will give a rundown of how we got here. Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, was not always this body engulfed in scandal and corruption. In fact, it was started back in 2001 with the purpose of funding companies that create technologies promoting sustainable development; this is not a bad idea. In its intended form, SDTC is an arm's-length and not-for-profit organization. However, it all changed with the Liberal government, which transformed it into anything but that. SDTC has a board of directors that oversees payments from the fund.

Jim Balsillie, the former co-CEO of BlackBerry, became the chair of this board back in 2013. He served in that capacity for several years, that is, until one day, the then Liberal industry minister expressed concerns because Balsillie was critical of the Liberal government. So they did what Liberals do and searched for a friendly face to take on the role, ultimately settling on Annette Verschuren in June 2019.

That is when the problems really started. Ms. Verschuren had received SDTC funding, which made her the only chair in the fund's history to have interests in a company receiving money from the organization. The minister, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's bureaucratic department, were warned of the risks with her appointment, yet they went ahead anyway. Ms. Verschuren went on to normalize an environment where conflicts of interest thrived. Simply put, the board of directors would award funding to companies in which they held financial interests. They enriched themselves at the expense of hard-working, taxpaying Canadians.

The examples are incredibly damning, so let me just mention a few. Stephen Kukucha, a former Liberal political staffer, served as a director for some time. During his tenure, companies he had a financial interest in received nearly \$5 million in SDTC funding. Guy Ouimet, another director, admitted that companies he had a financial interest in received about \$17 million in SDTC funding.

These numbers are not exactly chump change, but they pale in comparison to the story of Andrée-Lise Méthot. Ms. Méthot owns Cycle Capital, a firm that apparently invests in green technologies. During her time on the board, \$114 million in SDTC grants were given to companies she had a financial interest in. That was just during the time she was on the board. When we combine what the companies she had invested in received both before and during that time, the total was \$250 million.

I would like to say it stops there, but it actually gets a little worse. Before he was focused on driving our economy into the ground, the radical Minister of Environment was a so-called strategic adviser for none other than Cycle Capital. During his 10 years there, millions went from Liberal coffers to that firm. In fact, I understand he still owns shares in the company but refuses to tell us how much they have increased in value. My theory is that they have increased a lot, because he is apparently rich enough not to worry about the economic vandalism he and his government are doing to Canadians. He must be buffered from those challenges.

Regardless, the corruption was too great. The gravy train had to end at some point. In late 2022, whistle-blowers raised concerns about corruption at SDTC. Later in 2023, they went public with those concerns, sounding the alarm about unethical practices at the organization.

That November, the Auditor General announced that an audit of SDTC would be completed. The report released in June 2024 was damning, to say the least. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest. Not one, not two, not a few, but 186. Who in their right mind would think this is acceptable? I do not care what one's political stripe is; nobody would find that acceptable. To fight back against any investigation into that is simply appalling. Of the sam-

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ple of contracts investigated by the Auditor General, it turns out \$390 million in contracts was inappropriately awarded.

For many years, it was a good time to be a Liberal insider, until these dastardly whistle-blowers emerged. It turns out, time is up. The most damning testimony came from these whistle-blowers. Let me read a few quotes. One reads:

I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation [from] being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.

● (1645)

Another reads, “The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference.”

I will pause to give everyone a chance to reflect on those statements. If they do not drive home the problem, I do not know what will.

Recognizing this, the House decided to pass a motion on June 10 that called on the Liberal government to provide to the House documents pertaining to SDTC. It included provisions for the documents to then be provided to the RCMP so that it could undertake a criminal investigation on whether criminal offences were committed. This last piece is important, since the Auditor General conducted a governance audit, not a criminal investigation.

What did the government do in response? It is a reasonable question. It did not do what it was supposed to do, of course. It delayed and deflected so long that it forced the Speaker of the House to rule that the government violated the privileges of the institution and its members. That, simply put, is the story of how the Liberals transformed an arm's-length, not-for-profit organization into a money grab for Liberal insiders.

We all know the saying that sunlight is the best disinfectant. The Prime Minister used to crow about this all the time, but as of late, I would not dare him to say it publicly because it would not be taken seriously. Like many of the Prime Minister's promises, this one, of course, has faded into the distance.

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It has taken immense effort from a parliamentary committee and now a production order from the House of Commons for the government to comply with our request for basic documentation about these payments. This should have been a straightforward process. These documents do not require a motion to obtain. Departments ought to proactively disclose such information or at least readily provide it upon request. A government intent on transparency would have no qualms about sharing this information, but that is not the Liberal government.

Consider this: The government has consumed valuable legislative time forcing us to extract information that it could have disclosed at the outset. Instead of coming forward with the necessary documentation when initial concerns arose, the Liberals chose to conceal it intentionally, wasting time and resources that could have been better spent, I think, in the eyes of every Canadian. The ongoing redactions and the refusal to release certain documents speak volumes about the abilities of the government. These are not the actions of a government with nothing to hide.

We are merely asking the government to hand these documents over to the law clerk, who can then forward them to the RCMP if necessary. If, as we suspect, wrongdoing and illegality occurred, we owe it to the Canadian taxpayers, who have seen their money wasted, to pursue the truth.

I fully support the proposal to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This committee can delve deeper and examine what documents remain outstanding, what has been withheld and, crucially, hold those accountable for any misappropriated tax dollars. I urge all members to support this course of action, because we need to send a strong message to the Liberal government that we will not be intimidated by its underhanded tactics or its secrecy.

I am not daunted or apprehensive about taking the Liberals on. This is exactly what I am doing at the environment committee right now, as we start the process of investigating the Liberals' net zero accelerator fund, which is worth \$8 billion, far more than the green slush fund that we are talking about today. The environment committee has passed numerous motions to get its hands on the contracts the Liberals signed, and we will do whatever is necessary to get to the bottom of that quagmire. Based on the Liberals' track record, I would not be surprised if we see ourselves back here for a failure to deliver those contracts.

It is vital that we remember who as members of Parliament we serve. Each of us has a duty to our constituents to ensure that the government is spending their hard-earned money appropriately, that it is not being wasted or misspent and that it is going toward its intended purpose, not to the pockets of Liberal insiders and those who simply know how to game the system. This is more than just documents. This is about accountability and our democracy, and those who do wrong must be brought to justice.

I encourage all members, particularly my Liberal colleagues, whom I know this will be rather difficult for, to stand up for what is right, because their voters elected them for the same reason that mine elected me: They want members to do the right thing. They want them to vote for this motion to provide a bit of disinfectant

and sunlight to this information. When it matters most, it is time to stand up.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat a question that I have had the opportunity to ask on a couple of occasions.

The RCMP is in essence saying that it is very much concerned about the process being suggested for gathering information and handing it over to the RCMP. Legitimate concerns have been raised in regard to constitutionality and the potential violation of the Charter of Rights. It seems to me that the Conservatives are completely disregarding that aspect, believing they know more than the RCMP, and have discredited that institution on this important issue. Why?

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, “disregarding” is an odd word to use considering why we are here. Disregarding a binding House order, voted for by a majority of parliamentarians, is what the government is doing. I find it appalling that the defence is some made-up scenario.

If government members do not believe they did anything wrong, they can voluntarily and directly hand these documents over to the RCMP and say they did not do anything wrong; check them out. They are choosing not to and that is on them.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for those watching, this is a very serious issue. We had a question of privilege, and the Speaker ruled in favour of it. We are asking for documents to be turned over for accountability and transparency.

One of the biggest missing pieces I hear about at the doors is accountability. I am curious if my colleague can answer why he thinks the Liberals are not turning over the documents.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, it does not take a lot of common sense to come to the conclusion that the Liberals are hiding something. Why would they not turn over the documents if there was nothing to hide?

The reality is, when the Auditor General comes out with a report that says over 80% of these contracts have a conflict of interest and \$390 million has been misspent and funnelled through the companies of Liberal insiders who were stacked on the board, I do not blame the Liberals for not wanting to turn over the documents, because they know the outcome will be very bad for the Liberal Party of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also deplore the fact that important documents and information are being hidden. The Bloc Québécois deplores it as well. It is typical of our Liberal colleagues across the way, although I cannot explain why. We saw it with the WE Charity scandal. We saw it with SNC-Lavalin. We have seen it on I do not know how many occasions over the last two or three Parliaments.

Right now, the polls are predicting that we may have a Conservative government at some point in the next year. We do not know exactly when that will happen. I would like to ask my colleague the following question. What measures does his party plan to put in place to prevent such situations from happening again and to ensure that, when the House requests documents, it receives them unredacted, as requested?

[English]

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up a couple scandals that, in my 20-minute speech, I did not even have time to get through, which is really indicative of the approach of the government. It is not surprising, because this is its track record. Its track record is obfuscating. It is hiding. It is using a cloak-and-dagger secrecy approach.

We must remember that the Conservative Party, when first elected back in 2006, was all about the Federal Accountability Act. That is the act we brought in to clean up the last Liberal mess. We have a proven track record of true accountability, which is what Canadians not only demand but deserve.

I cannot wait to have the Bloc Québécois, at the next opportunity, support the Conservatives' non-confidence motion so we can go to a carbon tax election and find out if we get the chance to govern.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank our newer member of Parliament for his speech. He was recently elected in a by-election and has been very insightful. He has clearly done his research and looked at the documents.

