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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 7, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1100)
[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 4 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first thing to ask today is why we are here and why the House is seized with this matter. It is actually not very complicated. The House ordered documents to be produced that the government has not produced. That is it. I could sit down right now and everything would be done if the government just gave the documents.

There are all kinds of convoluted arguments, like the Conservatives are talking about this too much, but the people who have the answers are all sitting right over there on that side of the House. The Liberals could end this entire thing by producing the documents. These are not documents that the Conservatives have requested, let us make that very clear, but documents that the House of Commons has requested. The government is not doing it and that is why we are here.

It could be over in literally five seconds. A member of the government could stand up right now to say the government is going to produce all the documents that Parliament has requested and we would all resume our normal duties. However, they will not, so we have to ask ourselves why we are here. It is probably because the documents contain many things that the corrupt Liberal government does not want to be released. I do not use the term “corruption” lightly, but when we look at the specifics of this particular incident, we know there was corruption. It is unequivocal.

On June 10, Parliament adopted a motion compelling the production of documents about the green slush fund. Of course, that was supported by all parties other than the Liberal Party, the government, because it has something to hide. The government did produce some documents, that is true, and government members are

going to stand up during questions and comments to say that they produce some documents. However, the Prime Minister's personal department, the PCO, redacted those documents. For those watching who do not know what “redacted” means, it means they took a big black marker and covered up all the juicy parts. For anything that could get the Liberals in trouble, they said, “We better not release that.” That is where we are.

The motion that Parliament adopted did not say that the Liberals could pick and choose which parts of the documents to disclose, nor that the Prime Minister's personal department, the PCO, could go through them and take out anything that might hurt the government's reputation. The government's reputation is not so good right now, so it must be really bad if they are afraid that the documents would hurt the reputation of the government.

Let us remember that the redactions done by, again, the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, were for a Prime Minister who has been convicted not once but twice of ethics violations. Also, when the PCO was redacting those documents, let us be clear that it was not redacting that fund members met, had a couple of coffees, decided a company was at arm's length and had no conflict of interests, and gave it some funding. That was not what was redacted. What has been clearly redacted are things the Liberals know will be damaging, which is why we are here.

Parliament is supreme, and Parliament does not take on these powers on a whim. As I said before, this was supported by all of the parties, so it is not about one party trying to gang up on another. This is by the will of Parliament. Parliament has said that it wants the documents produced and that it does not want them to be redacted, because that was not in the order of Parliament. Parliament said it wants all of the documents.

We had to fight to get here. It is not as though the Liberal government agreed that the fund did not operate well, that there were some problems and that we should get to the bottom of them, and then provided the documents. No. There was a long, painful process where we had to continuously push and push to get the government to where we are today. It is the Liberals' continuous refusal to produce the documents, whether at committee or any other time, that has led us to where we are today, with Parliament adopting a motion.

Privilege

• (1105)

Parliament does not take this lightly. We do not do this all the time. It is a rare and exceptional circumstance when Parliament demands the production of documents, and when it does so, the government should respect Parliament to follow the order. The order was not for redacted documents that the Prime Minister's personal PCO chose to redact. It is a flagrant violation of the will of Parliament.

That is why we are here. That is why this is going on, and it could all end in five seconds. The Liberals could just produce the unredacted documents. Members have now been pushing this issue for three days in Parliament. At any time, they could have done that, but they are not, and we have to ask ourselves why. These documents must contain so much evidence of corruption by the Liberal crony-appointed board members who rewarded themselves and other Liberal insiders. These documents must be so bad that they are willing let this debate go on for days and days without producing them. We can get to no other conclusion.

Now that we know the summary of why we are here, let us talk about how we got here and why we are requesting the documents.

This stuff is stranger than fiction. If we tried to make up a scandal, we could not make this up. Way back in the day with the sponsorship scandal, which I am old enough to remember, a bunch of Liberals were handing out money in brown paper bags and \$400 million of taxpayer money disappeared, most of it handled by Liberal insiders and given to Liberal insiders. That was nefarious and secret and we can maybe understand how it went on for a while without being detected. However, this is very different. This government program, which I will call the green slush fund because that is what it effectively became, gave away about a billion dollars of taxpayer money. When we talk about taxpayer money, we have to think about who is paying these taxes in a really difficult time in Canada. There are single mothers working two jobs just to make ends meet. Their taxes went into this green slush fund and were abused by Liberal insiders. Let us unpack that.

The Auditor General reviewed 50% of the contracts given out, and of that 50%, 82% had a conflict of interest. When I was in high school and university, I was really happy when I got 82% because that meant I did a heck of a job. This is corruption 82% of the time on half of the contracts. If we extrapolate that, we are looking at 82% of 100%, or pretty darn close, because I do not think it was just a strange coincidence that 82% of half of the contracts had conflicts of interest. Every dollar that this fund spent had to be approved by the board. Who was on the board? It was a whole bunch of Liberal government crony appointees. What did they do? The unequivocal truth of this is that they lined their pockets.

When we think about that, we can think about the million everyday Canadians in Ontario going to food banks and the tent cities we have everywhere because life has become so unaffordable under the NDP-Liberal government. What does that mean? It means that all of this money could have been used for far better purposes. If we told single mothers working two jobs and paying taxes that a bunch of crony capitalism went on worth a billion dollars, they would be absolutely outraged. They would tell us to get to the bottom of this, because this money could have made a difference in their lives and

their friends' lives. It could have been used to build housing as opposed to tent cities.

• (1110)

However, this is what happens with Liberal governments. I mentioned the sponsorship scandal, so none of this is new. The sponsorship scandal was about Liberal cronies giving money to other Liberal cronies, all of this insider stuff. Some 400 million dollars' worth of taxpayer dollars evaporated, much of it handed around in shady meetings in brown paper bags. What the Liberals learned from it is that they did not have to hand money around in brown paper bags in shady meetings. They can just appoint a whole bunch of their friends to a board who can approve contracts for themselves and their buddies so that everyone gets rich and it is all legal.

Corrupt Liberal government members do not care about corruption. They told board members to do whatever they wanted while they were on the board, and there were no checks and balances. This went on for years and years. It was not until the hard work of Conservative members of Parliament that this corruption was discovered. Only then did the Liberals start to do a couple of things, but this is what has happened from the Prime Minister's Office appointing Liberal insiders to run a fund where members gave each other money.

Some people are getting an A+ in corruption. An example is Cycle Capital. One member of the board ran Cycle Capital, which got \$250 million from the green slush fund. That is outrageous, and Canadians are rightly outraged by it. Imagine someone gets appointed to this board by a Liberal friend and decides they are going to give \$250 million to their own company. Why not? The money has to go somewhere, so why should it not go to one of their companies? This is unbelievable.

Did the director declare a conflict of interest and recuse herself from the deliberations on these things? No, she was not going to do that, because then the money would not have gotten to her company. This was all under the watchful eye of the corrupt Liberal government. I use the term "watchful eye" with great derision. There was no watchful eye; the government just let it happen.

The Liberals had to know it was happening because they knew who they appointed. When someone gets appointed, the government looks into that person. The Liberals would have known the interests these people had in various companies. They would have seen the money going out to these companies, so they must have known and just did not care. We cannot draw any other conclusion from this.

Privilege

Also, this was not a one-off. Let us talk about another incident of this, which involved the former chair of the board, Annette Verschuren, who resigned from the board in 2023 following the opening of the Ethics Commissioner investigation into the agency. Boy oh boy, we know how well companies affiliated with her did. They did exceptionally well. She did not recuse herself from decisions to award money to early-stage companies that were nominated by two institutions in which she was a member. The conflict of interest is unbelievable. During her time on the board, seven out of 25 companies invested in by the venture capital firm Cycle Capital, in which she had an interest, were funded by the green slush fund.

When we listen to this, we have to give our heads a shake. This cannot be possible. How is this happening in Canada? This is the kind of corruption we would see in countries where there are real problems with corruption. The only time we have real problems with corruption in Canada is when the Liberal Party is in government, as with the sponsorship scandal, when everybody was making it rain for Liberal insiders. Now, of course, we have the green slush fund, where, once again, Liberal insiders are getting rich.

Guy Ouimet was also on the board. He is a venture capitalist on the board of Lithion Technologies, which received almost \$4 million from the green slush fund.

• (1115)

We can go on and on and talk about this, but the fact is that this is corruption on a massive scale. We have to get to the bottom of it. How do we get to the bottom of it? We get to the bottom of it by the Liberals producing the documents.

One thing I am concerned about is the question of where the NDP is going to be on this. I know the NDP. It talks about fighting crony capitalism all the time. We need the New Democrats to stand strong with us in the demand for these documents. Two days from now will they say that they think we should move on and give up on this? That would be a tragedy. That would be defying the will of Parliament and the Canadians who want to get to the bottom of this, and get to the bottom of it we will. We will get these unredacted documents. I just hope the NDP will choose to be on the right side of this, as opposed to going back into the unholy coalition with the Liberals.

What we will hear from the Liberals is a whole bunch of what I like to call gobbledygook. They are going to say that we are disrupting the normal course of Parliament because of this. When we hear that, automatically remember that this could end if they release the documents. Whenever they say that this is taking up too much time in the House of Commons, we just ask them to release the documents and it will be over. However, they will not, because they know how damaging those documents will be.

The Liberals also say that this will be some kind of charter rights violation and that we should not give the documents to the RCMP. This is also a bait and switch. They are trying to deflect from the fact that they do not want to produce the documents. They are coming up with this grandiose scheme, and we all know this. When we say that they need to do something and they start making up all these gigantic excuses, such as the dog ate our homework, we got caught in traffic, there was a massive pileup on the highway, we

start realizing that they are just explaining why they are not going to do something, that they never had an intention of doing it.

We are going to see it in the questions they are going to ask me. They are going to try to make the claim that somehow what we are doing is a charter violation, that the RCMP should not get these documents or that the RCMP already has these documents. It is all smoke and mirrors. It is all just an attempt to deflect from the fact that the Liberals will not produce the documents. No matter how many little circular arguments they try to make, when they try to go through that maze and it goes through 17 different things, trying to explain why we should stop, just remember that if they produced the documents, all of this would stop.

The RCMP does have some documents, the redacted ones. It should get the unredacted ones. We all know why the documents were redacted. Let us think about it again for a second.

Why would the government fight so hard to not release the documents? If it has nothing to hide, the truth is very simple? The truth is very simple on this, and that is to release the unredacted documents. Everything else the Liberals have to say is smoke and mirrors. It is an attempt to deflect. It is an attempt to rationalize their absolutely unacceptable behaviour, their assault on Parliament and the supremacy of Parliament. This is what they are doing. They are going to try to justify it. We are going to hear it in just a couple of minutes. No, produce the unredacted documents. That is where this all finishes, no matter what they say.

The Liberals have been going on a barrage of this. They are all over social media saying that what we are trying to do is outrageous, as if we are in control. They are in control. They should release the documents and the truth shall set them free.

The truth actually feels good. They should just get it off their chest and then beg the forgiveness of Canadians. They should say that the people who they appointed to this board engaged in severe corruption, that they are ashamed of themselves, apologize to Canadians and resign. They will not do that. They should also promise to never to do it again, except they will. It is like the story of the scorpion and the frog swimming across the river. The frog asks, "Why did you sting me; now we're both going to die." In reply, the scorpion says, "Because I am a scorpion; it's what I do." Why do they keep doing these corrupt things? They are Liberals; they are corrupt.

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have some advice for the member across the way. He says that the truth will make people feel good. Let us talk about the type of garbage the member is talking about. He talks about SDTC and the chair, how corrupt and bad she is, and all that kind of stuff. That is character assassination of the individual. He says that she is nothing more than a Liberal hack, a Liberal appointee.

Privilege

Does the member not realize that Stephen Harper appointed her to the economic advisory council? She also advised Brian Mulroney. I understand there was even one member who said that she actually donated to his party, yet he classifies her as a Liberal hack.

Why does the member continue to be so dishonest with Canadians in the comments he says in the House of Commons?

The Speaker: Members should be very careful about the language they use.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I have had worse things said about me by much better people, so I am not really concerned about what the member has to say.

On the specifics, the real problem is that corruption seeps onto people. There are no claims this person had any problems when doing other things with other parties. A few years with the Liberals and the rot just spreads. Therefore, all this crony capitalism was engaged in, taking taxpayer money.

What does the member say when he speaks to a single mother in his riding about the government behaving like this? It let 82% of a billion dollars be given away to Liberal cronies by other Liberal cronies. What does he say to that single mother?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague will be quite simple.

I am troubled every time contempt of Parliament occurs. Today we are talking about a failure to comply with a relatively simple request from the House. It makes no sense for us to receive documents that are almost entirely redacted.

In my colleague's opinion, what is so bad about those documents that the Liberals do not want us to see them before the election? More importantly, what dangerous precedent will it set if we do nothing to address this lack of transparency?

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question and one that the Liberals never want to answer. They will not answer why they are redacting the documents. They will not answer about how they could make it happen in a second. Instead, their questions are to my authenticity because they have nothing to say on this. They know the documents are going to be very bad for the Liberal government. That is why they are trying to hide them and cover them up. It is a very serious issue. They are defying the will of Parliament.

This is a very serious issue and the Liberals do not even care. They do not say they are really sorry that they are defying the will of Parliament, but they have a good reason. They do not care. They are defying the will of Parliament intentionally. Why? Because to release the documents would be bad for them. It is disgraceful conduct.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the course of his speech, my colleague asked where the NDP was. We are right here and we will await pa-

tiently the day when Conservatives stop enjoying the sounds of their own voices, so Parliament can actually vote. We will vote in favour of both privilege motions as they stand before the House. I just want to put that on the record.

I did read that the RCMP has these documents and that an investigation is ongoing. When will Conservatives allow us to execute a vote on this so we can get the business going and get this investigation under way?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased the NDP is going to vote in favour of this motion. When we do, we will be there as well, but there is a lot that needs to be litigated in the chamber.

Why does it have to go to the vote? A Liberal member is laughing because this is all funny to him, corruption is funny. All the Liberals have to do is release the documents.

I ask my NDP colleagues to use whatever influence they have left from their supply and confidence agreement and tell the Liberals to release the documents, and then this all ends.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the House can vote on this question of privilege, but the government still can refuse to hand over the documents. I would argue it cannot legally or constitutionally, but what we have seen in every other case is that it will still refuse to hand over the documents. This is why it is critically important for us to take this stand and tell the government that, at this critical point, the corruption must come to an end and the documents must be handed over. When the documents are handed over, then this whole discussion ends.

Fundamentally, it is not about a vote; it is about getting the government to hand over the documents. The NDP has a choice in it. Will its members stand with us in insisting that the corrupt government hand over the documents and be transparent or will they facilitate a way out for it, whereby it will avoid handing over the documents? This is the question before the House.