We hear tripe, and it really is tripe, from the Liberal House leader and the Liberal members of Parliament about the RCMP. They say that only the RCMP can ask for documents, but the RCMP is interested in receiving these documents. Why? At the justice committee, Deputy Commissioner Mark Flynn of the RCMP was asked if he would look at the documents if they came from the House of Commons by order, and here is what he said: "I can say that any information that comes to the RCMP will go through the appropriate level of review, using the appropriate resources to do so." He did not say it would interfere with the investigation.

Would the best way to avoid having Liberal cronies funnel \$400 million of taxpayer money to their own companies not be to appoint people to public positions who are not conflicted before they are even on the board?

• (1655)

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent point by my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets. I would like to applaud him because he has done yeoman's work to get to the bottom of this. He has done incredible work to find out the truth in this matter. It is not surprising to me that he is bringing up more recent realities from the RCMP, because why would the defence be that the RCMP does not want to see information that could prove the Liberals were corrupt? That is a very weak argument.

The charter is meant to protect Canadians from the government, not the government from Canadians. I cannot wait until we form a common-sense Conservative government. We will be thoughtful of our appointments and will not put a bunch of insiders in place, because we have a much higher level of respect for not only this insti-

Privilege

tion but government as a whole. We will be transparent by default and will follow through on it, not just say it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the problem with glass houses is that people who live in them should not throw stones. I do not want to live in the past either. I think there is a rotten scandal here, and I am looking forward to speaking about it tomorrow morning. However, I recall that some people who former prime minister Stephen Harper decided were worthy of being in the Senate ended up committing various acts of coercion. There were some allegations of bribery. Senator Mike Duffy is an example.

Some people who have served in these institutions as parliamentarians were put there solely for the benefit of being able to grease the palms of their friends. I really regret that we have to think about that. Let us just take an oath of doing better, all of us. Let us not assume that we know that everybody else is corrupt but we never will be.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my colleague across the way on many things, but she is often thoughtful. I look forward to hearing her speech on this topic tomorrow morning because I think it will bring a few issues to light that the Liberal government will not want to hear.

Do not quote me on this, but in terms of Senate appointments, I think it is 87 appointees whom the current Prime Minister has put into a Senate that is no longer functional, that is apparently independent but stacked with a whole bunch of Liberal insiders.

I am not for throwing stones in glass houses. The reality is that we both agree this scandal has been a failure and that there have been dozens, which is dozens too many for Canadians to bear. That will turn after the next carbon tax election.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague from Portage—Lisgar has any more examples of not so much corruption but conflicts of interest. Have any other projects come to his mind as he has been working as an MP in Ottawa?

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I have only been here for a little over a year, so I have only seen a half-dozen or so from the Liberal government. One that I cannot wait to see come forward is the government's refusal to hand over documents about the net-zero accelerator fund, which my colleague and I are working to investigate at the environment committee right now. I think a wild story is going to come out about a whole bunch of money that was spent promising to reduce emissions. Once we see the information, it will prove to have reduced zero emissions, with zero opportunity to reduce emissions. Of course, before I finish, I cannot help but point out the multiple proven ethics violations of the Prime Minister.

Privilege

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of days, it has been somewhat difficult to listen to all the comments as the Conservatives work with other members of the House to put a serious twist on things. How can they say that, just because we have the parliamentary authority and the decisions we make are so supreme, we are somehow allowed to walk over things like the Charter of Rights? I am not surprised this is coming from the Conservatives, because they also believe in being able to use the notwithstanding clause on a whim.

I would suggest that individuals need to be aware of what the Conservatives are asking for. We can simply say that the Conservative Party has taken it upon itself, according to the member for Brantford—Brant, to assist the RCMP. They are going to gather information and provide it to the RCMP directly. I would suggest that this blurs the issue of judicial independence.

Time and again, we hear Conservative members stand up and try to give the impression that everything is okay, that we should not worry about it, that they are not going to be walking on any potential issues related to the charter. They say that they have the supreme right because, after all, they are members of Parliament. That is what it is they want to say, loud and clear. I understand the important role we all play as members of Parliament, but I also have a deep respect for the institution of our RCMP. Therefore, when it says that it is very uncomfortable with what is being proposed by the Conservatives, unlike the Conservatives, I listen to that. I think the wording was “extreme discomfort”. When the Auditor General also expresses extreme discomfort with the issue, I listen to that.

For those who are asking how it is a charter issue, I am not a lawyer. However, I understand the importance of judicial independence. Furthermore, I suspect that there is a good potential for guilt to be found. I suspect that, when and if this thing goes before a court, we could easily see a defence lawyer challenging how the rights of an individual were breached through the Charter of Rights by the manner in which the RCMP was provided information. It is highly irresponsible to completely close our eyes and deny that. That is what we are seeing from the official opposition. Why? It is because they say that all they are trying to do is assist the RCMP. What a slippery slope that is. What are the Conservatives going to do if they do not like the conclusion of one aspect of the law or the RCMP's conclusion not to lay charges on something? Are they then going to take action and say that they are supreme because they are members of Parliament and that they want the RCMP to lay a charge?

I have more confidence in the system and the institution, in the RCMP and even in the work that has been done to date on the issue. Let us think about it. When this issue first came to light, we had the department and the minister responsible and two independent investigations that were done, as well as work by the Auditor General of Canada. I do not know how many hours of debate took place, as well as questioning of all the individuals involved at the standing committee.

• (1700)

The Conservatives have a drive to try to keep it alive, even if it means walking over someone's charter rights. Where was this enthusiasm when they were actually in government? That is the nice thing about what is said inside the chamber: It is all recorded. The Conservatives' focus, virtually from day one, has been on character assassination; wherever they can throw the word “corrupt”, they do. I want to remind members opposite of their actual behaviour.

I appreciate that a number of the New Democrats actually raised a couple of these points, and I want to reinforce some of these things. Let us think in terms of Conservative government corruption, in just one government: that of Stephen Harper. Many members who are sitting across the way were a part of that government. In fact, the leader of the Conservative Party was a minister.

I have a short list of instances of their corruption. There is a much longer list; maybe I will be able to expand on it sometime next week. There is the anti-terrorism scandal by the Conservative Party, the Phoenix scandal and the G8 spending scandal. There is also the gazebo scandal; we had a minister taking money and saying they wanted to build a gazebo. What about that scandal? That is one of the sub—

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would say that the hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor, so I would maybe let him continue his speech. We can make sure we start a list of people who want to ask him questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to answer as many questions as members opposite might have.

It is interesting; there is a direct link. I suspect some of them might not necessarily know about it, because not all of them were a part of Stephen Harper's government, but they should do a Google search on it or check the encyclopedia. They will find lots of details, and they will see a direct connection to the Conservative Party. There is no direct connection here, I must say, in terms of what they are talking about.

We have the ETS scandal. That is a \$400-million Conservative scandal. Then, we have the F-35 scandal and the Senate scandal. That scandal went all the way to former prime minister Stephen Harper's office, to the Senate and to the House of Commons. That was a fairly significant scandal, not to mention the Elections Canada scandal—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Again, I am happy to make a list of members who want to ask questions when that time comes. We are only eight minutes into this discussion. The hon. member has 12 minutes to go. Are we going to let him continue? I am making sure he can catch his breath.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the last one I mentioned was the election scandal, but there should be an “s” on “scandal” because there was more than one. Remember that one Conservative member of Parliament actually went to jail as a result. That is not to mention the robocalls and the fines the Conservative Party had.

There is something that all of them have in common, and that is what I want to try to rope together. Trust me, there is a lot more than what I just said. Let us think about this. There are all the different scandals, but where were the Conservatives and some of the enthusiastic members jumping out of their seats wanting to address this issue when it came to collecting information and handing it directly to the RCMP. Where were the Conservatives' accountability issues back then? I would suggest—

Mr. Larry Brock: There was no criminality.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, he says there was no criminality. I just finished telling the member opposite that one of the Conservative MPs went to jail. He would not have gone to jail if he were innocent. That was a Conservative scandal. How can the member say there is no criminality? I shake my head sometimes.

At the end of the day, we need to understand and appreciate that the Conservatives, while in government, did not believe in accountability when it came to scandals because they constantly buried them. Not only Liberal members will say that; other members will say the same thing.

Now there is an issue before us today that the Government of Canada has taken seriously right from the get-go, even before the Conservatives were aware of it. To give the false impression that it is only the Conservatives who are concerned about ensuring there is justice on the issue is a false narrative; it is just not true. On more than one occasion, more than one minister has stood to defend the taxpayer on the issue, saying they will ensure that there will be a consequence for whoever violates and abuses tax dollars. I would like to think that is a given.

When the Prime Minister today talks about accountability and transparency, Canadians can feel confident in knowing that the government is not trying to avoid accountability whatsoever. The Liberal Party does believe in the the Charter of Rights and in our Constitution. In fact it was the Liberal Party that brought the charter into being. That is the reality of it.

It is truly amazing that today the leader of the Conservative Party and other members, including the previous speaker, said we could be doing something other than debating the issue. Of course we could be doing something else, but who has been doing all of the debating? For the last couple of days, the Conservatives have continued to debate the issue. What happens if the Conservatives stop debating it? It means there will be a vote. What will happen when the vote occurs? The issue is likely going to go to the procedure and House affairs committee, where there will be a great deal of discussion on the issue, and where witnesses will appear. That is not really what the Conservatives want.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Call an election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, they want what the member just heckled, and that is to call an election. That is the only thing on the minds of the Conservatives today, not the concerns and issues that Canadians have in the communities we represent, but rather, one focus, and one focus alone. All they want to do is talk about scandal, corruption and character assassination. That is their objective between now and whenever the next election takes place.