I wonder if the member can reflect on just how critical this point is and the steps we need to take to fight back against Liberal corruption once and for all.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I analyze it this way. There is one way that this ends, which is that the deputy House leader or deputy whip, whatever his position is, could stand right now and say that the government will give us the documents unredacted. Then we all go home. It is literally that simple.

The challenge we have is this. The Liberals are going to try to say that we should just stop talking about it. In fact, the only reason we are talking about it is because they will not release the documents. That is the problem. We know they are not releasing them, because the documents are really bad. We hope the NDP will stand with us on this and ensure we can put pressure on the government to release the documents. That is what this debate is doing, putting pressure on the government to release the documents. We are going to keep that pressure up until it does, and we hope the NDP stands with us on this.

• (1130)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we support the motion and we believe in getting to the bottom of the Liberal scandals.

We also believe that we should have been able to get to the bottom of all the Conservatives' scandals that happened on their watch: the ETS scandal, the G8 scandal, the F-35 procurement scandal, the Phoenix pay system scandal, the anti-terrorism fund scandal. All of those were blocked by Conservatives in the House of Commons and at committee, so we could not get to the bottom of them.

Now we have recently heard of a new scandal in Manitoba among the Conservatives. Manitoba's Conservative Party paid \$3,800 for services from an intimacy coach. This is according to documents acquired by the Winnipeg Sun. This was hidden as rental car fees, but according to the website, it states that "Somatic sex education...is a form of sex therapy that individuals can engage in alone or with a partner". These are taxpayer-reimbursed funds.

My question for the Conservatives is quite simple. They are always saying that they do not think about sex. However, the reality is, in this case, that it is an absolutely inappropriate use of taxpayer-reimbursed funds. Would the member agree that the use by the Conservative Party in Manitoba of an intimacy coach is absolutely inappropriate?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I often say it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, but this is no pleasure.

If the member wants to talk about issues in Manitoba, perhaps he should run in Manitoba. Perhaps he should talk about the B.C. NDP scandals, because there is no shortage of them. This is not relevant.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I am trying to understand this, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's contribution to this is whether the Conservatives think about sex. This is how serious the NDP is. That is the member's question.

The New Democrats are talking about an invoice from a province and a provincial party. When we are talking about how the government is engaged in corruption and a cover-up and will not produce documents, we get that kind of a serious question from the NDP. It is really sad and pathetic. I am not going to talk about something that allegedly happened in a provincial party that has nothing to do with this issue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, why do the Conservative Party and the leader of the Conservative Party not respect what the RCMP and the Auditor General are saying, that this particular motion, or what the Conservatives are asking for, is making them feel highly uncomfortable? That is one of the reasons why there is a great deal of concern.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, again, I go back to my speech where I said, whenever they come up with this sort of thing over here, we know that the answer is they could just produce the documents. That is the simple answer.

The smoke and mirrors coming from the government is that it is a violation of this, this person is concerned, or this, that and the other thing. It is like when people are trying to solve a little riddle, and they take their pen and go through a maze to get somewhere. That

Privilege

is basically what the government's answer is. It is some complicated, hazy, mazy thing that no one quite understands. It is to try and distract.

Produce the documents, and everyone here will stop speaking.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, and this instance is no different, although I wish it were a different circumstance. I wish we were not speaking about Liberal corruption.

Before I begin, I do want to recognize a couple of things. This is my first time, outside of an emergency debate, to rise substantially in this chamber. I would like to recognize a marriage. One of my esteemed staff members was married this summer. Jesus and Jenna Bondo are now one. It was a beautiful ceremony. It was such an honour to attend and I wish them all the best in their marriage.

I also want to give a shout-out to an Olympic gold medallist from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. He was born in Nanaimo but we will forget about that for the moment. He was trained in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo and currently resides there. He was coached by Beijing Olympic medallist Dylan Armstrong, whom I went to high school with. He was double my size when we were in high school, despite being younger than me. We are very proud of Dylan and his contribution to Canadian athletics. Dylan coached Ethan Katzberg to an Olympic gold medal in the hammer throw. Ethan was also one of the two flag bearers for Canada at the closing ceremonies. We are incredibly proud of him. On the floor of this chamber I want to give him congratulations.

We hear the New Democrats talk a lot. I have often said that if this were a radio station, it would be all talk, no rock because that is really what we are dealing with. If I could actually pose a question and, who knows, the New Democrats may answer this, it would be to ask whether they will eventually support a closure motion from the government. If this were the old NDP, the pre-coalition NDP, I would say no. That was a party that historically fought for the underdog, that historically fought for Parliament, that recognized Parliamentary supremacy with its limits, though not many, but all of its effective exercises of discretion. That was the NDP, often known as the conscience of Parliament, a party that would challenge other parties to think about the ramifications of their decisions. That is what opposition parties are supposed to do. Opposition parties have a constitutional obligation to provide that conscientious and thoughtful opposition, but opposition nonetheless, when things are not going right. However, here we stand on the floor of the House of Commons looking at a scandal in which insiders got rich.

Privilege

As a kid from North Kamloops whose parents immigrated to Canada without two pennies to rub together, when I see the enrichment that took place on the backs of taxpayers, I am disgusted. There are people out there who are lining up at food banks as we speak, and Liberal insiders got rich. If that is not repugnant enough, the Liberals here will not provide the documents to tell us exactly who got what, when and why. The New Democrats have said that they will vote in favour of this motion. Will they vote in favour of a closure motion from the government?

I have heard before, and I am still trying to wrap my head around this, about charter rights. Now, it is no secret I was a lawyer. Perhaps the government members can enlighten me and I am certainly open to hearing it, as maybe there is something I am missing about the charter. The charter is meant to protect people from government action. It is always interesting because the Liberals like to use it as a sword. The charter was always meant to be a shield, to shield the people from the government. This is basically what is taught to us in undergrad courses or first-year law; and yet, the Liberals are talking about protecting themselves from the release of these documents. The government is protecting itself, coming in here and saying that it does not want to release this because of the charter. Perhaps the government can connect the dots; I am certainly open to hearing that.

● (1135)

Even if there is an ongoing investigation and there are questions about that, and I understand the integrity of the investigation, Parliament has a job to do, notwithstanding an investigation. That is just a fact. Investigations of this magnitude typically take years to complete. Then we have to go through what is called a charge approval process, where somebody has to look at this and they have to get all the disclosure. We have the Jordan decision, which we know well in this chamber. With all the disclosure it could be years before we actually see any charges if they are merited, which is for someone else to determine. Far be it from me to say whether somebody must be charged. That is for an independent prosecutor to determine.

Where does that leave us? It leaves us with a scandal where insiders, presumably people who are fairly well off, in positions to further their own interests as they own companies, can further that interest. People got richer on the backs of taxpayers. This is so disgusting. As I say it, I feel myself getting more and more angry that we are standing here asking why the documents are not just tabled.

Is there anything more repugnant than stealing from the state? When I say from the state, it is actually stealing from Canadians and from me. Whether somebody is like the 104-year-old veteran whom I awarded a King Charles III's Coronation Medal to, who fought for freedoms, they are stealing from him and his taxes, and stealing from a newborn.

These are the allegations that are before us, and frankly, a lot of them are substantiated. Whether it is criminal is another question, but what we know here is that there was a complete and utter misappropriation of funds, so much so that, if I understand the Speaker's ruling, we are dealing with nothing until we deal with this.

The Liberals do not like that. There is a pretty easy solution. They can put forward the documents. When we get into politics,

obviously we think about pros and cons of any course of action. I ask myself, what is going through the Liberal machine right now? What is going through their heads? They can put forward the documents and bring an end to this, or they cannot.

What are the pros of doing that? This is openness by default. I will get to that in just a minute. Why will they not do this? I am thinking out loud here. There has to be something so damning in those documents that they refuse to put them forward and that grinding Parliament to a halt is worth it. They are prepared to put aside their legislative agenda because there is something in those documents that somebody in a Liberal back room or front room has said they do not want to be revealed. What could possibly be that bad?

I always make reference to my parents, and I apologize for those who watch my speeches, although I think it is just my mother. I always think about the common person, and I often will reference my father. He started loading wood in boxcars by hand at a sawmill when he was 17 or 18. He did that until he could no longer medically do it, for about 40 years. What does this say to him?

What does it say to the person who is newly immigrated to Canada, and is looking at their pay stub? They are working any job they can, often because the Liberal government has been so slow to allow people who have immigrated to this country, who are trained in fields that we need people in, like doctors, nurses and other fields, to work in their field. They are forced to work any job that they can take and see their paycheque evaporate into rising taxes, and then what is left evaporates into inflation.

● (1140)

What does it say to them when the government, which is talking about the middle class and those hoping to join it, will not even tell those people who got rich off their backs? This is utterly shameful. It is disgusting. The Liberals will stand up, invoke the ghost of Stephen Harper and talk about how terrible things are right now because of him. Stephen Harper has not been here for nine years. We can talk about a lack of accountability. The government is not taking any sort of accountability. I am sure the member from Winnipeg will stand up and ask a question for the 1,624th time in this place. At the end of the day, where are we? They should just release the darn documents.

I will pause here because it is an appropriate time to recognize two people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo who were recently engaged. One of them is a young man whom I have spoken with regularly; I know his father. My mom actually worked with his father when she was beginning as a legal assistant, and my sister went to school with his aunt. His name is Spencer Paul; he is a terrific young man who is beginning his teaching career. I want to salute him and wish him and his fiancée, Yulia Voloshenko, all the best on their engagement and a life of prosperity together.

Privilege

Let us talk about a website founded by Professor Matt Malone, Open by Default, which looks at various government Order Paper questions, things like that, and compiles them. Professor Malone has done great work. However, for a government that said it would be open by default, it has been anything but. We are standing here today because this is the height of a lack of transparency. This is a government that promised sunny ways, openness and transparency. We have been here four or five days because the government is choosing to obfuscate. This is not just the deflection that a lot of politicians do on all sides; more than obfuscation, this is deliberate stymying. The Liberal government has chosen to ignore the will of the House because there is something bad in those documents. I question why the Liberals will not just put them forward.

The Liberals will stand up and say, “Oh, but this person really isn't a Liberal; they were Conservative once. Did members know that?” I do not care who they are. They could have been my campaign manager, but if they got rich off the backs of taxpayers, they should be held accountable in the House and through whatever independent mechanisms there are. The buck stops here when it comes to Parliament. We should see those documents, and they should be tabled. It is the same when it comes to the 11 who have either wittingly or unwittingly helped hostile states. I do not care if it is the person sitting next to me; they should be named. If they cannot be named here, then where can they be named?

This is a Liberal government that has much to hide, but it is getting tired. The expectation is that people will run defence for it and do different things. However, people who stand here and who sit in the balcony at question period ask this: “Why aren't the questions ever answered? Why do we have to ask the same question over and over again?” I would say, rhetorically, to the Liberal members who are here that I wonder what their response would be if this were a Conservative scandal.

• (1145)

For those at home, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, is supposed to be an arm's-length, not-for-profit organization; it is meant to support projects that develop and demonstrate technology. Here is the problem: SDTC executives awarded projects in which they held conflicts, equalling over \$330 million of taxpayer funds. Let us go back to the middle class: How many middle-class families does it take for their federal tax burden to equal \$330 million? We all know that the Prime Minister has lavish tastes, and he has no problem pontificating about carbon taxes while he jet-sets all around the country and tells people about how they have never had it so good with their carbon rebates, which really do not make up the complete picture. They really do not tell people how much they are actually paying, especially when we think about tax upon tax and how it is levied at each and every single step.

How did this happen? In 2019, the Liberal industry minister, Navdeep Bains, began appointing people who would have conflicts of interest to SDTC. These are Liberal appointees. To those people who talk about Stephen Harper and say that “this person served under Stephen Harper”, as I heard earlier today, they were appointed by the Liberal government five years ago. If we know one thing about Liberals, it is that they help Liberals, appoint Liberals and

want to fund Liberals. What did they start doing? They started giving themselves contracts: “You scratch my back, I scratch yours.”

We are here in Parliament. I talked about my roots as a kid from North Kamloops, the child of immigrants, thinking I would probably never be in a place like this; however, if I ever had envisioned it 20 or 30 years ago, the last thing I would be thinking is that a government would be stymying the production of documents over people who got rich. I will make this clear: If anybody who works for me used their position to get rich, or to steal \$20, I would have no problem terminating them on the spot. That is what is expected, period.

In contrast, when it comes to the Liberals, when it comes to them having to deal with this scandal, they put up roadblock after roadblock. Why is this? Why are they hiding something? The reason is that there must be something substantial, something explosive. I invite people to watch question period and watch the answers. Watch how little of substance is said. We have these vague references to charter rights. We have, “Well, the RCMP are investigating, so we have nothing more to do.” Last time I checked, we are not the RCMP; we are Parliament. Parliament should have the right to figure out its own processes, and we do. The people and the Liberals, they do not understand that there are actually separations. They say that, as Conservatives, we want to meddle. They do not realize that Parliament controls its own destiny, while the RCMP controls its own destiny. These are the documents that need to come.

In my view, our whistle-blower legislation should be enhanced. There were whistle-blowers who came forward and said, “This is wrong. This is so wrong that I am prepared to put my career on the line for it.” What do they get? The people who bravely came forward got stymied. I am sure the member for Winnipeg North is just going to stand up and tell us the reason. This should not happen when whistle-blowers put their necks on the line so that Canadians can know the truth. The Liberals should release the documents and give us the truth; it will set us free, especially the Liberals.

• (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer, but the member opposite is. Having said that, I think of how Annette Verschuren was an appointment of Stephen Harper and an adviser to Brian Mulroney. She was appointed indirectly as the chair of SDTC; she is no longer the chair. If she goes to court, as we all believe that she ultimately will, and we do the work the RCMP has indicated to the House that it is not comfortable with, could we be compromising the trial? In terms of what the Conservatives are calling for, we could collect information inappropriately and hand it over to the RCMP. The defence lawyer for Annette, for example, would be able to cite that, which could cause problems in terms of issues related to the charter.

Privilege

Putting on his lawyer hat, does he believe there is any merit to that whatsoever?

• (1155)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. What charter right is compromised by what he is saying? A person has a right to a free trial, and I will fight for that right for anybody. I do not care who worked for Brian Mulroney. As I said, I do not care if it is the person sitting next to me. Canadians deserve transparency. The member wants to obfuscate. I do not care who they are. The RCMP will do their thing. If somebody is entitled to disclosure, they will get that disclosure as part of the criminal process. In Parliament, we have the right to do our thing, and we should do it; we should not have people from the Liberal government standing in our way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from what I understand, 10 out of 58 projects were ineligible. About \$59 million went to projects that do not meet the requirements of the agreements between the government and the foundation. That is my understanding.

I hear the Conservatives emphasizing that. They are right, and this requires an investigation. The government needs to face the facts and ensure that the documents are produced. I would like to ask my colleague if he could explain the difference between a conflict of interest, possible negligence and corruption. What I am hearing this morning is that this is corruption. We do not have the documents and we do not know why.

I agree that the government is wrong to refuse to do what is being asked, but I am just wondering why the Conservatives are emphasizing the word “corruption”.

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question on the difference between corruption and conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when somebody can benefit themselves. I think corruption is actually much more wholesale, and that is not to say the two cannot have any overlap; I think they have substantial overlap here. In my view, when we have a Liberal government that is providing contracts to its friends, or allowing its friends to provide contracts, that is not just a one-time thing where they line their own pockets. This was a decision to systematically fleece taxpayers and to do it in a way that would be covered up.

That is corruption. I do not know how that is not corruption. If a person or a party, in this case the Liberals, deliberately decided to ensure that people get rich off the backs of taxpayers, they were in a conflict of interest. Even an apparent conflict of interest is enough; if it looks bad, they should be recusing themselves. This did not just look bad. This was bad. They should hand over the documents.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will put it on the record again, so there is no doubt, that New Democrats will be supporting both of these privilege motions. However, given that my hon. colleague is a lawyer, when is the Conservative Party prepared to make its closing arguments so that the House can actually arrive at a decision and we can start executing some action on this?

From 2011 to 2015, the Conservative majority government had no qualms about using its legislative muscle in the House to quash numerous investigations, some of which were actually seeking documents. My follow-up question is this: Does my hon. colleague think maybe the Canadian public would see a bit more legitimacy in Conservative arguments if their record were not just as bad as that of the Liberals?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, the question really fascinates me. It implies Canadians do not have an appetite to investigate scandal. It is like the people of Canada are asking the government to please take their \$330 million and give it to Liberal insiders as it sees fit, that they just do not care. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I will stand here as a Conservative, but more importantly, as a parliamentarian representing the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, look into the camera and tell the member that I will make my closing argument when the Liberals hand over the documents.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the RCMP, an independent institution in Canada, and the Auditor General, again an independent institution in Canada, are both expressing concerns with the Conservative tactic, which all of us should be sharing. Those in the Conservative Party of Canada are throwing up their hands, saying they do not care about those institutions; they want what they cannot have, even though Stephen Harper never ever provided these types of documents, but they have a right and civil liberties do not matter.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to expand upon his point about what is going to be compromised by the release of these documents. At the end of the day, Parliament controls its own destiny, and if there are articulable bases on which these documents should in some way be safeguarded, I am confident Parliament can work that out. However, the Liberals refuse to do it.

They talk about Stephen Harper time after time. It is like the ghost of Stephen Harper is hiding under the member's bed, spooking him every single night, and the member does not want to give out the documents because the ghost of Stephen Harper is going to haunt him. Give me a break. The Liberals should hand over the documents.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to talk about Stephen Harper under beds. That is too much for me to grasp on a Monday morning.

An hon. member: The ghost of Harper.

Mr. Brian Masse: I do not care if it is a ghost or him or whatever. You can have the ghost. It is all good; I know it was in jest anyway.

Mr. Speaker, we got to this place before with the Afghan detainee documents that were not released by the Conservatives, and now we have this situation. One of the solutions for Parliament is updating Crown copyright. It is important to preface by saying that Crown copyright is the privileged access Canadians get to documents, information and research that should be made publicly available on a regular basis. Canada is one of the Commonwealth nations that has not updated this. All the others have. In fact, our laws go back to the early 1900s and have rarely been reviewed. The United States does not have this problem.

Why are the Conservatives still opposed to updating Crown copyright? We could have done that and it would have prevented a lot of this mess right now. I would like to see that done. If the Conservatives would agree, we could get that done and get some of the documents sooner.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, unlike so many of the questions today, I believe it is a very sincere and legitimate question.

I am not going to purport to be an expert on Crown copyright. I know next to nothing about it. I am certainly prepared to take my hon. colleague's suggestion under advisement because, frankly, I would need to get up to speed before I could provide a fulsome answer. I am not prepared to venture into something I am really not as knowledgeable about as I would like to be before answering that question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 61 to concur in the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motions be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred pursuant to Standing Order 66.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

[English]

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

Privilege

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes said, “Here we go again”, debating yet another breach of privilege by the Liberal government.

The Liberals' continued refusal to comply with parliamentary orders shows their complete lack of respect for this institution and parliamentarians. As frustrating as this is, it is not surprising. After all, on July 25, 1969, during the debate on a motion to adjourn the House, it was reported that Pierre Elliott Trudeau made the following statement regarding the opposition: “When they get home, when they get out of Parliament, when they are 50 yards from Parliament Hill, they are no longer hon. members—they are just nobodies”.

I can confirm for members today that the apple has not fallen far from the tree. Right from the beginning, with “elbowgate”; with Motion No. 6, which would have given the Liberals new powers to control the business of the House and was described by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby as both “fundamentally anti-democratic” and a sign of the “greater disrespect that we've seen developing now for the last few weeks” and also described as a “completely undemocratic move to take away the tools we [opposition members] have to express our differences” by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle; or with the Liberals' attempt to exploit the pandemic by introducing legislation that would have allowed the Liberals to carry on for almost two years with no parliamentary oversight, the Prime Minister's disregard for parliamentarians in opposition and the rules that govern this place is obvious.

According to Standing Order 108(1)(a), parliamentary committees hold special powers to summon people and order the production of documents. It states:

Standing committees shall be severally empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters as may be referred to them by the House, to report from time to time, and except when the House otherwise orders, to send for persons, papers and records, to sit while the House is sitting, to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned, to sit jointly with other standing committees, to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by them, and to delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House.

These powers are essential as they allow parliamentary committees to conduct important work. These powers are fundamental to the proper functioning of Parliament. When the government obstructs the work of committees by unlawfully refusing to provide documents or providing them heavily redacted, it is insulting not only Parliament but Canadians, who have sent representatives to this place to be their voice and hold the government accountable.

The Liberal government has a pattern of trying to obstruct the work of Parliament and its committees by refusing to hand over documents, and it is regularly supported by the NDP in this regard.

Privilege

In fact, during our study at the government operations and estimates committee of the government's contracts with McKinsey, Conservatives called for unredacted documents from government departments related to those contracts. Nearly every department sent either heavily redacted documents or no documents at all. This included the Department of National Defence, the Department of Natural Resources, Export Development Canada, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the Canada Development Investment Corporation, the Department of Employment and Social Development, the Department of Finance, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, the Canada Post Corporation and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and it was all led by the Prime Minister's own department, the Privy Council Office.

Thirteen government departments, agencies and Crown corporations refused to comply with a motion passed at a parliamentary committee. These departments, led by the Privy Council Office, denied the supremacy of Parliament, stating that they were able to decide what documents Parliament was entitled to have, granting themselves far-reaching and unconstitutional powers.

• (1205)

When we tried to escalate the issue to the House to force the departments to provide the unredacted documents, the Liberals filibustered, claiming that there was nothing to see and we were wasting our time. They convinced the NDP, their staunchest supporters in this place, to yet again bail them out and shut down our document request, hiding vital information about these contracts from Canadians. This was despite the fact the law clerk was brought to committee to provide the legal basis for parliamentary powers and provided the following testimony:

As the grand inquisitor of the nation, the House of Commons has the right to institute and conduct inquiries, as well as to send for papers and records. These rights are part of the House of Commons' privileges, immunities and powers—ofentimes referred to as parliamentary privilege—that are constitutional in nature, as they are rooted in section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, as well as in its preamble.

These rights, including the constitutional nature of parliamentary privilege and the fundamental role of the House of Commons and its committees, have been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

There is no limit to the right of the House of Commons and of its committee[s] 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, the House of Commons or its committees.

In a later intervention, he reiterated the following:

You asked me to explain and clarify the right of the House and its committees to send for papers and records.

This right to send for papers and records is one of the parliamentary privileges that the House of Commons and its committees have. This power is constitutional in nature, and it is subject only to the limitation that Parliament, the House or the committees will impose on themselves.

When requesting documents, sometimes a committee may be faced with a confidentiality claim. In such circumstances, the committee may decide to put measures in place to protect sensitive information; it may decide to no longer insist on its production order; or it may decide to insist on its production order and insist on the production of documents unredacted. Ultimately, it's for the committee to decide what option it wants to choose.

Despite our protests and the rules that supported our request, Conservatives were outvoted by the NDP-Liberal coalition and our study of McKinsey was stalled, with the NDP once again covering for the scandal-ridden Liberal government.

However, the Liberals' victory was short-lived with the Auditor General tabling her report earlier this year, which found that contracts should have never been awarded to McKinsey in the first place. The Liberals had, yet again, inappropriately given a sweetheart deal to a company being run by a close friend of the Prime Minister. This may have come to light earlier if the NDP had not helped the Liberals with obstructing the work of our committee. Instead, even to this day, we still have not received these documents. By allowing the bureaucrats to defy our order, the Liberals were successful in denying our committee access to the documents and keeping us, and indeed all Canadians, from seeing what they were trying to hide.

In the case of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, the facts are even more startling. Hundreds of millions of dollars were given to Liberal insiders by hand-picked board members who had conflicts of interest related to the companies being given taxpayer dollars. The Auditor General found 186 cases of conflict of interest by board members. These board members were allowed to vote to give taxpayer dollars to companies they had an interest in 186 times and the government did nothing. It did not ask any questions or check up on who was sending money where; it just allowed the board members to give money to anyone they wanted to. It turned out they were sending money to companies they were involved with.

• (1210)

The 186 instances of conflict of interest involved \$334 million. Even more concerning is that the Auditor General did not get through all the cases. This means there could be hundreds of millions of dollars more that have been given to companies that the Liberal insiders have an interest in.

Canadians deserve answers, and parliamentarians need to see what other egregious corruption is hidden in the documents. For now, we know that \$334 million was spent without any oversight and without any accountability, and now it is gone. Canadians are left footing the bill. Can we expect the Liberal government to get the money back, or that the wrongdoers will be held accountable? Probably not. The government will continue to sweep the issue under the rug, chalk it up to the cost of governing and move on, much like it did with arrive scam, which it still has not recovered any money from.

In fact, it is no wonder we will see no accountability from the scamster board members, given that a current minister used to work for one of the most prolific of them; the current Minister of Environment worked for Cycle Capital, a company that benefited greatly from SDTC grants. He was, in fact, its lobbyist. While working as its lobbyist, he managed to secure \$111 million in grants for it before he was elected, and he still holds shares in the company to this day, as was pointed out by my colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

The practice of funnelling hundreds of millions of dollars to companies that Liberal insiders have a vested interest in is a deeply disturbing pattern with the government. It is actually corrupt. We saw it with McKinsey, with over \$100 million in contracts being inappropriately awarded while a close friend of the Prime Minister, Dominic Barton, was the chairman. We saw it with Rio Tinto having been given \$222 million just five months after the same Dominic Barton was appointed as its chairman.

We saw it with arrive scam, with tens of millions of dollars going to middlemen who did no actual work. We saw it with the \$237-million contract given to the company of a former Liberal MP, Frank Baylis, for ventilators that were later sold for scrap metal. We see it with the purchase of the \$9-million luxury condo on Billionaires' Row for the Prime Minister's media buddy Tom Clark in New York City.

Time and time again, Liberal insiders get rich at the expense of Canadians and are shielded from any accountability by Liberal members of Parliament and their NDP coalition. While the Liberals have been creative in finding ways to abuse taxpayers' dollars to ensure that they find their way into the pockets of their friends, they have also shown themselves to be uniquely corrupt and untrustworthy. When the government and its bureaucrats hide the documents by refusing to provide them or by heavily redacting them, they not only insult the House and infringe on the privilege of its members but they also place themselves above the Constitution and the very foundation of our parliamentary system.

While it has become commonplace under the Liberal government, with new scandals coming to light week after week, Canadians need reassurance. They need to be reassured that the corruption is not normal and that this is not the way government is meant to work. Government is meant to work for the people, for Canadians.

This will not be how things are run when Conservatives form the next government. That is actually why Conservatives have brought forward the motion that calls upon the House to:

order the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) and the Auditor General of Canada each to deposit with the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, within 14 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control:

● (1215)

It intentionally includes:

- all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, e-mails or any other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC;
- contribution and funding agreements to which SDTC is a party;
- records detailing financial information of companies in which past or present directors or officers of SDTC had ownership, management or other financial interests;

Privilege

SDTC conflict of interest declarations;

minutes of SDTC's Board of Directors and Project Review Committee; and

all briefing notes, memoranda, emails or any other correspondence exchanged between SDTC directors and SDTC management;

provided that,

the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall promptly thereafter notify the Speaker whether each entity produced documents as ordered, and the Speaker, in turn, shall forthwith inform the House of the notice of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel but, if the House stands adjourned, the Speaker shall lay the notice upon the table pursuant to Standing Order 32(1); and

the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for its independent determination of whether to investigate potential offences under the Criminal Code or any other act of Parliament.

Canadians deserve a government that respects Parliament and its fundamental role and powers. They deserve a government that will be transparent and accountable. They deserve opposition members who do their duty in holding the government to account. They deserve a government that will respect taxpayers' dollars. Canadians deserve an end to the corruption, and it is time for a change. Conservatives are ready to provide the kind of leadership and government that Canadians deserve.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for those who are following the debate, I think it is important to recognize that SDTC was, in fact, an arm's-length organization there to support Canadian industry in a very environmentally friendly way. Annette Verschuren was the chair of that board, and she was someone who was actually appointed to Stephen Harper's economic advisory council during 2008 and was an adviser to Brian Mulroney.

There is no doubt that something has gone wrong. That is the reason why the government took swift action upon learning about it, to the degree that two independent audits were done on it. We are supporting the Auditor General. There has been a freeze on the funding. The board has been replaced. The government has taken action on the issue. For the Conservatives to label it as corruption and tie it to the Liberal Party is just wrong.

Part of the problem is that the Conservatives continue to spread misinformation to try to get wedge issues at the cost of what I would suggest was an organization, not the board but the organization, that did so much for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, while there was no question there, I will repeat what many of my colleagues have pointed out, and that is that five years ago, it was a Liberal minister who appointed the board of directors of SDTC, and he and the Liberals need to take responsibility for the appointments and what has ensued since.

Privilege

While the member obfuscates on the issue of ignoring parliamentary privilege, Canadians are struggling. There are hundreds of tent cities cropping up across this country, and millions of people are lining up at food banks. What is obvious during the debate is that the Liberal government's priority is to continue to line the pockets of its Liberal insider friends and then go on to cover it up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this. Of course it is unacceptable that the government is refusing to comply with an order of the House to produce documents. We have heard allegations that this also happened with previous Conservative governments.

I would like to know whether my colleague has any ideas about what we can do to prevent this type of situation from happening again.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, when Conservatives formed government in 2006, we brought in the Federal Accountability Act, which was to clean up the mess left behind by the previous scandal-ridden Liberal government. However, I would have to admit that no member of Parliament could have foreseen the blatant corruption and disregard for Parliament that the government has shown over the past nine years.