Privilege

At the end of the day, if the Conservatives really and truly want to put Canadians ahead of their own political ambitions, we would see this go to committee, but they do not want that. They moved an amendment so that not only can every member speak to it once but they can also do it a second time.

● (1710)

This is because the Conservatives want to prevent the House from being able to debate government legislation, which is interesting. They are preventing legislation from being debated, and then say that the House is not functional. Well, gee whiz, that is like standing on a sidewalk, tripping a child who then falls on the sidewalk and then asking, “What are you doing lying on the sidewalk?” Well, the Conservatives have tripped legislation on the sidewalk. It just does not make any sense. If the Conservatives want to work for Canadians, then they should do that. Do not believe that, at the end of the day, everything they are doing is in the best interests of Canadians when, in fact, it is not. It might be in the best interests of the leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservative Party itself, but they should not try to give false impressions in regards to the interests of Canadians.

SDTC is an institution that has been here for more than 20 years. It has done a fantastic job over the years at ensuring that technology in Canada continues to evolve to the degree where, I would suggest, we do not have to be second to any other country. It is because of individuals, like former prime minister Jean Chrétien, who brought this program into existence, and it has made a difference. It has had a very tangible and real impact.

Unfortunately, at times, issues come up, which is not new to this government or any other government before it, where there appears to be significant abuse. The question is, what does the government do when it sees it? I would suggest to compare our actions to Stephen Harper's actions, and members will see that we have been forthright in providing information to members and in being there for committee members.

However, to ask Liberal members of Parliament to ignore the comments of the RCMP and the Auditor General in terms of the risk factor by bringing in this particular tactic, well, I think we should be concerned. If the Conservatives are genuinely interested in ensuring that there is more accountability on this issue, well then, why not allow it to go to committee? What is the purpose in preventing this from going to committee?

At the end of the day, as I indicated, Conservatives have a strong focus on character assassination. One Conservative member stood up in the debate and effectively said, “Well, you know, corruption takes place in a different sense”. We often hear Conservative members, in addressing this issue, talk about other issues, and one of those is in regards to Mark Carney, and we hear what they say about that particular individual.

Privilege

I raised a question on a different issue of a conflict of interest, much like what the Conservative member yesterday said when he made reference to corruption in a different sense. I responded to that particular statement by talking about a young lady, Jenni Byrne, who is a lobbyist and does work with Loblaws. She played a critical role in Stephen Harper's elections. I believe she was the co-chair or manager of the current Conservative leader's leadership bid, and I know that she is deeply involved in the Conservative caucus.

• (1715)

I am thinking that, if I were to behave like a Conservative and started putting dots here and dots there, and then pulled them all together, I might think there was something corrupt about this, something that maybe we should be investigating. I am wondering if some of my like-minded colleagues on the other side would see that there could be some value in this. After all, it was Stephen Harper who ultimately saw Loblaw and Shoppers melt into one, and the Conservatives are concerned about affordability. The reduction of competition no doubt had something to do with that.

Better yet, in my member's statement today, I talked about allegations of foreign interference. The leader of the Conservative Party should be aware that there are serious allegations that the leadership he won was impacted by foreign interference. Again, let us look at these dots, which the Conservatives like. There might be something there. I think we better pursue the issue of why the leader of the Conservative Party does not get security clearance. I started thinking that maybe it is because he would not get approved if he applied, which would then beg the question of why he would not be approved and if there is something we do not know about.

I am sure members can appreciate and understand the point I am getting at, which is that the Conservatives are—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1720)

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has had one more security clearance than that member.

The Deputy Speaker: That is debate.

The time is up, so let us go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant has the floor.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that my colleague from across the floor took it upon himself to identify me in his debate. I took great homage with that, but I want to refresh his memory because those who live in glass houses ought to be very careful about throwing stones.

My colleague talked about and smeared the entire Conservative bench for the fact that a previous member was found guilty of violating the Elections Act. Perhaps I should remind the member, who is a very experienced member of the Liberal Party, that his former colleague, Marwan Tabbara, pleaded guilty to two counts of domestic assault and unlawfully entering a dwelling house. He received a criminal record and was placed on probation.

I am wondering if the member forgot about that. Perhaps I can now smear the entire Liberal Party of Canada as a result of that. Also, one of his current colleagues, the member for Calgary Skyview was found guilty for violating the Elections Act. Perhaps the member needs to have his memory refreshed.

Are you trying to bury those deep, dark secrets as well about your party?

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. member to address questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued by the comment made by the member's seatmate when he said that the leader of the Conservative Party had a higher security clearance than me. That is a very good question. I would like to be able to show my security credentials to the House, and I would be prepared to table that, as long as it can be acquired. I do not have a problem with that.

I am wondering if the leader of the Conservative Party would. If it would make the leader of the Conservative Party happy, and he gets that security clearance and wants me to get the very same one, I am in for it. I, too, will get that security clearance.

However, I really do think, and members can stop to think about this for a moment, that the leader of the Conservative Party might not want to get the security clearance because of his past. I think we should maybe look into his past and find out whether it would be approved and that is the only reason he does not want to apply—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was very explicit in his speech. However, the government is responsible for its actions. The government is refusing to produce all the documents ordered by the House on June 10. This truly demonstrates a flagrant lack of ethics and is leading members to raise questions of privilege, which are currently taking priority.

The Conservatives are monopolizing the debate. We, as legislators, are caught up in this tactic.

What is the government hiding in its refusal to hand over the SDTC documents?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, there was a genuine attempt to provide the documents that have been requested.

My understanding is the official opposition, in particular, has real issues in regard to areas where the documents have been redacted. It does not feel it got all the information required, because they want to help or “assist the RCMP”, even though it is not asking for that assistance, in making sure it gets more information.

Privilege

I would suggest that we have more faith in the institutions than we have currently witnessed, whether it is the standing committee, the internal investigations, the department or the Auditor General of Canada. It is having confidence in that system, as opposed to trying to vote in favour of a motion that ultimately could be in violation of the Charter of Rights, which is something we would not know until it ultimately gets to the court process where a potential defence witness could say that his or her charter rights have been violated.

• (1725)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to this debate for quite some time.

Many times, members have expressed that Parliament is supreme, but according to the Canadian constitutional system of government, the executive, the legislative and the judiciary all have their own powers and responsibilities.

If Parliament is so supreme, can we go directly into the operational matters related to the executive or the judiciary? For example, can Parliament ask a judge to pass a particular sentence which this august House decides, even if it decides unanimously?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question and that is why I made reference to the slippery slope.

At the end of the day, the leadership within the Conservative Party is taking a position that ultimately says to disregard the concerns that the RCMP and the Auditor General of Canada have, and that it is more important to tie this issue to a scandal and somehow connect it to the Liberal Party, in particular, the Prime Minister.

That is what they are more concerned about, not the Charter of Rights. It just has not dawned on the Conservatives. They just do not understand. Individuals should be concerned, especially when Conservatives, provinces and others are so willing to use things like the notwithstanding clause within the Constitution.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, sometimes we just happen to agree. I agree with some of the things the member said, including the fact that our role as parliamentarians is to study bills and try to find a consensus or to scrap that bill.

Since the beginning of the debate, I notice that on one side, the main opposition party, the Conservative Party, is saying that the Liberals are corrupt. On the other side, the Liberals are saying that the Conservatives are corrupt.

I see a problem and I wonder whether the problem is that power makes some people forget that that same power essentially comes from public trust. I am not talking about everybody. I said, “some people”.

Is the problem that Canada's bicameral system gives the impression that there is no need to seek consensus, that it is okay to just keep arguing all day instead of thinking of the common good?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, for me personally, my voice, my power as a member of Parliament, is rooted in the constituents I represent. It has always been and will always be this way.

The issue, in terms of the stalemate that we are starting to see, has been caused by the Conservative Party's decision to prevent legislation from being debated. If the Conservatives stopped talking, this issue, for example, would go to a standing committee and be thoroughly discussed and debated, with witnesses and everything.

However, they realize that, if they allowed that to occur, then the government would be able to bring in legislation. They would have to come up with some other way to filibuster. There should be no doubt that the Conservatives' only concern is about the next election and getting it as soon as possible. Unlike the other two opposition parties, the Bloc and the New Democrats, they are more concerned about their political party than they are about Canadians. The Bloc, the New Democrats and, I would suggest, the Liberals are more concerned about continuing to do the job that we were elected to do, which is to serve Canadians. The way we do that is by having debates on legislation, voting on legislation and so forth.

• (1730)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. government representative has raised a question a couple of times that also troubles me. The hon. leader of the official opposition has said that he does not want top secret security clearance, because he is afraid it will gag him.

Fortunately, thanks to David Johnston, this was made available to me, as leader of the Green Party, for the first time ever. If it were not for David Johnston's decision, I could not have asked for top secret security clearance. I did that process. It is long and onerous, and they really want to make sure one is not compromised. It is certainly not the case that I was gagged because I obtained it. I am very troubled with regard to the leader of the official opposition, with all due respect to my colleagues across the way.