I believe we will need to take a very hard look at how the current government has subverted parliamentary practice and procedures time and time again, and determine how we can prevent this kind of corruption in the future.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a fairly simple question. I read through the motion and the amendment, and essentially the motion is to refer the government's refusal to produce the documents to committee and to direct the committee to call certain witnesses. The implication is that the committee's work is what would lead to greater accountability and get Canadians the answers that they deserve on this important matter.

If that is the case, and assuming that Canadians deserve those answers as quickly as possible, why would we not vote on the motion, refer it to committee so the witnesses could be called, and undertake that important work so we could get answers as quickly as possible? I do not understand the rationale or the strategy for drawing out the debate for days when the actual work should be done at committee.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, of course my colleague was not sitting on the government operations and estimates committee when the committee was seized with a very similar situation, where we were calling for unredacted documents from a number of departments within government in order to be able to get to the bottom of the contracts that were awarded to McKinsey.

It was the member's own colleague from Courtenay—Alberni who voted with the Liberals to ensure that the committee could no longer do its work. I am not convinced that the NDP at this point in time, especially with its coalition with the Liberals, would actually

allow the work to be done in committee. Instead of stating here that they are going to support the motion, and they are supporting it so I am not sure why he is concerned with the motion—

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Actually it was the NDP that helped bring the motion to the floor of the chamber. In fact I did the intervention myself, along with the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of debate. I appreciate the clarification.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has the floor.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, perhaps he could clarify that with his own colleague, who is asking why we are here today instead of referring it to committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating this issue for some time now. We said that we agree on the substance. We absolutely must ensure that the House's privilege is respected and that we get these documents. I have been listening carefully to the debate from my seat in the House and from the lobby. From what I understand, the Conservative Party is less interested in obtaining the documents than in stalling the work of the House.

We could vote on the motion, which would force the government to take action. If the Liberals do not produce the documents, then they will pay the political price. However, if the idea is that we should stay in the House until someone stands up and hands over the documents, then I have the feeling that we will be here for a very long time.

What is the Conservative Party's real goal? Is it to ensure that the House is respected and to obtain the documents, or is it to bring the work of the House to a halt and then claim that the government is not doing anything?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I am just going to quote what Michel Bédard said at committee when we were seized with the issue of not being able to get documents as called for:

The courts have recognized the existence of the power to send for records and papers. In parliamentary privilege jurisprudence, they have recognized that the exercise of the privilege itself is not something that is subject to court scrutiny. The manner in which the privilege is exercised is for Parliament alone to decide and, in recognizing the power to send for records and papers, they haven't set any limit to this privilege.

I would simply say to the member that the only people who are obstructing the documents from getting to this place and the work of Parliament being done are the Liberal members on the other side of the chamber.

• (1230)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think back to the early 2000s and the sponsorship scandal. It was one of the first things that made me understand how Liberals think and how they are always trying to put money into the pockets of their friends.

I wonder if the member could remind this House of some of the scandals similar to that which have occurred under the Liberal government, where it has demonstrated its innate response and innate ability to continue to take taxpayer money and use it in ways that it should not be used.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague is aware that it is a very long list. It is a very long list that has created deep concern for Canadians across this country, such as when we look at the arrive scam, when we look at the external contracting going to Liberal insiders and their friends, and when we look at the \$9-million condo that was purchased for the Prime Minister's media buddy.

The list goes on and on when it comes to how the Liberal government is spending taxpayers' money and is not willing to be held accountable and transparent about what it is actually doing.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sitting here and reflecting on the privilege motion before the House of Commons today reminds me of the 40th Parliament from 2008 to 2011. I was privileged to be in the chamber as a graduate student when the former governor general, Michaëlle Jean, gave her Speech from the Throne; and as an observer when papers were thrown in the air. Papers were thrown in the air because the former leader of the Liberal Party, Michael Ignatieff, brought forward a motion to produce documents related to the F-35.

Through a debate at the procedure and House affairs committee, there was back and forth between the government and the official opposition at that time to determine what papers were in fact needed. However, behind that very debate was not the Conservative Party saying it was not going to comply with Parliament. No, the Conservatives wanted to work with the official opposition, but the Liberals then used it as a political ploy to go into an election. Thankfully, Canadians understood very clearly what Michael Ignatieff and the failed Liberals were trying to do, and that was to take advantage of their parliamentary powers to push forward an election. Thankfully, the Liberals were defeated in that election.

It raised a serious question for me as a graduate student at that time and as a former Canadian parliamentary intern: Why use the power of privilege only to defeat a government, when the very purpose of that privilege was to get to the bottom of what the government was doing at that time? That is an important historical point to raise here today. It seems that only Conservatives seem to be bothered by the hypocrisy we have seen from the Liberal Party once again.

Therefore, with that, the recent events surrounding the government's handling of the Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, program have brought this issue again to the forefront of our democratic discourse. That is the production of papers, the right of this very House to demand anything from the government that it so decides to do. That is the fundamental privilege of Parliament. Last week, the Speaker rightfully ruled on a question of privilege raised by the House leader of the official opposition. The Speaker's ruling confirmed what Conservatives have said all along, which is that the government violated the expansive powers of this very House by failing to surrender crucial records or papers related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

Privilege

Let me take this time to remind members of the government's corrupt mishandling of the SDTC program, otherwise known as the green slush fund. This program was designed to support innovation in sustainable technologies. It was established in 2001. It operated with few issues under Liberal and Conservative governments until the current Prime Minister took office. Earlier this year, the Auditor General released a damning report. It revealed that \$123 million had been misappropriated by the Liberal-appointed board of SDTC. The report outlined serious governance failures, including a staggering 90 instances where conflict of interest policies were not followed; nearly \$76 million spent on projects connected to friends of Liberals who sat on the board; \$59 million awarded to projects that were not eligible for funding; and \$12 million spent on projects that not only fell into conflict of interest, but were also ineligible for funding based on the government's own criteria. This situation not only represents a betrayal of public trust, but also illustrates a significant failure in oversight by the current minister. We must ask ourselves, how can we ensure accountability in government if those in power are not held to the same standards we expect from others?

Conservatives have proven that the privileges of parliamentarians were violated by the government's refusal, which is why we are continuing to speak about the serious action the government has taken and indeed why the House is completely seized with this matter. This is not just a procedural misstep. It is a direct challenge to the very foundation of our parliamentary democracy. The Auditor General report made it clear that this scandal falls squarely on the shoulders of the current Liberal minister, who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were given to insiders. The minister even went so far as to suspend the SDTC board because he knew that he was in hot water and he took the correct action.

● (1235)

The government is unjustly infringing on the right to access these documents today.

To further understand the gravity of this situation, we must first reflect on the historical context of parliamentary privilege. Our rights and privileges as parliamentarians are not mere formalities. They are rooted in centuries of struggle against tyranny. As the British House of Commons gained eminence as a legislative assembly, it established privileges as statutes, as a part of common law aimed at protecting its members from interference, namely from the Crown.

Erskine May, a cornerstone reference in parliamentary procedure, defines parliamentary privilege as "the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions." In other words, I cannot do my job, nor can any other member of Parliament do their job, if this privilege is compromised. This underscores that our privilege is essential for holding the government, the Crown, to account.

Privilege

In Canada, we inherited the legacy of the U.K. through the Constitution Act of 1867, which enshrines our rights and privileges, ensuring that they are not exceeded by any authority outside of this House. The Parliament of Canada Act, 1985, further states that we retain the privileges not exceeding those “held, enjoyed and exercised by the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom”. In other words, we inherited that democratic tradition of Westminster parliamentary, responsible government. This is a powerful affirmation of our rights and responsibilities as members of this institution, drawing on hundreds of years of precedent that brings us here today.

Let us get back to the motion. In June, the opposition House leader tabled a motion asking for all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, emails and any other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC. This motion was sent through, and SDTC and associated parties either redacted the documents, withheld the documents or outright refused to present the documents to the official opposition and to this Parliament. This is a clear violation of our collective parliamentary privilege.

In making his arguments, the opposition House leader referred to page 239 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, which states:

Disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated. Without proper respect, the House of Commons could not function.

When the rules of parliamentary privilege in the House are disregarded, it undermines the authorities and powers the House can enact, and diminishes its ability to govern properly. Let us not forget it is not the government that decides which papers it must provide to Parliament; Parliament decides which papers it needs.

Without respecting the use of parliamentary privilege and obeying the orders of the House to produce and bring forward the requested documents, it displays a complete disregard of respect for the House, and its authority and duty to Canadians to provide them with accurate and transparent information.

In response to the House leader's motion, the Speaker confirmed the accusations that the government violated its powers. In his ruling, the Speaker referenced page 985 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, affirming that, “No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect”.

This clearly establishes the House has an inherent authority to compel the production of documents vital to our oversight functions. He went on to say that procedural precedents are abundantly clear. He said, “The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any and all documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties.”

● (1240)

To strengthen his ruling about the absolute nature of power to order the production of documents, the Speaker referenced a ruling of Speaker Milliken from 2010. In the Debates at page 2043, we can find Speaker Milliken stating the following: “procedural authorities are categorical in repeatedly asserting the powers of the House in ordering the production of documents. No exceptions are made for

any category of government document”. However, the government has argued that the order to produce these documents may infringe upon charter rights, particularly regarding police investigations and privacy.

The House leader has contended that this order exceeds the authority of the House by seeking documents for the exclusive use of a third party, namely the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This is a very wrong and dangerous interpretation by the government House leader. The House leader does not have the right to predetermine when documents can be disclosed. It is up to Parliament.

Even after the Conservatives have called out the House leader and the Liberal Party for their blatant violation of parliamentary privilege, the House leader still stands by her statement that the Conservative Party wants to infringe on the charter rights of Canadians. She has even gone on social media to spread the false narrative that the Conservatives are infringing on charter rights. She is using the charter as a shield against what would otherwise likely be a criminal investigation. How is finding out the truth about the mismanagement of this program an infringement on charter rights? What are the Liberals really trying to hide from Canadians?

It is essential to recognize that the House of Commons exists to hold the government accountable. The notion that the government can refuse compliance under the guise of protecting individual rights undermines the principles of transparency and accountability, which govern our democracy, have been clearly established by multiple Speakers and are, of course, written in the Constitution Act of Canada.

The privileges we enjoy today were established to protect the House and its members from the power of the Crown and other authorities. As noted by Enid Campbell in her analysis of parliamentary privilege in 1966, “the House of Lords and the House of Commons may investigate any matter whatsoever, however embarrassing the inquiry may be either to individuals or to the government of the day.” That is why we retain privilege.

We know that this whole charade is very damaging to the Liberal brand in Canada. I was a member of the industry committee when we conducted hearings with Annette Verschuren on her contract as board chair of SDTC, and there was a clear conflict of interest. We would think that with the new open and transparent appointment process, Ms. Verschuren would have been disqualified immediately from even sitting on the board, but we would think wrong.

When he was still in cabinet, former minister Bains ignored several warnings about her conflict of interest and proceeded with her appointment within three weeks of Balsillie's removal. With the arrival of Ms. Verschuren at SDTC, an environment was created in which conflicts of interest were tolerated and managed by the board. Board members would go on to award SDTC funding to companies in which they held stocks or positions. Former minister Bains also appointed five more board members, who engaged in unethical and illegal behaviour by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership or seats on the board. Officials from the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development sat on the board as observers and witnessed 96 conflicts of interest but did not intervene.

Former minister Bains was replaced in January 2021 by the current minister, and in November 2022, whistle-blowers began raising internal concerns with the Auditor General about the unethical practices they were seeing within the department. In February 2023, the Privy Council was briefed by whistle-blowers and commissioned two independent reports. In September of last year, the allegations became public, but it took the industry minister a month to agree to suspend funding for the organization. Then in November, the Auditor General announced that she would be conducting an audit of SDTC.

That brings us to today and the Liberals continuing to cover up the scandal by not tabling the documents that Parliament has requested. If the House cannot access the documents necessary to fulfill its duties, we are left vulnerable to government overreach and mismanagement. The ignorance of the government House leader surrounding parliamentary privilege has allowed the executive branch to resist transparency, and it is our duty to correct this.

● (1245)

In conclusion, I urge all of my colleagues to recommit to the principles of parliamentary privilege. The Liberals refusing to hand over all documents related to the green slush fund within 14 days is simply unacceptable. We must ensure that our House retains the authority to demand accountability from the government. We must also recognize that while certain information may need to be withheld for legitimate reasons, this should not be a blanket excuse for a lack of transparency.

The current situation is a wake-up call. It calls for a deeper understanding of our roles and responsibilities in the House. Canadians deserve a government that is accountable and transparent. It is why Conservatives will continue to hold the government accountable and call for a carbon tax election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the messaging the member is trying to get across. The Parliament of Canada is supreme in many different ways, but that does not justify walking over the Charter of Rights. It does not justify the actions the Conservative Party is taking.

The Conservatives are trying to say that the RCMP's opinion does not matter and that the Auditor General of Canada's opinion does not matter. We had a Conservative just the other day stand up and talk about how wonderful it was that we had a jail inside Centre Block at one time, and that Parliament should, in essence, be

Privilege

able to put someone directly from the bar into jail, walking over the Charter of Rights and the idea of innocent until proven guilty.

The Conservative appointed by Stephen Harper back in the day, the adviser to Brian Mulroney, ultimately became the chair of the board in question, and there will be a consequence for her, no double about that. However, I am concerned that the Conservative Party, in its games and its quest for an election, is walking all over a person's charter rights and freedoms. I find that disgraceful.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, what is disgraceful is that the Liberal Party of Canada does not understand that Parliament, with its power to investigate any matter whatsoever, however embarrassing an inquiry may be to individuals or the government of the day, is the ruling authority of this country. Parliament rules supreme, and it is not for the government to predetermine how documents should be used when Parliament demands papers. No matter how embarrassing an investigation may be, Parliament will always retain its authority to request documents from the government because we are the ones who approve how the government spends money.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 16, the House leader of the official opposition questioned the Auditor General of Canada's role in this matter. He made several accusations against her and blatantly challenged what she had said and written on this matter.

Since the Auditor General is a highly respectable and respected individual within this Parliament, I would like my colleague to tell me whether he condones the Conservative House leader's comments.

At the same time, are disparaging remarks like these not responsible for the creeping dysfunction within this Parliament?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the NDP-Liberal coalition, which just fell apart, has made Parliament very dysfunctional. That is a fact.

Privilege

The Auditor General report clearly outlined the immensity of the corruption we are dealing with here today. It is not every day that the Auditor General finds a prima facie case where the ethics laws of Canada were violated, up to \$173 million. That is what we have before us today. Why this motion continues to be debated is that the government will not come clean on its obligation to meet the demands of Parliament to produce the necessary documents so that Canadians can know what went on behind closed doors between Liberal friends and insiders.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the intervention by my colleague, who I miss on the industry committee. It is important that he was part of the SDTC's original examination. I will give him credit for that.