I cannot speak to them directly, but I wish that the Conservative Party members would encourage their leader not to embrace ignorance as a virtue. It is much better to have top secret security clearance and clear the air so that Canadians know we are not compromised.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question because it is noteworthy that all leaders, except for the Conservative leader, have actually gotten the top security clearance. It is a legitimate question to ask on behalf of Canadians, as to why the leader of the Conservative Party will not agree to get the top—

* * *

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-235, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Privilege

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House on behalf of the great people of southwest Saskatchewan. It is particularly an honour to speak to the privilege motion that we are debating here once again today.

Back in 2019, when I ran in my nomination, the government was embroiled in the SNC-Lavalin scandal, and that was not the first scandal that the government was dealing with, either. We all know about the Prime Minister's lavish trip that he took with the Aga Khan that he did not even bother to check with the Ethics Commissioner on, and he was guilty of that. We know that trip is one of many of the Prime Minister's ethical lapses. The Aga Khan just so happened to be getting millions and millions of taxpayers dollars handed to him through his organization. Of course, the Prime Minister being closely connected to him put the Prime Minister in a direct conflict of interest, so we do know that he has an ethics report to his name because of that.

In the SNC-Lavalin scandal, we all remember how the Prime Minister was also putting pressure on the Attorney General at the time, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to give SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement so that the company could avoid having to go to court for its wrongful dealings. This led to the Prime Minister dismissing her from Cabinet because she would not bow to his wishes. This then led to Jane Philpott joining her on the sidelines because she stood up for her colleague. These are two very strong and competent females that the Prime Minister was all too happy to sideline because of their firm commitment to truth, transparency and doing what is right by Canadians. Conveniently, we later found out that the RCMP chose to not investigate the Prime Minister for his involvement in pressuring the Attorney General because there was an election upcoming and the RCMP did not think it was in the public interest to investigate him during that time. It was absolutely in the public interest for the RCMP to investigate criminal wrongdoing by the Prime Minister, if there was any in that particular case. The RCMP still have not investigated him, despite the fact that we all know that there is that cloud hanging over the Prime Minister's head with his dealings with SNC-Lavalin.

One of my first speeches in the House of Commons as an MP was in relation to the Peschisolido Report, which was a report from the Ethics Commissioner about former Liberal MP Joe Peschisolido. I talked then about how, as a new member of Parliament, it was unfortunate that this is what I was getting to speak about as a newer member of Parliament, because of the culture of corruption that was permeating throughout the government from the top down. That was back in 2019.

Why am I leading off with these three stories about ethics violations by Liberals? It all comes down to trust. Canadians elected each and every one of us with the hope that we would be in this place with the utmost integrity, that we would do what is best by

the country and do so in a trustworthy manner. Can Canadians trust this Prime Minister? Clearly, they cannot. Today's debate gives them another reason to not trust him or his government. We are debating a privilege motion because the government has refused to produce documents that the House requested back in June with regard to the Liberals' green slush fund, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC.

The Speaker of the House has recognized that there is a prima facie case, which means that we are debating this privilege motion until no MP wants to speak any further, unless the government figures out a way to intervene. This is not the first time that the Liberal government has been found to have breached parliamentary privilege. In the case of the Winnipeg lab scandal, the government was in contempt of Parliament. I know several of my colleagues have talked about this earlier today as well and in previous days. They have done a great job of highlighting it, but it continues to provide context for the magnitude of the lack of respect and the amount of disdain that the Prime Minister and his caucus seem to have for this place and these institutions.

• (1735)

What was the Prime Minister's response to the Winnipeg lab documents and to the will of the House to have some documents produced? The Prime Minister decided to sue the Speaker of the House of Commons, which means that he effectively sued Parliament in his efforts to cover up whatever was going on in the Winnipeg labs. Conveniently, the Prime Minister called an election that just so happened to stop that production order. However, we will recall that, before Parliament ended that summer, prior to the election, the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada was brought to the bar of Parliament and formally reprimanded by the Speaker. Such a thing had probably not happened in around 100 years in this place, but it was not the last time we had somebody come and visit us at the bar of the chamber.

Along with the Liberal government's failure on the Winnipeg lab, there was a whole lot of other corruption going on at the same time with the arrive scam app. Members will remember that the arrive scam app was a \$60-million boondoggle. The app could have been developed for substantially less, maybe in the tens of thousands of dollars. We found out, by looking at the arrive scam scandal, that there were other scandals attached to it. One of the scandals involved was GC Strategies and Kristian Firth, who was called to the bar and faced Parliament over his deliberate lying to a House committee. He was found to be in contempt of this place.

It is easy to lose track of all these scandals, especially because the list keeps growing, seemingly by the day. Right now, we have the green slush fund scandal before us. Liberal insiders got rich and were enabled by former minister of industry Navdeep Bains. Mr. Bains had removed the previous chair of SDTC and appointed a new one, Annette Verschuren. She was flagged as having conflicts of interest, but he appointed her anyway.

It is worth noting that SDTC had run without conflict for decades across both previous Liberal and Conservative governments. However, as soon as the current Liberal government took control of it, from day one, problems began. The Auditor General took a look at some of the contracts and found \$390 million in inappropriate contracts. One of the whistle-blowers said:

The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference. It should never have taken two years for the issues to reach this point. What should have been a straightforward process turned into a bureaucratic nightmare that allowed SDTC to continue wasting millions of dollars and abusing countless employees over the last year.

They went on to say:

...I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation [from] being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.

That is a damning indictment of the government from a brave, common-sense public servant who recognizes the importance of integrity and honesty. We need more public servants of this type to serve the country.

What has happened so far as a result of this corruption? The Liberals had to freeze the SDTC funding to get a handle on what was happening and do some damage control, but we still do not know how much more there is to this story. However, the Liberals are ignoring the concern so that they can just move on and resume the funding for it again. They have claimed that they strengthened the contribution agreements that govern the rules over how SDTC can allocate funding. At the industry committee, we tried to get a motion passed that would produce the contribution agreement to see what was included in it. If they had made some changes, we wanted to see the contribution agreement to see what that framework would be like for SDTC to allocate funding. However, the Liberals blocked it, which leaves us wondering why. For all we know, the same companies that were conflicted when the funding was halted will still be conflicted with the funding flowing once again. Given the Liberal track record, they would not dare demand that the conflicted companies withdraw from the fund, and they definitely would not ask them to repay the misappropriated funds.

Now, do members remember Kristian Firth? He was the one called to the bar for grifting taxpayers out of a sum of \$200 million from his basement company called GC Strategies. I was talking about that earlier. However, the Liberals were not willing to demand that he repay the money.

● (1740)

We are going to go back in history a little, probably a long way back in Canadian history, certainly before my time on earth. Centre Block used to have a jail cell in the basement for people like Kristian Firth who committed crimes against the Crown, and they were to remain there until their debts were paid.

Let us contrast that with the treatment that Kristian Firth actually got. He waltzed in through the door of the House, sat down at a desk behind the golden bar and had to face Parliament for two hours. He sat there and gave answers, offering some clarifications back and forth. The very last question that was asked him, by the

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member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was whether he had any shame. He said, “I am not ashamed.” Then he got up, waltzed right out the door, walked down the stairs and out to the street, hopped in his car and drove away.

I have done some searching and looked in a few places to try to see whether I can find it, and if it exists out there I will happily stand to be corrected, but as far as I know, the Liberal government still has not demanded that Mr. Firth pay back taxpayers for committing fraud against them. That is absolutely shameful.

The supremacy of Parliament used to mean something in this country. However, the Prime Minister continues to undermine its authority at every turn. Canadians see this, and they do not trust the government. After nine years, faith in our institutions is at an all-time low. Rather than work to rebuild trust, here we are once again debating the privilege motion because of the government's refusal to accept the will of Parliament and produce the documents for the RCMP.

It is clear that the government sees no wrongdoing in connected insiders' abusing taxpayer money to enrich themselves. In fact, it seems as though the government is even encouraging it to happen, because it happens so often with the current group of Liberals. Why else would former minister Bains be so comfortable with appointing a chair who was known to be, and he was even warned about this, in conflict of interest?

While I am speaking about former minister Bains, I will add that he was also part of the decision-making process in 2019 to award Telesat, a broadband satellite company that does not have any satellites or provide any service to households, 600 million taxpayer dollars in a contribution agreement that Telesat told stakeholders was part of its projected \$1.2 billion in revenue over 10 years. Conveniently, Telesat had just had a drop in revenue of just under \$600 million, from 2017 to 2018. It must be nice to have friends in high places.

I am going to quote from its 2019 year-end statement that it put out to the public. It said that the money was “to ensure access to affordable high-speed Internet connectivity across rural and remote areas of Canada through the development of Telesat's LEO Satellite Constellation.” It is a company with no satellites and no broadband.

It did not stop there with Telesat, which is projected to have \$5.5 billion in debt while struggling to return a profit. From 2017 to the current day, its revenue is on its way down. This is the same Telesat that the government just gave another \$2.14 billion after having also given \$1.44 billion to it in 2021.

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We also learned that the CEO happens to be a good friend with none other than Mark Carney, or should we call him Mark “conflict of interest” Carney, who is the new adviser on all things financially related to the Liberal government. Mark Carney becomes the adviser of the government and Telesat gets a \$2.14-billion handout. We can look at some of the stock shares, as the pricing has been changing. It is pretty remarkable how the timing seems to work.

This also happens to be the same Mark Carney who just recently sent out a fundraising request on behalf of the Liberal Party to its membership. There were already questions that needed to be asked about the best use of tax dollars, but once again it is starting to look suspicious. Today we are focused on the breach of privilege related to the green slush fund, because the Liberals have a pattern of covering up corruption. If there is something amiss with the funding for Telesat, it should come as no surprise to anybody.

• (1745)

With a deal like that, there should at least be some guardrails in place so that the benefit goes to Canadians who need it instead of corporate executives who are good buddies with current and future Liberal politicians. It all just needs to stop. We need a government that will follow common sense and bring home much-needed transparency, accountability and integrity.

The Conservatives are committed to restoring public trust in our institutions. When we say that we will stop the crime, this is an aspect of it. Robbing the taxpayer is a serious offence, and we will stop Liberal grifting, which has gone on for far too long in this place under the Prime Minister and under the members of his caucus. This is something the Conservatives take seriously, and we will make sure that we get it right.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands spoke of transparency and has been in the media lately. For transparency, Canadians would like to know about that. The member has supposedly been on an all-expenses-paid trip to Florida on an anti-abortion speaking tour at southern churches. That may or may not be true, because when other members of Parliament stood up in this House to say that members being in the United States—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am not sure if the member knows where he is, but we are debating a privilege motion on the green slush fund, on SDTC and on the Speaker's ruling about the House's breach regarding the production of documents, not the issue the member noted.

An hon. member: He is very new.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I guess he is new, so I will help by informing him that this is a privilege motion and he has to be relevant to it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is not the House that is in breach.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, to go back to my point with respect to transparency, if someone wants to talk about transparency, they should also demonstrate some.

Has the member of Parliament for Cypress Hills—Grasslands been to Florida for all-expense-paid anti-abortion tours or not?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of points on that.

When the Prime Minister took his trip with the Aga Khan, he did not bother to consult with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I went to Florida. I submitted to the commissioner where I was going and what I was doing. I filed that with him and got the approval to go. Guess what. I do not have a conflict of interest report in my name. The Prime Minister does.

The member is actively spreading misinformation, as is the government. Every single person who has talked about this in the chamber for the past week has been deliberately spreading misinformation. I did not attend an anti-abortion rally. That is fake news. The Liberals want it to be true because they are plummeting so far down in the polls that they are desperate to paint any kind of false narrative they want.

The member should be ashamed of himself and should be ashamed of spreading misinformation.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was wondering whether my colleague has any ideas as to what measures could be put in place to prevent this kind of situation from happening again, to prevent the government from simply refusing to give access to documents and getting away with it as it is now.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, one of the most important parts to what is missing here is that the government should just operate in an ethical manner. We have seen this happen over and over again. This is not the first time the House has requested documents. It is not the first time the House has been blocked after a request for the production of documents. I am sure the member has been at committees, as it has happened multiple times, where the committee has tried to get documents but does not get them, or, if the committee does get them, they have writing on them with a black sharp marker that goes straight across, etching them out.

Transparency, honesty and ethical accountability need to begin and end with the government. It needs to respect the will and supremacy of Parliament.

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Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the easiest ways to avoid a conflict is not to appoint chairs to a government agency overseeing a billion dollars, in my view. They had a conflict and were doing business and should not have been appointed. The Prime Minister's Office and the former minister were warned by the organization and they ignored it.

I would ask the member to comment on that since he has sat in these hearings. Does he think that when we appoint an individual who has an admitted conflict and is doing business with an organization, it changes the tone and can result in the kind of cover-up we have now, with Liberal insider dealings and corruption?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, my colleague has done a lot of great work in getting us to where we are today with this production document. After nine years of this tired NDP-Liberal government, this is the continued behaviour that we seem to be getting from them. It is across multiple departments, it is across multiple members of their caucus, and it is up to the opposition to hold this government accountable. We are doing the best that we can to do that. We are happy to see that the other opposition parties are in agreement on this one to try to get to the bottom of this and really make sure that we hold the government accountable, but also make sure that taxpayers are getting a good deal and a proper deal, and that they are not being bilked out of their hard-earned money that should be in their pockets and not those of Liberal insiders.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I wish we could have had a full RCMP investigation on the SNC-Lavalin scandal. One reason I will just throw into the mix for his consideration is that I do not think we actually have evidence that the Prime Minister pressured our former and honourable minister of justice, Jody Wilson-Raybould. The only person we know pressured her was our former clerk of the Privy Council Office, whose former immediate boss, Kevin Lynch, was, at that time, chair of the board of SNC-Lavalin.

I remain very dubious until we have a full investigation. I just share that for perspective.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I would encourage that member to read the book that Jody Wilson-Raybould wrote in regard to this. The clerk, Michael Wernick, was acting on behalf of the Prime Minister, but there are also some very interesting tidbits in her book about the Prime Minister's conduct toward her in regard to pressuring her to get the deferred prosecution agreement. There is actually substantive evidence that is out there, but I am not the RCMP.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, when we talk about producing documents, there is often the issue of redaction, in other words, the fact that some of the information has been hidden. The rule of thumb is to hide people's names and their personal information. That is a matter of ethics, to prevent witch hunts that could result in erroneous analyses and misinterpretation.

Does my colleague think that any properly redacted document, which would hide information like names, telephone numbers and email addresses, would be acceptable and accepted?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I think there is a fine line here about naming individuals. If it is just the name of a public servant who was working on a certain case, but was not part of the conflict, then of course that particular individual would have the right to privacy.

Where I want to make sure that we get this right is if someone is applying for public funding, and like Kristian Firth, for example, found to be stealing money from the taxpayer and committing fraud to the taxpayer, absolutely their name should be published. People deserve to know that individuals have been committing wrongful acts toward this place and toward the taxpayer. In that case, those names should be listed.

However, when it comes to people who are simply doing their ordinary job, and they are not in conflict and doing good work, I do think they do have a right to privacy, but not if they are on the wrong side of the law, especially when it comes to taxpayers' money, because this is a public place. Anything that has to do with the public purse is an honour and a privilege higher than any other that we have in this country. It needs to be taken with utmost seriousness. This government has no desire to take it seriously.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to when Centre Block had a jail in the basement and if Parliament did not like the results of the individual appearing before the House of Commons, that person would go to jail. Then, he brought up Mr. Firth and he said that Mr. Firth came to the bar and then he walked away. He clearly implied in his statements that he believes Mr. Firth should have been put into jail. That is what he was implying—

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, he says, "yes", and we get a Conservative member applauding from behind him. That is the slippery slope. The Conservatives feel not only that they can give any information to the RCMP, but also that they can just throw anyone that they want in jail, even though there was no criminality found as of today.

Does the member believe that Mr. Firth should have the rights provided to him under the Charter of Rights?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, every person, when found guilty, has the right to a fair trial. Mr. Firth was found guilty. If somebody was found guilty, they would have gone to jail. It is not just our opinion that Mr. Firth is guilty. I look forward to one day, hopefully, seeing some justice. Now, Canadians also want to see justice for their \$200 million that was stolen from them.

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Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the wonderful constituents in Calgary Midnapore. Today we find ourselves in a situation of privilege. I will just briefly review the timeline of events. On June 10, the House adopted a motion calling for the production of various documents related to SDTC to be turned over to the RCMP for review. Of course, we have also referred to this as the green slush fund. This is what those at home would know this as.

In response to the motion adopted, departments either outright refused the House order or redacted documents that were turned over, citing provisions in the Privacy Act or Access to Information Act. Nothing in the House order necessitated redactions. The House enjoys the absolute and unfettered power, or it should, to order the production of documents that is not limited by statute. These powers are rooted in the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act. In a response to the failure to produce documents, our Conservative House leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, raised a question of privilege, arguing that House privilege had been breached due to the failure to comply with the House order.

On September 26, the Speaker issued a ruling on the question of privilege and found that the privileges of the House had, in fact, been breached. Now, I wish I could say this is the first time this type of privilege has been breached, but we have come to see that it is a practice of the government to withhold documents, not only from the House but in committee as well. It is a tactic of this government and it is an action that obstructs democracy because it does not allow us, the Canadian public and, in this case, the authorities' access to the documents so that they can review the information in full to act upon it, and for Canadians to decide upon it.

This is of course why the NDP-Liberal government, for the past nine years, refuses to hand over documents. Members want to withhold information. They do not want to be judged on this information because it would certainly be found damning. What other reason could there be? They are simply trying to hide something. This is not a new practice for the Liberal-NDP government.

One example is the carbon tax. We had a situation where the Liberal government was declining to release its internal analysis of economic impacts of carbon pricing and refusing to say why it was keeping the data secret, even as it criticized the federal budget watchdog for an error in its analysis of the policy. I have behind me our wonderful shadow minister for natural resources, the incredible member for Lakeland. I know that she has dealt with this specifically in her work. She has faced obstruction of information relative to carbon tax pricing and relative to the natural resources sector. She will remember that this has taken place several times before. That is just the first example where data was withheld on the impacts of carbon pricing.

It is the same reason we are not having the carbon tax election right now, which Canadians want so badly. The government has withheld information on the carbon tax because it does not want to be judged on it. It would just give Canadians more information and more reason to distrust the government, to not feel confident in how it is running this country. It is evident for Canadians when they go to the grocery store, when they go to the fuel pump, when they pay

their heating bill every year, and it not just families, but businesses and community organizations, too.