I want to ask him about some of the problems we have with the appointment processes and transparency. Will the Conservative Party support changing the current practice of making these appointments? Bruce Carson, who was appointed by Stephen Harper, was caught and charged for influence peddling. There was Arthur Porter, who Prime Minister Harper also appointed. He actually fled to Panama and sadly passed away there while awaiting extradition. There has been a litany of appointments, by both the Liberals and the Conservatives, for which we still see no transparency.

Does the member agree that these documents and the reason people are appointed should be more transparent and that the documents should not be redacted so much? Then all of Parliament and Canada could see that someone will work on behalf of the taxpayers and government when they are appointed by a person in power, like the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Windsor for his question related to appointments. Indeed, irrespective of government, I think there can be more transparency in the way we appoint individuals to boards that are funded by the Government of Canada. That is a very fair question.

The New Democratic Party has a very serious decision to make today. Will it stand with the government and support its obfuscation of Parliament or stand with Canadians and demand for transparency?

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the member at the transport committee.

He has talked a lot about the supremacy of Parliament. To me, Parliament in itself is not special; it is special because it represents the people. Does he believe that people are entitled to find out what happened to their money?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for those kind words.

I think he is raising a very important question. If Parliament cannot fulfill its constitutional obligation to demand papers and receive such papers, Canadians will lose trust in the House of Commons. A lot of Canadians across the country are feeling disillusioned by our institutions. That is because this institution is being prevented from doing its job.

Canadians work so hard, but business insolvencies right now are up 50% year over year. We have seen a record loss of businesses in

our country. When businesses that have worked hard to stay afloat and create jobs see this institution throwing around hundreds of millions of dollars and not getting to the bottom of it, they question what is really going on in Ottawa.

• (1255)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting debate for a Monday. Having just flown across the country and landed in the midst of this, I am trying to understand the Conservative logic. It reminds me of an eight-year-old student asking his teacher if he can go to the washroom and then standing there for 10 minutes with his legs crossed, hopping up and down reiterating how badly he needs to go to the washroom.

We plan to vote in favour of the motion. The Bloc Québécois plans to vote in favour of the motion. That represents a majority of the House, so immediately, we could vote on the motion and send it to committee. After all, it calls for the committee to do the work of getting to the bottom of this very important issue on behalf of Canadians. The irony is that the member is not only obstructing the business of the House, but obstructing the work of the committee that the motion itself calls for.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I would refer back to the original motion from June, which called for the unredacted documents to be provided to the House of Commons. Those documents have yet to be provided. That is why, at the beginning of my speech, I referenced the gravity of what we are dealing with here today. I was very disturbed by the government House leader, who used the Charter of Rights to move us away from what is at stake, which is the ability of Parliament to do its job for Canadians.

We want the documents today. When the government is willing to provide those documents, we will be able to move on with the other important matters of this House that we all want to deal with. That is the issue at hand.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to join the debate today.

I will start with the question raised by the NDP member from British Columbia. The whole idea of Parliament is that this is supposed to be a chamber of debate, of conversation. Sometimes they digress, I agree, and I have certainly been in the House for some very long digressions, but what comes out of that can sometimes be quite impressive and actually miraculous.

From having the ideas of different parties, different perspectives and individual backgrounds, all coming together in this wonderful place we call Parliament, we sometimes get to the most amazing conclusions. It is, as Winston Churchill said, the best worst system, but it is certainly our system, and it is the one we have chosen, so I will never apologize for debating an issue. Sometimes I do not like what I hear, but that is okay. When I am being heckled, sometimes I do not enjoy what I am hearing, but even that is okay. That is our right. I am proud to be in a country where we have freedom of speech and where the people have representatives here in Ottawa to defend their interests.

Let us go back in time because I think it is important that we put context around this debate today. We have had nine years, as much as the government members sometimes like to create the impression that they just walked into town, all of these problems already existed, and they are here to save it. Every new Parliament is a complete ignoring of all the previous issues. They will say that those were because of some other guys, that those were because of Stephen Harper. They will say that they did this and they did that. Even nine years later, we still do not see an acknowledgement. I do not think I have once heard members from the other side say that they got something wrong, but they have certainly gotten a lot wrong.

Let us look at the background that this latest Liberal scandal falls against. It was not long into the government's mandate when we already saw the fall from sunny ways. I am not going to cover all the scandals because I only have 20 minutes, and that would take hours and hours to discuss, but I will go over some of them because I think it is important. Not long after the mandate, there was the vacation that the Prime Minister took. It was hundreds of thousands of dollars. It was called the Aga Khan vacation. He claimed he was a friend. However, the ethics commissioner disagreed, and that was his first ethics violation, so we are starting there.

Sunny ways were looking a little dim at that point, but we will continue on. There is many to pick from, but I would say one of the most challenging scandals for the government was the SNC-Lavalin affair. We will hear, and I think this is particularly enlightening in this debate, the other side say that the Conservatives are going to trample judicial independence and the bureaucracy. No, we are not. We are simply asking for documents to be handed over to the RCMP in an ongoing investigation. That does not seem like the trampling of anything.

What was a trampling of the independence of the judiciary, as well as of the bureaucracy, was what was alleged to have happened in the SNC-Lavalin case. The Prime Minister, and if he did not do it, he came very close it, pushed on his then attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould. She, of course, had to resign to avoid this interference with the independence of the judiciary. He was looking for a deferred prosecution agreement, or a get-out-of-jail-free card, in layman's terms, for his friends at SNC-Lavalin.

There we had an actual case of interfering with the independence of the judiciary. This is not that. We have yet another scandal on this journey of corruption, so we will continue down the Liberals' journey of corruption, which has gone on over nine years. Hopefully we will be seeing the end of it very soon. The next one is really not that far off from the SNC-Lavalin scandal.

● (1300)

We would figure that maybe the Liberals would learn. As a small digression, I have the best kids in the world, but, as a 10-year-old and an eight-year-old, they still go off the rails occasionally. I tell them that mistakes are okay, but repeated mistakes are not. They need to learn from these things in life. Clearly, the government is so dedicated to corruption that it will keep going.

Next is the WE Charity scandal. Who can forget this notorious chapter of the Liberal government? We can argue it involved \$500 billion or a trillion dollars, depending on the way we look at the

Privilege

numbers, but once again, Liberal insiders were getting rich with Canadian taxpayers' money. WE is an organization that is now, thanks to reporting in the media and the great work of some Conservative members on the ethics committee, troubled, at best. I will put it that way. Liberal insiders got half a trillion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' hard-earned money, and we do not know what it was for. Maybe it was to build another well in Africa or just to rename one again and again. This is the organization that the government sought to give billions of dollars to.

Then there is the "other Randy" affair, a more recent one. I have skipped over a bunch, such as clam scam and a number of other scams. I could go on, but I want to get closer to the present. We have the "other Randy" affair, which is unbelievable to me. I am shocked that this has not progressed into an RCMP investigation. If it has, I am not aware of it. A sitting member of cabinet directed his business in a cabinet meeting. This is unbelievable.

Literally millions of dollars were flowing out the door to Liberal insiders.

Then there is one of my personal favourites: arrive scam. For arrive scam, there were IT guys who said they could probably have created the app for \$250,000, but let us be generous and say it would have cost \$1 million or \$2 million. No, it cost the government \$60 million, and we do not even know if that is the full extent. The Auditor General said that the bookkeeping was so bad that she could not even say for sure the amount of resources that were dedicated to this disaster.

Let us go SDTC, which is incredibly problematic. For those not following along at home, the SDTC board was to give out millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. It was funded, I believe, in the most recent funding agreement, with a billion dollars to help the environment, to fight climate change and to modernize our economy. It is important to put a little context around that. Our economy is in dire straits. Our GDP per capita has not grown over the last 10 years. There are a number of issues, most of which funnel back to the Liberal government, as to why we are on such a terrible trajectory and our growth is the worst in the OECD. There is a lack of capital that the government has smothered with overtaxation and over-regulation, but one thing that a lot of folks will point to is Canada's troubling record on innovation.

We produce some of the greatest ideas in the world, and I say "ideas" for a reason. I do not mean intellectual property because, oftentimes, before an idea makes the jump from someone waking up in the middle of the night saying eureka and drawing it on a napkin to it becoming a commercial idea, it has already left the country.

Privilege

● (1305)

The idea of the organization of Sustainable Development Technology Canada was not in itself a bad one. It was the execution that was bad. It could have had great utility if that capital had been directed to some of the great minds currently in Canada, those produced by our wonderful universities. It could have been directed to our companies and our businesses, which could have had a real lift for the economy. It could have solved one of our productivity issues, in fact, one of our main productivity issues, which is a lack of innovation in our economy. Instead, it was funnelled outside of our economy.

What happened? For those people who are not aware, there is a lot of specific information. If we want to really boil this down, SDTC board's primary job was to allocate capital. That is a fancy term, too. Its job was to take the billion dollars it was getting from the federal government and give it to individuals who would grow our economy by promoting innovation with that capital that was provided to them, which businesses need to start. Oftentimes, especially with tech companies, they can be capital intensive, and it can be years until there is a product. By having that funding operation, it could have added real value.

Let us go over what the Auditor General found to have happened instead. There was up to \$390 million that was misspent. I think it is important to categorize the ways that the money was misspent because there was quite a variety. One was ineligibility. Members can imagine that the government gave this billion dollars to SDTC and it had a rule book about how the money was to be spent. That makes sense. What did SDTC do with that? It ignored it. Just in the sample that the Auditor General looked at in her report, there were 10 separate enterprises that did not fit the criteria eligibility, but they still got nearly 60 million dollars' worth of projects. That was \$60 million where the board members said that they knew what they were supposed to do, as they had it in writing right in front of them, but that they were not going to give that \$60 million to the businesses that fit the criteria. Instead, they picked other businesses. I do not think the Auditor General gave the reason for that, but perhaps we can draw our own conclusions.

We have other cases where there was a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest means that someone has an interest in a decision that is being made. A director may have ownership or their spouse may have ownership. That is a normal thing. Tens of millions of dollars went out the door in cases with a conflict of interest. Someone declared a conflict of interest, and the board went through the criteria, but then awarded the money anyway. There were also tens of millions of dollars misspent where they just simply did not follow or abide by their conflict of interest rules. There were hundreds of millions of dollars that left taxpayers' hands to go to, in some cases, Liberal insiders. That is extremely troubling.

Members can look at the scandal that is going on now. It has taken years, by the way, to make its way through, thanks to the great work of our Conservative members at the ethics committee. What will its impact be and where are we right now? The RCMP has come out and said that there is an ongoing investigation. The Conservative Party, supported by other opposition parties, brought forward a motion to produce documents. Unfortunately, we received from the government an incomplete set of documents.

● (1310)

We received piecemeal, redacted documents that did not meet Parliament's criteria. That is troubling not just on the substance of this issue but also on a broader impact as well. Parliament, in itself, is not special. I am not special. The other 337 members are not special. The people who we support and represent are special. Each one of us represents 100,000 people combined of the over 37 million Canadians. Their money was taken.

At the end of the day, over a billion dollars was taken out of the pockets of Canadians. When we look at that, it is Canadians handing over a thousand million dollars. That money could have gone to helping and feeding their families. It is money that could have gone to a down payment on a mortgage or to help individuals meet their rent. That money could have gone to so many good causes.

Instead, the government, as the rightful authority, took the money. However, when government takes money, there is a real importance to accounting for it to the rightful owners, the Canadian people. Those dollars were not generated in Ottawa. They were taken from towns like Colborne in Ontario, from places like Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Toronto and Montreal, and all brought to Ottawa. Sometimes that money is spent very well, like in supporting our women and men in the armed forces, which the Liberal government has woefully neglected. However, when the Liberal government takes a billion dollars and awards it to its friends, it is hurting the economy, Canadian people and those most vulnerable in our communities.

Last, but certainly not least, the government is undermining the authority and the legitimacy of our democratic institutions. When people see scandal after scandal, at the same point when they are paying more money to Ottawa than at any point in the history of our country, they are increasingly wondering what they are getting for those dollars. They know how hard it is to earn. They know that with the Liberal government's record cost of living crisis, record increases in interest rates and inflation, they are having a harder time.

Then to add insult to injury, the government, which is taking more money than ever before in Canadian history and just lighting it on fire, in addition to taking all that money is also running out the credit card. Not only will our families have to pay the Liberal government debt back, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to pay this debt back. What will the government have to show for it, other than a few Liberal insiders getting rich?

It absolutely makes my blood boil when the Liberal government has the audacity to say that Conservatives, by calling for accountability and for the government to not be corrupt, are somehow trampling the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Privilege

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, virtually from day one, the Conservatives have done nothing but focus on character assassination, particularly with respect to the Prime Minister.

I understand the game the members in the Conservative Party are playing. They talk about Liberal insiders. What they do not say is that Annette Verschuren was an adviser to Brian Mulroney, and she was appointed to a position with Stephen Harper.

The Conservatives continue on, but let us just say what it is: It is an arm's-length organization that made very serious mistakes, which caused it to shut down and the board to be replaced. The moment the government found out about its actions were taken to resolve the issue and ensure that taxpayers were being protected. That is the reality.

However, the Conservatives want to play—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is a bit of crosstalk going on and I want to ensure we keep that to a minimum.

The parliamentary secretary was almost done with this question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are playing a game here. That is what this all about. It is not about Canadians, it is about the agenda of the Conservative Party, which is nothing more than a thirst for power.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I will be extremely generous and hope that member simply does not understand how government works. Let me explain what happened. SDTC and the Government of Canada entered into an agreement, where the Government of Canada would give a billion dollars for having those dollars go to technology companies. It is the Government of Canada's responsibility to manage that contract and to design the contract in that way. The buck stops with the Liberals, and they need to take account for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debates for a while now, and I am feeling somewhat uneasy. I am wondering whether my colleague feels the same way.

The Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of the motion. As we have said, the government must be held accountable, especially when it comes to corruption. We agree on that, and it has been stated repeatedly this morning.

However, I am uncomfortable with holding up the government's work for so long when there are so many incredibly important issues at stake. We have often talked about the housing crisis. There is the chronic underfunding of health care. There are long lines at hospitals in Quebec, and the solution is here in Ottawa. There is the fight against climate change. There are public finances. There are the seniors we have been talking about. There are so many topics we could be talking about, but everything is at a standstill because of this one debate.

I am not really okay with this. Does my colleague share my unease?

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the issue is this. I believe, and I would hope my colleagues all believe it too, the government has failed. The government will not make anything better. If the nine years have not proved that, then I do not know what will. The NDP and the Bloc need to join us and call for a carbon tax election so we can get these problems solved.

• (1320)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the speech of my friend from Northumberland—Peterborough South. Near the beginning, I think he was arguing that the importance of having these long-drawn-out filibuster days of debate is that sometimes miraculous things happen in the course of debate. I am wondering whether that miracle happened during his 20-minute speech or how I would know it happened, because I did not feel anything.

Will the miracle come in the questions and comments period, or did the miracle just not happen and I will have to wait until his colleagues get up later in the day for that miraculous thing to happen so we can send this to committee, which, after all, is the point of the motion?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the miracle could happen right now. Members could stand behind the NDP leader and say that they are actually ripping up this agreement and are voting non-confidence, but they will not, because this is a House of hypocrites.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I can assure the member that members of the Liberal Party, the Bloc and the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker: I will simply ask the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and ask my friend a question.

It is funny how history repeats itself. As a young man, I wrote a paper in university called "Have the Liberals Lost the Legitimacy to Govern?" This paper was about the ad scam scandal that eventually took down the Chrétien-Martin government. As my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle says, Liberals are going to liberal.

The more we go through this, the more we see history repeating itself, except on a much larger scale. We are talking about \$300 million. The NDP and the Bloc members are saying that this does not matter. We would love to see the opposition come forward and hold the Liberal government to account on how Canadians are getting poorer and their friends are getting richer.

Do the Liberals continuously repeat this cycle? How much deeper will this go to see how many people got rich, and why?

Privilege

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we have scandal after scandal. I rattled off half a dozen significant scandals, where billions and billions of dollars were spent. Ultimately, I can jest a bit about that, but it is deadly serious. A couple of things are going to happen, such as billions of dollars not going to our social safety network. It is billions of dollars that are not going to health care. It is billions of dollars that continue to undermine our economy through overtaxation and over-regulation. That means there will be children who do not reach their potential because the government decided to spend more money on Liberal insiders than it did on health transfers.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today. I will not hide the fact that I wish we were talking about something else, like other bills already before the House. As my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert just pointed out, a lot of topics need our attention right now. We could be debating housing or the fight against climate change, which is something we do not talk about often enough in this place. We are in a climate crisis, and I do not think we are doing enough about it.

Just this morning, I read in a press review that the government is still investing in research for small modular reactors. However, we know very well that the best way forward would be to invest in renewable energy sources, such as wind, hydro and solar power, not in forms of energy that continue to harm the planet. I think it is a bit of a waste of time to debate matters like this.

I think that, so far, the House has been seized with this issue for roughly 15 hours. I am not saying that it is not important. Every question of privilege is important, usually. However, the Conservative Party seems to be using it as a tactic to obstruct the work of the House and the study of certain bills that have been introduced in the House. I share the same sense of unease as my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, who said earlier that there are so many other things we could be discussing. I want that to be perfectly clear to our constituents who may be watching our debates right now. They expect us, their elected members, to debate and pass bills on matters that concern them and that may help them in their daily lives. That is why I think this is a shame.

However, I will do the Conservatives the courtesy of playing along and talking about the issue that we have been seized with since Friday. I want to reiterate what was said by some of my colleagues and by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who stated our position on this issue. I want to go over a few facts, if I may. I did say I feel as though we are wasting our time, but I want everyone to understand that the question of privilege that is before us today is legitimate. When Parliament orders the government to produce documents, the House has spoken and the government needs to respect that. What is the point of the House of Commons if its will is not respected? This is a legitimate question of privilege, and Parliament's authority to demand documents is clearly established.

I want to go over a few facts. On June 10, the House adopted a motion moved by the Conservative Party that ordered “the government, Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) and the Auditor General of Canada each to deposit with the Law Clerk

and Parliamentary Counsel, within 14 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents” and that those documents be handed over to the RCMP.

A little while later, we realized that the documents in question had never been tabled in the House. In the opinion of the Bloc Québécois, and definitely in the opinion of the Conservative Party, the failure to table these documents is a breach of privilege. That is what I gathered from their question of privilege.

One thing, however, has not been mentioned enough. I think that the responsible thing to do is to exempt the Auditor General from being obliged to hand over the documents. After all, she is not the custodian of the government's documents. We would prefer to put more responsibility on the government and less on the Auditor General.

Then, on September 26, the Speaker of the House ruled that the question of privilege concerning these documents, about the government and Sustainable Development Technology Canada, was a *prima facie* case of privilege. That is why the Conservative Party now wants to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Like I said, it is a legitimate question, but let us not forget that this new agenda is considerably affecting the House's legislative agenda. I will say it again because I think it is important for people to understand this. I think it is a shame that this type of tactic is being used. I am afraid that the Conservative Party is taking advantage of this opportunity to monopolize the work of the House. That way, they can prove that Parliament has come to a standstill, that we are no longer able to move forward on issues, that nothing is working anymore and that an election must be called. Maybe that is part of their strategy.

• (1325)

I heard my Conservative colleague who spoke just before me say that the NDP and the Bloc Québécois need to join the Conservatives and call for a carbon tax election. We do not need to go very far from Parliament. We can just cross the river to Quebec and ask people there if they want a carbon tax election. I am not sure many people will say yes. That does not seem to be a priority for Quebeckers right now. Quebeckers have many other concerns besides that one. I am not saying that the Bloc Québécois is not ready for an election, but it should be about serious issues.

Privilege

What the Bloc Québécois has done is give the government an opportunity to deliver for Quebeckers. The Prime Minister often says he wants to deliver for Canadians. We have given him an opportunity to truly deliver results, to make things better for Quebeckers. We have given him an opportunity to make things better not only for seniors in Quebec, but for seniors across Canada. If the government does not move forward on this file, we will have a good reason to bring it down, with the support of the other opposition parties, obviously. However, we are not going to bring down the government just because somebody woke up one morning and decided they wanted to become prime minister. That is not how it works. There need to be good reasons to bring down a government.

Let us come back to the issue before us. Parliament obviously has the power to compel documents from the government. That has been clearly established. The only limitation on the House's ability to compel the government to produce whatever information it deems necessary is the good judgment of the House, not the goodwill of the government. The government should have no reason not to produce the documents as demanded by the House. In June, the House was clear. It ordered the government to produce this series of documents. There may have been a lot of documents, and that may be what prevented the government from producing them, but the order was perfectly clear. The government did not respect it, and that is a breach of the House's privilege. That is what we need to address today. We want the Chair to examine this issue.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois leader raised another point. The Conservative Party is taking advantage of this issue to go after the Auditor General. One thing must be perfectly clear: This is not about the Auditor General. She is a highly respected officer of Parliament. As elected officials, far from putting her between a rock and a hard place, our duty is to protect her from the government. The documents she had access to were meant for her performance audit and, we would point out, they belong to the government. The government's refusal to obey an order of the House has put the Auditor General in a difficult situation, to say the least. Obviously, the government is the one at fault. It is up to the government to hand over these documents to the House. The government alone, not the Auditor General, is the one violating the privilege of this House.

This is a serious issue, so we urge parliamentarians to treat it as such. I do not think that has been the guiding principle in the debates so far. In particular, I think it is important to avoid partisanship and sweeping accusations. We know that there may be good reason to think that Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, failed in its duty. There may be good reason to ask some serious questions about what went on. If there is any reason to believe that wrongdoing has occurred, then it should be investigated. At that point, it is not up to us to decide whether to move forward on this issue. If the RCMP wants to receive documents, great. It may not need the documents to conduct this type of investigation. When there is evidence of corruption, when it looks like taxpayers' money has been used dishonestly, this obviously needs to be investigated.

• (1330)

There is not much more to say on this subject. However, I can provide more detail about the mandate of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

It is an independent foundation created in 2001. Its mission is to support the growth and development of pre-commercial clean technology companies. It reports to the minister responsible for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. Whistle-blowers started sounding the alarm in November 2022. They had concerns about how the foundation was managing public funds and human resources. They approached the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, which advised them to contact the Privy Council Office.

The Privy Council Office then received a 300-page document from the whistle-blower group, laying out allegations dating back to February 2022. I want to go over a few dates. In October 2023, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry stated that he was going to commission the firm Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton to prepare a fact-finding report.

The fact-finding report identified a number of instances in which SDTC was not in full compliance with the contribution agreement made with the Department of Industry. As a result, the department sent SDTC an action plan to address the issues identified in the report and indicated that the action plan needed to be implemented by December 31, 2023. The department also requested the suspension of funding for all new projects until the action plan was implemented.

On November 1, 2023, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada announced that it would be conducting an audit on how SDTC was financing sustainable development technologies within the Department of Industry's portfolio. The Auditor General published that audit on June 4.

In short, here is what we learned from the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General found that there were serious governance issues with the fund. That was quite clear. The main problems were the mismanagement of conflicts of interest and a lack of clarity surrounding the criteria for awarding grants. As I was awkwardly trying to say earlier, we can see that there has been wrongdoing here. The responsible thing to do is to get to the bottom of things.

That said, the issue that concerns us now is as follows: When Parliament is seized of a matter like this and asks for documents to be tabled, the least the government can do is respect the will of the House and table those documents. It does not get any simpler than that.

• (1335)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, because it was really a pleasure to hear someone give the House such a great summary of the problem. I am very grateful that she is taking the subject so seriously.

Privilege

If I understand correctly, the motion asks that this whole issue be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I would like my colleague to comment on that. Does she think we should wrap up debate here and refer the matter to committee?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind words. I ended my speech by saying that the Auditor General was quite clear and that it appears there has been some serious wrongdoing. I did not go over the entire chronology of events, but I know that several people involved in this matter have already appeared before certain House of Commons committees, including the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

The Conservative Party's motion is quite clear, calling for the matter to be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This might be less about the wrongdoing itself and more about forcing the government to produce the documents.

The member said she was pleased that I described the situation so well, but still, it is her government that is implicated in this. I cannot help but wonder why the government is refusing to table these documents in the House of Commons. Is that what the Conservative Party wants to address at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs? Is it more about the tabling of documents when the House requires it? Maybe that needs to be clarified. In any case, as I said earlier, we must get to the bottom of this.

[*English*]

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, out of curiosity, if my colleague were the owner of a company, would she simply ignore fraud and unethical behaviour or launch an immediate investigation to get to the root of the problem, so it could be addressed and stopped?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty clear that, in this situation, there are very few people who would suggest that this wrongdoing should continue without an investigation. Our position has been quite clear from the outset, and it is the same here. If an investigation is required, one should be done.

That said, is it necessary to spend dozens of hours here in the House talking about it, rather than talking about the bills that are already being studied and moving forward on the issues that our constituents want us to move forward on? That is the question I would like to put to my colleague.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague very clearly laid out that, in order for the House to act upon this matter, we have to arrive at a vote one day. I have heard Conservatives arguing that they need to prosecute this case in debate, but, so far, I am hearing the same talking points repeated again and again through their speeches. There are no new ideas being advanced through debate; I am glad that she acknowledged that.

There has been a lot of finger pointing between Liberals and Conservatives today. Does my hon. colleague think that the Conser-

vative arguments might have a bit more legitimacy if their record during the Harper years was not just as bad as that of the Liberals?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I find it odd that my colleague would ask me that question, considering that both of us sit together on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We spend most of our time watching the Conservatives and Liberals butt heads and point fingers at each other over anything and everything to do with public safety.

We are there and we try to discuss constructive things. Now, I do not mean to point fingers at anyone for the lapses that did occur. I certainly have no answers in that regard. What I do know is that Parliament was seized with an issue, asked the government to table documents and the government did not comply. In this case, I think that the fault lies squarely with the Liberal government.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if she agrees with the following statement. On the one hand, the Conservatives are trying to stop Parliament from functioning and are holding every member of this Parliament hostage. On the other hand, the Liberals are unable to find a way out of this deadlock.

In my opinion, this situation is partly to blame for making Parliament totally dysfunctional over the past two weeks. Would my colleague agree with that statement?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I quite agree with what my colleague said. I have a feeling that perhaps we are still here some 15 hours later because, in the end, it is convenient for the government that we are not debating some of its bills and not moving matters forward too much. In its current position, the government may be trying to buy some time.

I am not accusing anyone. I am just saying. Perhaps it suits the two major parties to let time go by and have members debate this question of privilege—which does not make it any less legitimate. However, is it really essential? It is a valid question.

[*English*]

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quote that I would like to mention here on the floor of the House of Commons. This came up during committee hearings on this horrific SDTC scandal that we are hearing about, and I would like to read it specifically:

...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.

What are my colleague's thoughts on this, and do they understand why we are pushing so hard to have these documents made public?

Privilege

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, seeking the truth is legitimate. In a way, the Conservative Party is seeking the truth and wants everyone to know what is happening. It is legitimate to want to get to the bottom of this.

However, it is a bit much that the Conservative Party wants to waste people's time here in the House and prevent us from talking about bills that are on the agenda right now. I take issue with this current tactic.

Like my colleagues from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert and Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, I feel uneasy. Yes, we need to get to the bottom of this matter. However, is it worth taking up so much of the House's time? Can we not just immediately refer the matter to a committee to be studied?

I think we have reached that point.

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was away last week in Dublin at the European security council meetings. Then I came back to find that we are again playing the games of the Conservatives.

There was so much to be discussed in Dublin. I believe my hon. colleague was there. I think of this song:

Raised on songs and stories, heroes of renown
The passing tales and glories, that once was Dublin town

Then I came back here to see this sort of gamesmanship.

I would like to say to my hon. colleague this: While the Europeans are talking about Ukraine, the climate crisis and Gaza, here we are in Canada with a dysfunctional, abusive party that is interfering with democracy.

I would like to get my hon. colleague's thoughts on that, and if she would like to share a song from Dublin, I would be more than happy to hear it.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. member wants to sing, but I think she can answer the question.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, last week, I learned that the member likes to sing as much as our Bloc colleague from Charlevoix does.

It is rather impressive to take part in international forums and to see the issues that are discussed there. Those are fundamentally important issues. Take, for example, the situation in Gaza, the situation in Ukraine and the conflicts that are happening around the world.

Then, when we get back home and return to Parliament, we see that the House is still debating the same matter as it was before we left, so one has to wonder how legitimate the Conservative Party's tactic is.

[English]

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am probably going to disappoint a lot of my friends and family members who were ready to tune in around five o'clock tonight, on the edge of their seat, ready for this. We have brought it a bit forward to quarter to two in the afternoon, so I do not think they are as keen around the TV as I thought they would be, but here we go.

Today I am pleased to speak to an egregious violation of parliamentary privilege as a result of the Liberal government's refusal and failure to comply with a Conservative motion that was duly passed by the House in June. The House of Commons as a collective and members of Parliament as individuals have a number of rights and immunities that are necessary in order for them to perform their work. These rights and immunities are integral to the work of parliamentarians and are required in order to protect members of Parliament, as well as the authority and dignity of the House of Commons.