This is just one example. The second example I will give of withholding documents is in the foreign interference review. Here we have an article that states, "Liberals blocking access to 1,000-plus documents, says intel-oversight panel reviewing foreign interference." Another reason that the government wants to hide these documents is a result of, again, democracy and fairness in our elections. I am actually quite concerned about the carbon tax election when we have it.

● (1800)

The wonderful member for Wellington—Halton Hills was attempting to speak today, and members of the government were chastising him for speaking up against foreign interference when his family was targeted.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I am getting sneers from the government benches as a result of me calling this out, but that is what happens when we have a government that does not want to release information to the Canadian public and to the House of Commons. It is disgraceful. We have another case with foreign interference in which the government does not want to release the documents, just as we are seeing here with the green slush fund, SDTC, and the handing over of those documents. It is very disturbing.

The next issue that is very close to my heart is the ArriveCAN issue. The previous speaker, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands mentioned some of the main characters in the arrive scam scandal. This is another situation where, in the committee on government operations, a committee that is accountable to overseeing the spending of the government and reviewing how funds are spent, documents were withheld.

I have a Globe and Mail article. I know that the government loves to quote Globe and Mail articles, so I will quote one at this time. It is titled, "Canada Border Services Agency misses deadline to hand over ArriveCan invoices, declines to identify subcontractors".

Members may have seen, earlier in the House today, as I was very pleased to share the information with Canadians, that the procurement ombud has, in fact, decided to undertake a review of the bait and switch practices of the government to ensure Canadians are getting value for money and that subcontractors of government contractors are acting not only ethically but also for the best dollar value for Canadians. That is some other good work we are doing here in the House of Commons. Again, it is so difficult because this work is being obstructed in the effort to obtain documents.

I will expand upon the article. Bill Curry always does a wonderful job of covering these scandals of the government, and he writes, “The Canada Border Services Agency has missed a committee-ordered deadline to hand over outsourcing invoices, i.e. documents, related to the ArriveCAN app. The agency president told MPs Monday that she could not provide a timeline for handing over the documents.”

That is another mechanism that we see with the government. It is almost like a form of gaslighting, where someone will not come out and say, no, we are not getting the documents. Instead, they believe that the documents are coming, that if we are patient and if we wait, the documents will arrive, when in fact the intention is for the government to never actually deliver these documents. This is another mechanism that the government uses to obstruct democracy and obstruct the good functioning of the House and of committees in ensuring that Canadians have an opportunity to review the work that we are doing and to judge all of the information for themselves, as they will soon do in a carbon tax election.

I will move on to the next example where the government withheld documents from the House of Commons and Canadians: the Winnipeg lab. Who can ever forget that shameful NDP-Liberal cover-up? We had documents withheld from one of the most serious of national security scandals detailing Beijing’s infiltration of Canada’s highest security lab. The Prime Minister defied four orders of Parliament and took the House of Commons to court to block the release of these documents.

As the shadow minister for the Treasury Board and a former public servant, I am saddened, embarrassed and ashamed when I see public servants consistently having to wear the poor ethics and incompetence of the government. There was a perfect example of that with the Winnipeg lab documents. The government dragged a top health bureaucrat to the bar and admonished him, when, really, the government was trying to hide and trying to avoid handing over the documents, just as we are seeing with the question of privilege here today. This is another situation where we were denied documents as a result of the government not wanting to be truthful and wanting to obstruct. The SDTC situation today, the green slush fund, is another example of that.

● (1805)

There is another one. My colleague, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, referred to the horrible SNC-Lavalin scandal. As my colleague mentioned, I would really recommend for anyone to read the testimony of the former attorney general and justice minister of Canada, *Indian in the Cabinet*. I think that it would be very valuable reading for Canadians and give insight from someone who was an insider, who had to participate in the dirty work of this type of governance. She just decided that it was not for her and made the choice to leave the government. She could see the obstruction of justice, of democracy and of the functioning of the House. In that case, this was a result of many things, but today, it is a result of not handing over the documents.

We are in a new era of scandal now. However, another thing is relevant to that era. We can say that there is always a new scandal; it is like Taylor Swift’s eras. We have exited the arrive scam era and are into the green slush fund era, but this is from the SNC-Lavalin

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era, when the government did not produce the documents. I was hoping that all members of the Liberal government would have a chance to hear this, particularly the minister who was most implicated. What I am getting to is the WE Charity; again, documents were not handed over, which was obstruction of justice.

An article states, “The government released thousands of pages of documents related to the WE matter as the committee requested last month.” I congratulate it. The article continues, “But rather than have the independent law clerk redact certain information, such as cabinet confidences and personal information, the various departments responsible for this...program did the blackouts themselves—an apparent contravention of the committee’s request.” That is a key word, “independent” law clerk.

The committee requested the documents unredacted. This, again, is how we completely evaluate all the information. When there are no redactions, we are able to read, in its entirety, the information that is there to present it to Canadians. Canadians are permitted, in many cases, to read the documents in their entirety. However, here, we again have a situation where documents were presented and were redacted regarding the WE Charity scandal. It was information only known to public servants who red-pencilled the material. It is scandalous that they did not even use a sharpie, but a red pencil. A spokesperson for the Prime Minister’s Office told CBC News that the redactions were done by the parliamentary law clerk, who was following the committee’s direction to remove documents and personal information. However, in a confidential letter of August 18 to the clerk of the finance committee, that law clerk said that the vast majority of the blackouts had been done by government bureaucrats, which is not a surprise at all. August 18 also happens to be my wedding anniversary and my father’s birthday.

Again, it is no surprise that we find ourselves in this situation today, in which documents have been held back, because this is what the government does. It holds back information because it does not want the collective members of the official opposition, or Canadians, to have it.

I have one more example of the government holding back information. This is relative to the Governor General’s scandal, although not even the latest one. That was the trip she recently took to Quebec, where it seems that she was not able to achieve a level of competence in our second language, despite committing to taking classes. I am referring to her predecessor, Julie Payette, who was mired in even more conflict and more scandal.

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• (1810)

I will say that when I served as consul to Dallas, Texas, I did audit Ms. Payette's invoices because she was based out of Houston. There was a problem at that time, and I do not ever recall any discrepancies, but it was information relating to documents that were held back in relation to the former governor general.

A National Post article says, “The public accounts list the \$277,592 figure”, which is an easy number to say because I am used to reading them in the millions and getting to the billions now, “as going to five claimants whose names are withheld due to “publication exemption.” That is another excuse to withhold information and another excuse to not provide information, like we are seeing here today with withholding the documents. The article continues:

The document provides no comprehensive breakdown of how the money was spent or even what type of claim was settled.

“Further details are not available for the line item in question,” said a spokesperson for the [Office of the Governor General].

The Privy Council Office also declined to comment and referred all questions to Rideau Hall.

That is not surprising.

Again, I wish I could say that this is just the first instance where documents have been withheld, but no; this is a pattern we have seen time and time again, where information has been withheld from Canadians and from the official opposition because the government does not want us to have the information to further examine it and to bring light to the issues for Canadians.

The irony is incredible, because the Prime Minister has always said, “sunshine is the best disinfectant”. Let the sun shine in and allow the documents to be brought forward to the RCMP, to the House and to whatever committees and bodies require them for evaluation and use, so the correct actions can be taken and the Canadian people can decide.

Another tactic we have seen the government use, and which is being used here again in this situation, is saying that the organization is an arm's-length one. The government just washes its hands of the situation because it is an arm's length organization. There is no *mea culpa*. However, we we have seen this before. We saw it with, for example, the former minister of transport when there was resumption of travel after the the pandemic.

The minister refused to take responsibility, as the minister of transport, for the actions of CATSA. We all know CATSA. We go through the airport and do what is required to allow safe and productive travel within our nation as Canadians. However, not only did the former minister blame Canadians; he actually said that CATSA was an arm's-length organization so he did not have to worry about this.

We have seen this type of behaviour time and time again, and in addition to withholding documents and saying organizations are arm's-length, we could go on and on about the situations where the government has avoided responsibility: sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, wildfire risks to Jasper, informing the public about Luka Magnotta, or the passport onslaught, which I would love to talk to the government House leader more about.

Aristotle said that character is revealed through actions. Government members, through their actions, have revealed their character. They want to obstruct democracy. They want to obstruct oversight. We are not going to let them do it.

• (1815)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member of Parliament for Cypress Hills—Grasslands made a fairly revealing comment when he indicated that Kristian Firth should have actually gone to jail once he had left the bar here. I am wondering whether the member opposite believes that her Conservative leader supports that thought, and if she does not know that, does she support that thought?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, this is a wonderful thing about the official opposition, is actually our leader gives us, shadow ministers and women, the agency to act on our own, to respond on our own. He does not throw us under the bus and we do not have to consult with him on every single decision. He trusts us. He allows us to speak for ourselves, to think for ourselves and to act for ourselves. I will leave it there. I guess the last thing I will say is that it breaks my heart to see public servants, contractors, anyone who needs to be thrown under the bus will be thrown under the bus by this government. As for me, and I am looking at three female shadow ministers around me, we have voices and we have agency as members of the official opposition.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague knows our position. We agree that there has been a breach of privilege.