Individual rights of members include freedom of speech in the House of Commons and committees, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty, exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness; and freedom from obstruction, interference and intimidation. Collective rights of the House of Commons include the right 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; and to institute inquiries and demand papers.

These rights are extremely important, and when the collective or individual rights of members of Parliament are violated, it is so serious that all other work must cease. The reason we are here today is that the Speaker of the House of Commons found that the Liberal government violated the collective rights of members by refusing to produce documents that the House of Commons had ordered. As I mentioned, the House enjoys or should enjoy the absolute and unfettered power to order the production of documents that is not limited by statute. These powers are rooted in the Constitution Act 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

Since the Speaker agreed with Conservatives that our rights as parliamentarians have been breached, all business of the House has ceased. There will be no debate of government bills and no debate of private members' bills, because the issue is so important that it must take precedence over all other business, and because the Liberal government has refused to comply with the lawful order of the House of Commons. For the benefit of Canadians who may be watching at home, I will discuss how the motion came to be and why the House has been seized with the issue for months.

Privilege

Sustainable Development Technology Canada was a federally funded, non-profit fund that approved and distributed millions of dollars annually to small and medium-sized businesses in the clean-technology sector. The fund was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada to fund the development and demonstration of new technologies that promote sustainable development. The fund managed to run without controversy for many years, that is until the Liberal government came to power and turned it into a green slush fund for its well-connected Liberal buddies.

The trouble began when former minister of innovation, science and industry Navdeep Bains and his Liberal colleagues handpicked the board members and chair, who went on to spend \$1 billion of taxpayer funds. This flagrant disregard for taxpayer dollars and blatant corruption flew under the radar for many years. It was thanks to the work of Conservatives on various parliamentary committees, but especially the industry and technology committee, that the scandal came to light and was fully investigated.

In February 2023, the allegations surrounding financial mismanagement and ethical lapses first came to light in the form of a complaint from a group of employees at the fund. The Government of Canada responded by conducting an internal investigation, which found several issues with how the fund was managed. Parliamentary hearings began at the same time.

The Auditor General of Canada first began to look into the allegations a short while later, in November 2023, and issued a damning report earlier this year. She found that 186 conflicts of interest had occurred, meaning that the board of directors and the chair had hand-picked where funding was going on. Some of the funding went to their own companies.

• (1350)

The Auditor General took only a sampling of the funding and found that 82% of that sample was in conflicts of interest totalling \$330 million. The Auditor General also found that SDTC did not follow conflict of interest policies in 90 separate cases, spending nearly \$76 million on projects connected to the Liberals' friends appointed to run the fund, \$59 million on projects that were not allowed or had been awarded any money, and \$12 million on projects that were both a conflict of interest and ineligible for funding. In one instance, the hand-picked chair of the fund gave a shocking \$217,000 to her own company.

Canadians at home might be wondering how this could possibly happen. How could the Liberal-appointed board of the SDTC misappropriate such a large amount in tax dollars? How could the board possibly have so many conflicts? I will explain.

Every single dollar that was disbursed by the billion-dollar green slush fund had to be approved by the board of directors. The members of the board of directors would declare their conflicts when they happened to arise; at the beginning of a meeting, those conflicts were declared. The trouble is that, in many cases, a director would stay in the room, or in some cases they would leave the room, while members were voting to give funds to their own projects. This is, of course, a completely absurd way to run a fund, and it led to these members' willfully and purposely enriching themselves and the value of their companies.

One egregious example of the scenario is when a member of the board, Andr ee-Lise M ethot, who runs a venture capital firm called Cycle Capital, received \$114 million in grants from the green slush fund while she was sitting on the board. Her company's value tripled during her time on the board at SDTC because the receipt of the funds lent an untold amount of legitimacy to her company.

Another shocking tidbit from the example is that Cycle Capital's in-house paid lobbyist was none other than the Liberal Minister of the Environment. He lobbied the PMO and the industry department 25 times while he was the paid lobbyist for Cycle Capital. Ms. M ethot then went on after her time at SDTC to become a board member at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, where she gave a handsome gift of \$170 million in Infrastructure Bank money to a company owned by the chair of SDTC, Annette Verschuren.

I will now turn to Ms. Verschuren's conflicts, which are a second shocking example of the corruption that took place under the Liberal government's watch. Annette Verschuren was appointed to the chair of the green slush fund by former minister of industry Navdeep Bains after he had removed the previous chair, Jim Balsillie, given the latter's public criticism of the Liberal government's privacy legislation. Mr. Bains proposed Annette Verschuren, an entrepreneur who was receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies, as a replacement.

The minister, the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council Office were warned of the risks associated with appointing a chair with so many conflicts of interest, and they were told that the fund had never had a chair with interest in companies receiving funding from SDTC. In 2019, Mr. Bains proceeded with the appointment of Ms. Verschuren despite repeated warnings expressed to his office.

Ms. Verschuren sat in on and moved two motions to funnel \$38.5 million out the door in COVID relief payments, payments that went out the door in contravention of the contribution agreements that SDTC had with ISED or Industry Canada. Not only did \$38.5 million inappropriately go out the door in these COVID relief payments, but \$220,000 was also funnelled into Ms. Verschuren's own company, of which she was the CEO, founder, majority shareholder and sole director. She moved a motion and voted on sending \$220,000 to her own company. Just recently, Ms. Verschuren was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner of breaking ethics laws. In his report, the Ethics Commissioner stated that Ms. Verschuren "improperly furthered the interests of the beneficiaries of SDTC funding to companies associated with those accelerators."

• (1355)

These are just two examples of the shocking revelations uncovered by the Auditor General, the Ethics Commissioner and my Conservative colleagues. According to the Auditor General, nine directors accounted for the 186 conflicts. I will remind members of the House that this fund had run well, by all accounts, until the Liberal government came into power and turned it into a slush fund.

In fact, one of the whistle-blowers who worked at the company stated, "The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government—

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind members who are joining us online to make sure that their microphones are in the mute position. If they are having challenges, that is their problem.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. member wants to back up a bit, I will allow it. The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate everybody wanting to hear me from the top. It means that it must be really riveting and that they are enjoying my words. I appreciate that. I would have loved the opportunity to start from the top, but I will continue from the quote.

It is a great quote. This is right from the whistle-blower who worked there:

The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government...

I am sure the government wanted to hear that a second time.

...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.

I have another quote from the same committee meeting:

...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 was an employee who used to work at SDTC and who was at committee. That is right from the committee meeting.

Statements by Members

I have lots more to say, and I look forward to continuing after QP.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a problem. Thirty years ago, polio was eradicated in the Americas. Two generations of children were made safe from the death and disability that polio wrought. Now we must wage this battle again. We are seeing long-eradicated diseases making a comeback, mostly because of the disinformation that fuels anti-vax communities.

As a physician, I watch in despair as conditions such as measles and rubella trickle back into our homes and classrooms, bringing with them chronic morbidity, death and disability to a new generation.

Canada was the first country to invest in the fight to end polio worldwide. Our objective was to totally eliminate the disease globally. Today, polio is on the rise again, and with global travel, it will become a pandemic. Canada must resume our global leadership; our \$151-million pledge over three years to the global polio eradication initiative to immunize 370 million children is a start.

The world's children deserve no less.

* * *

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been one year since my Conservative bill, Bill C-280, passed in the House of Commons.

This important bill would ensure that Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable growers are paid for the food they grow, and it would save Canadians money. However, the Prime Minister's hand-picked senators have held up the bill for months; now, some are actively looking to defeat it. In committee, one Senator even told produce farmers that it was tough luck, as the whole system is crooked, life is not fair and they were just going to have to deal with it. We can talk about being out of touch.

Bill C-280 supports farmers, protects our food security and promotes cross-border trade. Practically every MP voted for it; however, Liberal-appointed senators want to ignore the will of the House and side with big banks instead. They need to get their act together, stand with common-sense Conservatives in support of Bill C-280 and our farmers, and bring it home.

*Statements by Members***KITCHENER-WATERLOO OKTOBERFEST**

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the leaves turn to their brilliant autumn hues, it reminds us that Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is here once again. I am thrilled to invite everyone to the 56th annual celebration of this iconic festival, which is running until October 19.

For over five decades, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest has been a cornerstone of our region. It is the largest Bavarian festival in North America. From the official keg-tapping ceremony to delicious German cuisine served by local clubs and restaurants, as well as vibrant cultural events, there is something for everyone each day.

Our Thanksgiving Day parade will be broadcast nationwide, and there will be family fun for all ages throughout the festival, including activities for children and a free family breakfast. We also host a community food drive. Whether we are dancing a polka, enjoying a traditional meal or participating in family fun, this festival brings us together in camaraderie, culture and celebration.

I thank the organizers and volunteers whose dedication keep the spirit of Oktoberfest alive and thriving. I hope everyone enjoys Oktoberfest. *Prost.*

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATHAN'S RIBBON

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special ribbon that has been created in my region, namely, Nathan's Ribbon.

At the end of August, Nathan Macameau, a young teenager, was hit by a car while crossing the road after getting off a school bus. As the father of two teenagers, my heart goes out to his family at this tragic time.

That is why I am wearing this ribbon today. Its black and yellow stripes symbolize the colours of the school buses we see on our roads. The family-run business that created this ribbon, Autobus Maheux, is hoping this initiative will raise awareness. I would like to acknowledge Pierre and Nicolas Maheux and Yannick Goupil for their leadership.

Every day, school buses take to our roads with our most precious cargo: our children. Every day, dedicated and caring drivers like Louis-Georges helplessly watch on as drivers make reckless choices.

This ribbon is a way of honouring Nathan's memory. I invite people to get one. It is a way of reminding everyone of our responsibility and our duty to remember that, when the lights are flashing, we need to stop.

Enough is enough.

• (1405)

[*English*]

INHERITED BLOOD DISORDERS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to acknowledge the incredible work of the Global Action Network for Sickle Cell and Other Inherited Blood Disorders.

This organization is truly making a difference for those affected by serious blood disorders. The challenges posed by such inherited conditions as sickle cell disease, thalassemia, hemophilia, aplastic anemia and Diamond-Blackfan anemia are significant, yet the commitment of this network to raise awareness, advocate for timely diagnosis and promote comprehensive treatments is inspiring.

The Global Action Network for Sickle Cell and Other Inherited Blood Disorders will be holding a reception. I would like to invite all of my hon. colleagues to meet with professionals, advocates and individuals living with inherited blood disorders tomorrow evening in the Valour Building.

Our support of this cause is invaluable.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, Jews experienced the worst attacks since the Holocaust. Innocent Jews were barbarically slaughtered; women's bodies were broken from vicious rape. Children were tortured in front of their parents, and people were burned alive and mutilated. Twelve hundred Jewish lives were horrifically ended that day, and 101 hostages continue to be held by the Hamas terrorists responsible for this massacre.

Unbelievably, right here in Canada, Jews have experienced relentless anti-Semitism since then, targeting Jewish businesses, schools, retirement homes and synagogues. It is a national failure that Jews no longer feel safe in this country, yet Jewish people continue to fight. Their resolve is stronger than ever.

Conservatives stand with them and with the State of Israel. We condemn the anti-Zionist hatred and the spineless Canadian leaders who have allowed it to take root here at home. Today, we pray for Israel and for the victory of western democratic values.

Am Yisrael Chai.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks one awful year since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel took the lives of 1,200 people, including eight Canadians. Also on that day, more than 240 people from dozens of countries were taken hostage to Gaza. Over 100 remain there today. Let us all recommit to ensuring that they can soon rejoin their loved ones.

The killing, the sexual violence and the taking of hostages on October 7 mark the largest atrocity on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. It broke our hearts, but as Leonard Cohen said:

There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Today, we must come together to find and form that light.

Hersh's mother said, "In the competition of pain, there are no winners". There has been so much pain and no winners, but today we can hold space to mourn those who were killed on October 7.

We pray and work for peace. We pray and work for the release of the hostages. Let that be our light.

* * *

ARTHRITIS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important work that leading arthritis organizations are doing across Canada. This week, they are on Parliament Hill to raise awareness about the challenges faced by the more than six million Canadians living with arthritis. They embody the spirit of advocacy that is so vital in the fight against this pervasive disease.

Arthritis is often misunderstood as an ailment of older people, but half the people affected are under 65, including around 25,000 children. Arthritis is the most common chronic disease in Canada. It is estimated that the number will rise to nine million Canadians, or one in four, by 2040.

The debilitating pain limits mobility, hampers productivity and, sadly, can lead to isolation and have an impact on mental health. There is no cure for arthritis, but we can make a difference and help improve the lives of those suffering from it by working together to build a healthier future for all Canadians. This includes reducing wait times for diagnosis and treatment and improving access to care.

We thank Arthritis Society Canada and all partners for their advocacy.

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[*Translation*]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has set an ultimatum for October 29 in an effort to intimidate its friend, the Liberal Prime Minister. On the morning of October 30, the day before Halloween, nothing will change. The government will still be in office. This is nothing but the same old window dressing, the smoke and mirrors we have come to expect from the Bloc.

The Bloc Québécois has abandoned Quebec. It voted more than 180 times to keep our most expensive government in power, a government that has trampled over Quebec's jurisdictions and left immigration broken. The Bloc Québécois voted for \$500 billion in inflationary spending that added 100,000 public servants and doubled the federal debt. That is one of the reasons it is called the "Liberal Bloc".

Statements by Members

The Bloc claims to be the defender of Quebeckers, yet it failed to defend even the regions targeted by the caribou order. The Bloc Québécois is a very poor negotiator. It got nothing in return for a vote that is keeping the Liberals in power.

I have some advice for Quebeckers: Beware of the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, October is also known as Latin American Heritage Month. We must applaud the late Senator Enverga for making this recognition possible.

Today, I rise to thank organizers, publishers, writers, artists and volunteers, alongside representatives of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Panama, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay, for contributing to FILibro Canada 2024. Language is essential to any culture, and this book fair has become one of the most important forums for the promotion of Spanish literature. It also highlights the importance of Hispanic culture in Canada.

I would especially like to applaud Sylvia Alfaro, Ramón Sepúlveda, Gabriela López and their team, including Clara Mejía Lema. It was an honour to host the sixth consecutive Ibero-American Book Fair on Parliament Hill, where hundreds gathered to share, promote and create much-needed camaraderie in emerging cultural communities.

Diversity is Canada's strength, and I hope even more people join us next year.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost, crime or corruption.

We know the Liberal government took a legitimate federal foundation called Sustainable Development Technology Canada and turned it into a green slush fund for well-connected Liberal cronies and buddies. These Liberal insiders who were appointed to the board of SDTC gave nearly \$400 million in tax dollars to their own companies and friends at a time when Canadians could not afford to eat, to heat and to house themselves. Conservatives passed a motion ordering the Liberal government to assist the ongoing RCMP investigation by handing over all documents related to this scandal. The Speaker has found that the Liberal government has breached this order, which has now ground Parliament to a halt.