That said, is there not a broader problem around the fact that there are a bunch of governments within the government, sub-governments, sub-sub-governments and so on? I am talking about the fact that funding is sometimes given to private companies that subcontract and do a number of things. However, these companies are not accountable to our constituents, and this is in a context where the public service is constantly growing and should have the necessary expertise to do what needs to be done.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I think that is part of the problem. The problems are being created by the government, which decided that it did not need to hand over the documents and share the information.

I think that every situation would be much easier to navigate and that it would be much easier for Canadians to understand what is happening, if the government would act ethically and in a way that is more acceptable to the House, to committees and to Canadians. In my opinion, this is indeed a problem, but the problem is the government.

Privilege

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Calgary Midnapore has done amazing work dealing with the McKinsey scandals of the Liberal government, the ad scam scandal and many others. I actually have a spreadsheet in the office to try and keep track of them. As for the spurious argument of the government members, they will not provide the documents over a House order because somehow they think that the only way the police can investigate a crime and ask for documents is if the police do it. This is totally false.

The member is an experienced diplomat. If in her time as a diplomat in Canada, I am not saying that this happened, but if it ever did happen, and she discovered that an employee had absconded with taxpayer money from an embassy or from a mission, would she have to leave that employee in place to continue to do the work until the police discovered that that was going on and went to the courts to ask? Would she as the employer responsible for that money actually have a responsibility to contact the police, provide the documents and information? Is that not another way? Is that not what Parliament is doing here? Essentially it is Parliament on behalf of the taxpayers that owns this foundation where \$400 million had disappeared and been funnelled into Liberal insiders' pockets.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I would say to my colleague and to any Canadian who is watching here, anyone who is serving abroad, anyone who is serving in this chamber, their first obligation should be loyalty to Canada. Therefore, they should take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that loyalty to Canada is maintained, whether it is from a security perspective or from a fraud perspective. The government is not showing loyalty to Canada in not providing documents for the review of the official opposition and Canadians. This is a principle that I carry with me in the House of Commons, as do all of my colleagues, and that I carried with me as a diplomat. People can determine my actions based upon my loyalty to Canada.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Before I begin, I want to wish a very happy birthday to one of the people in my community, somebody I have known since I was a teenager, and that is Joan Britance, who just recently celebrated her 80th birthday.

With that said, I would like to ask my hon. colleague what it shows us when the Liberals, who campaigned on openness by default, will not even give us something that the Speaker has ordered. Is that not the greatest hypocrisy we could possibly see in this place?

• (1825)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it is a hypocrisy. Is it the greatest hypocrisy? I would say that it is one of the greatest hypocrisies that we have seen in the House. There was a commitment to sunny ways, and Canadians are living in gloom and doom every single day. There was a commitment to openness and transparency, as my colleague pointed out, a commitment to Canadians in general, when, really, Canadians have been nothing but let down by the government.

This is certainly one great hypocrisy, but there are so many great hypocrisies of the government, and Canadians deserve better. I cannot wait until we have that carbon tax election.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have said it before and I will say it again: When it comes to the strength of a Parliament, its only real power lies in the trust that people have in it.

That trust seems to have been shaken in recent months. It has been shaken by the actions that have been taken and by the decisions that have been made. I would like my colleague talk about the consequences of undermining people's trust in the parliamentary system.

Before I close, I just want to wish a very happy birthday to my daughter who turns 25 today.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I too would like to wish her a happy birthday. We have so many things to celebrate today. It is always good to have things to celebrate. Is there anything else we should be celebrating today? This is a good time before we wrap things up for the day.

I think the most important thing people of any country need to have is trust in the government, which is not currently the case. Canadians have clearly lost confidence in their government. That is why we need a carbon tax election.

[English]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to join in with some of my colleagues on this day of celebration and wish my husband a very happy fourth wedding anniversary. When we got married four years ago, I did not think I would be standing here in the House of Commons asking questions on scandals. It has made me reflect.

When I first started getting interested in politics, it was right around the time of the Gomery commission. I think about the normalization of scandal. After nine years of a government that claimed it was going to have sunny ways and be open by default, we see a pattern, case after case, of the government hiding facts from Canadians and trying its very best to avoid every single new scandal. It is hard to even keep up with the number of scandals just in the last three years.

To my hon. colleague, who has been at the forefront of finding many of these, what does she think the solution is for Canadians?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her fourth wedding anniversary. It is sunny ways that she is still married, so well done to her.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am at 40.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, that is wonderful. I congratulate you as well. What a day of celebration it is. I hope our whip and House leader do not mind all of this celebrating. It might be getting a little too congenial.

Again, it is incredibly disappointing. It is interesting to think about the Gomery scandal, which was some time ago now.

Mr. Frank Caputo: It was 2005.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it was 2005, almost 20 years ago, as the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo points out. It was the end of the Chrétien era, speaking of different eras once again.

My point is that Harper came in as a result of this scandal, so when we see a pattern of scandal, it tells me that it is time for a carbon tax election. Let us bring it home.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country.

I rise today to speak about homelessness and the ongoing housing crisis affecting my community and Canadians from coast to coast to coast. With each passing day, we are seeing more tent encampments, fewer affordable houses and more people forced into homelessness.

In my community of Kelowna—Lake Country, I hear constantly from residents about their concerns regarding homelessness, and we see people struggling on the streets. Residents are justifiably concerned over vulnerable people suffering on our streets. They are also concerned about the implications that increasing homelessness has, such as crime occurring in encampments.

Nationally, the story is similar across Canada. The Parliamentary Budget Officer released a detailed report in May this year outlining the state of homelessness in Canada. The data shows that the NDP-Liberal government is failing on this issue. According to this report, since 2018, chronic homelessness has increased by 38%. Chronic homelessness refers to persistent or long-term homelessness for at least 180 days. The Liberal government committed to eliminating chronic homelessness by 2030, but this increase illustrates how much the Liberals are failing on this issue.

This report also states that the number of individuals living in unsheltered locations has increased by a staggering 88%. Unsheltered locations are places not intended for human habitation, such as streets, alleys, parks, transit stations and encampments. This increase is significant and should worry every Canadian. Canadians should not be sleeping on the street.

What we are seeing is the result of a total failure of responsibility from the Liberal government and its partners in the NDP, and this is unacceptable. Over 35,000 people experience homelessness in any given night according to the most recently available data from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. By year, it is estimated that 235,000 people experience homelessness. These figures are only collected through information from shelters. Some experts believe the true number of those experiencing homelessness is triple what is reported, which is potentially more than 700,000 people.

These are not just numbers; these are people. These figures are a reflection of the heartbreaking reality that too many Canadians are increasingly facing. Each one of these people is a family member or friend. They are neighbours who can no longer afford or manage to stay in permanent housing. They are Canadians whose Canadian dream has been crushed, and they are just barely getting by.

Homelessness is often a complex issue that can intersect with many other issues, such as addiction and mental health problems. However, we know that housing affordability is just one key overarching reason. An expert witness at the housing committee from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness stated, “Homelessness is a housing affordability problem. It’s driven by high rent and low vacancy.”

Unfortunately, the NDP-Liberal government is failing. Since 2015, housing costs have doubled, rent has doubled and mortgages have doubled. The NDP-Liberal government is not creating the policies to build the homes Canadians need, and affordability has plummeted as a result. We need to do more to address homelessness.

That is why the Conservatives will build homes by linking federal infrastructure money to housing construction and by firing the gatekeepers who block homebuilding and contribute to housing unaffordability. We will axe the taxes and get a softwood lumber agreement with the U.S. in order to bring down construction costs and bring home investment to housing.

• (1835)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the spring, we outlined, in budget 2024, our plan to build a Canada that works better for every generation; a Canada where younger generations can get ahead, where their hard work pays off and where they can buy or rent their own home. To support this, we are also making Canada’s tax system fairer by asking the very wealthiest to pay a bit more so that we can make investments in prosperity for every generation.

Today, Canadians pay tax on the income from their job, which is fair. What is not so fair is that, currently, they only pay taxes on 50% of capital gains, which is the profit generally made when an asset, such as stocks or rental property, is sold. Increasing the capital gains inclusion rate from one-half to two-thirds on capital gains realized annually for above \$250,000 by individuals and on all capital gains realized by corporations and most types of trusts will create a fairer tax system and one that does not disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

To ensure that middle-class Canadians and Canadian entrepreneurs do not pay higher taxes, the government is maintaining existing capital gains exemptions and even creating new ones. This includes ensuring that people pay no capital gains tax when they sell their principal residence. In addition, we will introduce a new \$250,000 annual threshold for individuals so that those with a modest capital gain will continue to benefit from the 50% inclusion rate. We will increase the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$1.25 million from the current maximum of about \$1 million on the sale of small business shares or farm or fishing property. We are also introducing a new Canadian entrepreneur incentive that reduces the inclusion rate to one-third on a lifetime maximum of \$2 million in eligible capital gains.

Recently announced enhancements, from eliminating the founder and reducing ownership requirements to expand the eligibility to more small businesses, will further ensure innovators and small business owners, including farmers, are rewarded for their hard work. Combined with the \$1.25 million lifetime capital gains exemption, when this incentive is fully rolled out, entrepreneurs will pay less tax and be better off on capital gains up to \$6.25 million.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, tonight we are talking about homelessness and tent encampments. It just shows how completely out of touch the Liberal member is, considering he spent most of the time talking about the capital gains tax.

We cannot address homelessness if we are not increasing housing availability. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has stated that 5.8 million homes are needed to build and restore housing affordability in Canada. An expert at the housing committee said that there is “not a chance” that the government meets these numbers. This makes sense, given that housing starts continue to fall short of what is needed to address housing affordability. Never has a government spent so much to achieve so little, and that is the Liberal government's record.

In Canada, there are more tent encampments, more homeless and more people not able to pay for basic necessities. Unlike the Conservatives, the NDP-Liberals simply will not create the policies to build the homes that Canadians need to address the housing crisis and homelessness. This is why we need to have a carbon tax election so that Canadians can make the decision to bring home the Canada that we know and love.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, today, it is possible for a carpenter or a nurse to pay tax at a higher marginal rate than a multi-millionaire, which is not fair. Our government is increasing the inclusion rate for capital gains over \$250,000 for individuals with the exemptions I mentioned to make Canada's tax system fairer. In the process, we will also generate new revenue that will help make life cost less for millions of Canadians, particularly millennials and

generation Z. It will help fund our efforts to turbocharge the building of four million more homes. It will support investments in growth and productivity that will pay dividends for years to come.

● (1840)

Adjournment Proceedings

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked the minister about his failed environmental policies in my original question in question period. Since then, Canadians have discovered more environmental failures by the Liberal government.

An email obtained from the environment minister's department revealed that, for some reason, a senior official at Parks Canada was considering the political perception of prescribed burns. Five months before the devastating wildfires in Jasper National Park, a Parks Canada official sent an email that reads, “at what point do we make the organizational decision to cancel planned prescribed burns in Western Canada?” It notes that, as more and more media articles raise public concern over drought conditions, “Public and political perception may become more important than actual prescription windows.”

Why was the environment minister's senior official considering political optics and media articles over proper forest management?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, climate change is fundamentally changing the way in which Canadians live their lives. From extreme weather events to the price of food, climate change is making life more expensive.

Climate-related impacts are already costing the average Canadian household \$720 per year; without government taking action to reduce emissions, this is likely to rise to \$2,000 per year by 2050. Our government is taking decisive action to combat the effects of climate change because the cost of inaction is too great. This summer, Canadians watched in horror as parts of Jasper were ravaged by devastating wildfires.

Our government is stepping up to help communities combat the effects of climate change, whether from wildfires, floods, droughts or hurricanes. Canadians want a government that uses every tool to combat the deadly effects of climate change, and carbon pricing is an essential tool in our tool box.

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Experts agree that carbon pricing is the most cost-effective way of combatting climate change. The Canadian carbon rebate puts more money back into the vast majority of Canadians' pockets. In fact, on October 15, residents in the riding of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa and across Canada can look forward to their Canada carbon rebate. In addition, households in rural communities will receive a 20% top-up to their CCR, which reflects the unique circumstances they face.

Conservatives are uninterested in what the government has to say. Their claim that pollution pricing is causing inflation is simply not true. The reality is that carbon pricing is not causing inflation. The Bank of Canada estimates that the carbon price contributes under 0.15% of inflation every year. It is worth asking this: Why have the Conservatives spent this much time undermining carbon pricing when Canadians are better off? With the new revelations that senior Conservative advisers are confirming that they would let industrial polluters off the hook, combined with the reports that the Leader of the Opposition met with dozens of oil and gas CEOs at private fundraisers, their motivations are very clear.

This is not about helping Canadians, and it never was. It was always an effort to serve the leader's ultrarich, big polluter friends, especially those in the oil and gas industry. The Conservative position on carbon pricing is clearly designed to create political cover for them to try to let their leader's friends in big oil and gas and other heavy industries pollute for free while ending the Canada carbon rebate and leaving Canadians on the hook to pay for the cost of that pollution.

Putting a price on pollution is a proven, affordable method of reducing emissions and continues to be an important tool in combatting climate change. Our government is stepping up to protect the environment and ensure that future generations will have a place to live. It is a shame that other parties will not do the same.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, the member talked about the cost of inaction. Inaction and improper forest management cost the community of Jasper \$1 billion. We can let that sink in a bit.

Again, was the environment minister aware that his senior officials at Parks Canada discussed cancelling prescribed burns because of political perception, yes or no?

• (1845)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives can point their fingers in different places, but they cannot come to the realization that climate change is real. The situation in Jasper was not because of a bureaucrat or failed policies. Climate crisis is upon us and is costing us money today. The effects of climate change are too great to ignore, and that is why our government is committed to delivering on concrete climate solutions, which include pollution pricing.

Our government is focused on the bigger picture of protecting Canadians from the devastating impacts of climate change and ensuring a prosperous future for generations to come. Pollution pricing is working for Canadians. It is crucial, as we work toward combatting the effects of climate change, that our government stay committed to protecting the environment while making life more affordable for Canadians. That is what we will continue to do.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked a question last Friday that echoed the sentiment of Canadians from coast to coast, which is simply this: When will we have a carbon tax election? It is not a platitude, quip or slogan that should be brushed away, which the Liberals are doing. The carbon tax represents a societal and political flashpoint, and they really should be aware of this just by looking at the polls, for example. However, the Liberals have been married to it. It is full speed ahead, no matter the torpedoes. There is a more vulgar way to say that, but I will not say it here.

Yesterday and today we have been discussing, and I do not know for how many more days we will discuss, a privilege motion about producing documentation. The Speaker and the House ordered the Liberal government to produce documentation that a committee requested, which is within its right. What did it get? It received documentation, but it was blanked out and the information was not there. Hundreds of millions of dollars inappropriately went to members of the board of SDTC, who were Liberal appointees and had obvious conflicts of interest.

One in particular stands out in my mind, and that is the board member who runs Cycle Capital, which received a quarter of a billion dollars. Who was a lobbyist for Cycle Capital who actually got elected? It was none other than the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He lobbied the Liberal government and the Prime Minister 25 times the year before he was elected in 2019. We do not know the facts. Why are the Liberals hiding the facts, forcing us to debate hour after hour in the House when we should be doing other business?

I am thinking out loud, but is the whole obsession with the carbon tax really about getting Liberal insiders rich? We have to ask ourselves that question, and I think Sustainable Development Technology Canada is an example that sounds the alarm. I have taught Canadian history in school, and I am not aware of a more scandal-plagued government in Canadian history. There has been scandal after scandal, and it begins with the Prime Minister.

While so many Liberal insiders are getting rich on taxpayer money, people are getting poorer and poorer. In my riding and throughout the country, the response at people's doors is the same. Canadians are having a hard time, and the carbon tax is adding to the pressure by making gas more expensive, and groceries, housing, the cost of living—

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member opposite said one thing that I will totally agree with. He said we do not know the facts. I have never heard anything more true coming from that side of the aisle.

As Canadians face ever-increasing droughts, wildfires and extreme weather events, the need to continue taking action on climate change has never been greater. Climate impacts have already reduced Canada's GDP by \$25 billion. By 2055, without significant emissions reductions, these costs are projected to soar to between \$80 billion and \$103 billion. Who knows what kind of future we are leaving to our children?

Addressing climate change now is essential, not just for our environment, but for our economy and for our future. This summer, Canadians, including the member opposite, watched in horror as many parts of Canada were ravaged by wildfires. Canadians are looking to government to put forward concrete action to combat the effects of climate change. That is exactly what pollution pricing does.

As the member opposite knows, there is no federal price on pollution in the province of British Columbia. However, the Conservative Party is obviously not interested in what the government has to say. Maybe its members will listen when the Bank of Canada says that a price on pollution contributes less than 1% yearly to inflation rates. The reality is that the Conservative Party has no plan when it comes to fighting climate change.

With the new revelations that the senior Conservative advisers are confirming they would let the industrial polluters off the hook, combined with the report that the Leader of the Opposition met with dozens of oil and gas CEOs at a private fundraiser, the Conservatives' motives are very clear. This was never about helping Canadians. It was always about the efforts to serve their ultrarich, big polluter friends, especially those in the oil and gas industry.

The Conservatives' position on carbon pricing is clearly designed to create political cover for them trying to help their leader's friends

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in big oil and gas and other heavy industries to pollute for free, while ending the Canada carbon rebate and leaving Canadians on the hook to pay for the costs of that pollution.

We know the cost of doing nothing far outweighs the cost of our actions. Our government is stepping up to protect the environment so future generations will have an environment that is livable. It is a shame that other parties will not do the same.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, the member talked about fires. We have heard a controlled burn was recommended in Jasper. There was political push-back within the Liberals saying maybe they do not want to do that. Why? It is because it goes against a narrative of climate change. In fact, wildfires cause about one-third of carbon emissions in the world.

When we tax the trucker who brings in the food, when we tax the farmer who grows the food, and when we tax the grocer who sells the food, it is the consumer who pays for it. The Liberals are totally out of touch.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are always looking for scapegoats to blame for wildfires or anything else. They are looking at bureaucrats. Shame on them. They know that the climate crisis is real. Scientists, for 20 years, have said that this is the truth. Most Canadians understand this and most Canadians are asking us to do more.

If we do not invest in climate solutions now, including carbon pricing, we will all face higher costs in the future. We have seen fires in Jasper, hurricanes in my ride in Cape Breton, snowfalls and tremendous weather events. The Conservatives always want to point the finger at something besides what they have known for 20 years, which is that the climate crisis is real and we have to act.

I really hope that, at some point, the Conservatives will stop putting political points above the future generations of Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)

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