Statements by Members

Canadians do not have confidence in the Prime Minister, who has previously been found guilty of breaking ethics laws twice. It is time to axe the tax, cut the corporate corruption and let Canadians vote in a carbon tax election.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, Hamas committed the greatest massacre of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. The attack should have woken all of us up to the fact that the terror regime in Tehran and its proxy groups seek the destruction not only of the Jewish people but of democratic values around the world. These groups care nothing for the lives of the people subjugated under their rule, and they subject them only to death and misery.

The genocidal regime in Iran and its proxy terror groups are the foe today, which failing hands threw us the torch to guard against. In that, we must know that the promise of Canada does not self-perpetuate. We must fight for it every day. That means rejecting feckless leaders who placate lawless mobs within Canada's streets. It also means defending the right of Israel, a democratic nation, to protect itself from the same terror groups that also seek death to our Canadian way of life.

I remind my colleagues that peace never comes through appeasement. It only comes through strength. *Am Yisrael Chai.*

* * *

[Translation]

NATO

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and I had the great pleasure of officially opening the new NATO DIANA centre in Halifax.

NATO DIANA will help develop dual-use technologies that address challenges affecting security and defence. This initiative puts Canada at the heart of NATO's efforts to maintain its technological edge and preserve peace and security. This \$26-million investment is a demonstration of Canada's commitment to the NATO alliance and to our defence.

I want to congratulate Major-General Paul Peyton, who will be the Military Deputy Director for North America for NATO DIANA. I will conclude by saying thank you very much to all my Liberal colleagues in the Atlantic caucus for all their efforts over the years, especially the Liberal members from Nova Scotia who worked tirelessly to bring DIANA to Halifax.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

WIKWEMKOONG UNCEDED TERRITORY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, elders, health care workers, the band council and family members of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory are working exceptionally hard to replace their aging long-term care

home. Built in 1972, the current elders' home is at capacity and no longer meets current regulations. Detailed plans have already been designed for an expanded facility, but they need further investments to ensure that elders can age with dignity close to family and friends, as the licence is set to expire in June 2025.

The community has secured \$49 million for this project and needs Indigenous Services Canada to cover the funding shortfall. The existing facility must not close without having another one ready to transition current residents within the community. Failure to do so would retraumatize residents, who are residential school survivors, and reduce their ability to pass on their historical knowledge and teachings. Time is of the essence. Indigenous Services Canada and the finance minister must ensure the \$20 million requested is advanced for this new elders' home.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, October 7, marks the end of a year of horror. It has been a year since Hamas terrorists massacred over 1,200 people in Israel. It has been a year since Hamas took nearly 250 people hostage, including dozens who are presumed to be alive but who are still missing. It has been a year since the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

Last October 7, Hamas committed acts of incredible barbarity that plunged the Middle East into a spiral of violence with no end in sight. The world has every right to deplore this spiral of violence, but we must not forget the October 7 victims, the innocent men, women and children. We must not forget the hostages and their families, who no longer know rest.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to reiterate my solidarity with the entire Jewish community, who deserve to be able to commemorate this tragedy safely and with dignity.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one year ago, the Jewish people were savagely attacked in the deadliest act of sadistic barbarism since the Holocaust. Over 1,200 souls were raped, murdered and taken hostage by a radical death cult backed by the clerical regime in Tehran, seven Canadians among them. Today, 101 remain in the grips of terrorists hidden in the tunnels of hell.

Oral Questions

One year ago, the glory of living a peaceful and safe existence in this country as a Jew ended. They have placated the mob of woke radicals and the anti-Zionist Jew haters that reign free in our streets and reward terror. We used to be a country that was clear and unequivocal about eradicating anti-Semitism here and destroying terrorists, without conditions, everywhere.

For those who remain captive, those waiting for their loved ones to come home, those who never made it back, we remember them. For those horrified at the state of our country, we will fight to restore the Canada we know and love, even when they will not.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago, over 1,000 Israelis were killed in a terror attack by Hamas. Since then, Netanyahu's regime has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and victimized hundreds of thousands in the region. As long as this continues, so too does the harm in our Canadian communities.

Over the past year, our local synagogue has had to ask police for support during Shabbat and this past weekend during Rosh Hashanah. Palestinian Canadians who have lost entire generations of family members are afraid to grieve openly and continue to be targeted for their heritage. This is unacceptable.

No matter one's identity, people deserve to feel safe and to be able to grieve in our country. This is not a political issue; this is a humanity issue. If members in this House continue to make this tragic loss a partisan issue, we risk losing a part of our own humanity.

Today is a horrific anniversary for Jewish and Palestinian Canadians alike. Today is a day of grief.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have further proof that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption.

The Liberals have paralyzed Parliament by refusing to respect your ruling that the government must hand over documents to the RCMP regarding a \$400-million scandal. Liberal-appointed executives funnelled money to their own companies, which implicated them in 186 conflicts of interest, according to the Auditor General.

Will the Prime Minister comply with your ruling and hand over the evidence to the RCMP so we can get back to work?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is false. Your ruling was to refer this matter to committee for further study.

Will the Conservatives comply with your order?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is proof that after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, the crime or the corruption. The Prime Minister has ground the work of Parliament to a halt by refusing to respect your ruling. The government must hand over evidence to the police, concerning the \$400-million spending scandal that saw Liberal appointees give millions of dollars to their own companies. The Auditor General says there are 186 conflicts of interest in this scandal.

Will the Prime Minister end the cover-up, respect your ruling, and give the police the information so we can have accountability and get back to work?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is demonstrably false because your ruling was to send this matter to the procedure and House affairs committee for more study. In fact, it is only the Conservatives who are now obstructing their own obstruction. They do not want this to go to committee because it would demonstrate they are trying to upend charter rights and override police independence.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliament can get back to work this minute if the government will just hand over the evidence to the police about this \$400-million Liberal spending scandal. I found it interesting that the Liberals said everybody is going to lose their charter rights if the police get evidence into this \$400-million Liberal spending scandal. No, what will happen is that the Liberal nominees and appointees who engaged in 186 conflicts of interest to stuff their own pockets will be held criminally accountable, and Canadians might get their money back.

Why will they not hand over the evidence and respect your ruling so we can get back to work around here?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is interesting about this is that there is actually proof that what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is false. In your ruling, you said this matter needs to go to the procedure and House affairs committee for further study. What the Conservatives are putting forward is unprecedented because, as the RCMP mentioned, it would upend charter rights and it would blur the lines between judicial and legislative independence.

The Conservatives can follow your ruling and we can all go back to work, which is exactly what Canadians want us to do.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago today, a sadistic and genocidal death cult, Hamas, carried out the biggest attack on Jews since the Holocaust and has 100 more hostages. Bring them home.

Here at home, though, our Jewish friends and neighbours have been doubly victimized as anti-Semitic mobs take to the streets shouting, “From Palestine to Lebanon, Israel will soon be gone” and “There is only one solution: intifada, revolution.”

Will the government clearly and unequivocally condemn these genocidal chants from hateful mobs on our streets?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Judith Weinstein, Vivian Silver, Ben Mizrachi, Netta Epstein, Shir Georgy, Alexandre Look, Adi Vital-Kaploun, Tiferet Lapidot, may their memories be a blessing. It was my honour to have met with their families here at home and in Israel. On the anniversary of Hamas's horrific attacks, my promise to their loved ones is the following: Year after year, Canadians will honour their memories. We stand with Jewish people. We will not relent until the last hostage returns home.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister does relent, every single day, just like her leader.

I asked a very simple question. Mobs have taken to the streets in front of Jewish homes, hospitals and businesses to shout anti-Semitic hate slogans. I quoted a number of them and invited the minister to rise to her feet and specifically condemn them, to stand with Jews against the anti-Semitism that has been allowed to proliferate on our streets.

Once again, will she condemn these anti-Semitic chants?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is October 7, the anniversary of a horrific attack on Jews, with 1,200 people killed and over 200 people taken hostage. Our solidarity is with Jews in Israel and with Jewish people in Canada and right around the world.

What we stand up against, absolutely, is the amount of hatred that we have seen in this country and countries around the world. People have targeted Jewish Canadian schools, day cares and synagogues for acts that they have a problem with on another side of the world. We are better than that in this country. We need to stand up against that kind of hatred in support of Jewish people and for all people who defend their ability to worship how and whom they choose.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, seniors came to Parliament Hill to ask for a 10% increase to their pension plan. One poll tells us that 79% of the population agrees with that increase. Elected members voted in favour of it. The government just needs to give the royal recommendation to Bill C-319,

but it does not want to. Why? Because it says that this is not how things usually work.

We are talking about the plight of seniors and the government is talking about procedure. When will it stop messing around and give the royal recommendation?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I visited a lot of seniors in my riding on the weekend. Obviously, I take the time to have a good conversation with them. I hope, knowing my hon. colleague, that he said the same thing and was very clear with the seniors, especially when it comes to his opposition to lowering the age of retirement to 65. The Bloc Québécois voted against that. When we increased the guaranteed income supplement, the Bloc Québécois voted against that. When we brought in dental care for hundreds of thousands of seniors in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois voted against that.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors are coming together to improve their pensions. Some 79% of the population agrees. All parties voted in favour of this in committee. However, the Liberals refuse and only want to talk about procedure.

The same is true when it comes to supply management. Farmers are coming together in support of Bill C-282. All parties support it, but it is being held up in the Senate. The Liberals refuse to get involved. They talk about procedure. There are two procedural problems.

At the end of the day, is the real problem not this Liberal government's lack of political will?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is well aware that it was our party that initiated the supply management program. It is our party that has supported the supply management program throughout its history. It is a very successful program.

We supported Bill C-282. We urge the other place to move on this legislation.

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, housing is a fundamental right, but since the Liberals have been in power, the housing crisis has only gotten worse.

Oral Questions

The Liberals and the Conservatives before them sold over one million affordable housing units to wealthy developers who got rich off the backs of families. The Liberals let rents double. The Conservatives lined the pockets of their donors in the real estate industry. Both of these parties are to blame for the housing crisis.

Why do they want families to pay the price?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is quite right to criticize the Conservatives' role in the fight for affordable housing. When he was minister responsible for housing across the country, the Conservative leader built six affordable housing units.

My NDP colleague is also right to point out just how cynical the Conservative leader is. He says that helping seniors who live in low-income housing and co-ops is encouraging Soviet-style housing. We should not help them, because that encourages a Soviet way of life.

What are we to make of that?

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis in indigenous communities continues to be a stain on the government's record. Over 300,000 indigenous people continue to live in unsuitable housing. The Liberals promised to build homes for first nations, Inuit and Métis communities and broke it. To make matters worse, indigenous people are still reeling from the Conservatives' cuts to housing to this day.

The Liberals break promises, the Conservatives gut and cut, and indigenous people pay the price. When will the government finally act to build the homes indigenous people desperately need?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is entirely right. That is why we have built tens of thousands of homes for indigenous Canadians and other Canadians in the last nine years.

If we had built on the record of the Conservative leader, with six affordable apartments in his entire mandate, we would be a long way from what is needed for indigenous Canadians in 2024. In addition to that, as I said in French, the Conservative leader does not want to support seniors and indigenous Canadians when they live in low-rent housing because he believes it encourages a form of Soviet-style housing conditions.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I gave the foreign affairs minister two opportunities to condemn the increasingly common and terrifying anti-Semitic chants we hear in the streets, such as "Israel will soon be gone" and "There is only one solution! Intifada, revolution!" Twice she refused to condemn those remarks. She continues to pander to Hamas supporters and the Liberal Party as part of her leadership campaign rather than doing her job.

I will give her another chance. Will she publicly support Israel's right to retaliate against the tyrants of Tehran and the terrorists of Hezbollah and Hamas to protect itself, yes or no?

The Speaker: I want to encourage all members to be consistent with rulings in the past. I will come back to this at the end of question period, but I caution all members to please be judicious in their words.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is a day that we should not play politics about people's lives being taken or people being killed, it is today. We all in this House, I hope, are against any form of anti-Semitism or any form of discrimination.

I really hope that my colleague in front will apologize.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there was ever a day when we needed a government to stand up for what was right, this would be that day.

The government has sought to divide Canadians by saying one thing to one group and precisely the opposite to another group, and here in this House, it remains radio-silent on condemning anti-Semitic chants and on supporting Israel's right to truly defend itself by retaliating against terrorists and tyrants. Why will the minister not do the right thing and stand beside the Jewish people today?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago in the Middle East, peace was broken by a violent terrorist attack by Hamas. On this side of the ocean, we have to do better in how we articulate protests. They need to be peaceful. What that means is that one does not go out on the streets to target a day care, does not go out on the streets to target a community centre and does not go out on the streets to target a synagogue.

Our resolve to fight anti-Semitism is strong. It has been strong since this Parliament started, when we outlawed the wilful promotion of anti-Semitism. It is even stronger now as we are advocating for more strict penalties, which that party opposes.

* * *

• (1435)

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was you who ruled that the NDP-Liberal government obstructed a lawful order of this House by not turning over the evidence in a \$400-million corruption scandal. It has this Parliament paralyzed and unable to deal with the misery and chaos that have been created after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government.

Oral Questions

Taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up for the cover-up of this latest corruption scandal. Will the Liberals simply provide the evidence to the police so the House can get back to its work of holding them accountable?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is again being false in his statements, because what you clearly ruled was that this matter should be sent to committee for further study. It is the first time in Parliament's history that it is taking its extraordinary powers and abusing them in such an egregious way.

The issue the hon. member is discussing has been dealt with by this government, but it is up to the Conservatives to stop obstructing their own obstruction so that we can all get back to the important work of governing for Canadians.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal would get up in this place and say that the majority of members of the House, who were democratically elected and are exercising powers that are legally bestowed upon this Parliament, are somehow infringing upon the government's constitutional right to not be investigated by the RCMP for its own corruption. It is absolutely unbelievable. There were over 186 conflicts of interest and \$400 million lining the pockets of well-connected Liberal insiders, while Canadians are lined up at food banks in record numbers.

We want to know if the government is expecting the NDP to bail it out and stop us from holding it to account.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear about two things. In terms of a criminal prosecution, the way it normally unfolds is that the police seek a search warrant from a judge and the judge evaluates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the charter interests at stake in getting documents, something about which that party cares not. Second, we have a fundamental premise called police independence. We safeguard it in Canada. Who does not safeguard it? It is authoritarian regimes. I guess the Leader of the Opposition and his minions are sharing their blatant favouritism toward authoritarian tactics in this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, history will remember this as a government riddled with corruption.

The latest scandal on the list concerns the green fund, which became a bottomless pork barrel for the government's cronies. The Auditor General was scathing. This fund's directors gave out subsidies to their own companies 186 times. What a bunch of winners. Corruption on that scale warrants police action.

The question is clear. When will the government agree to the Speaker's order to hand over the documents to police so they can do their job?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, but only a Conservative would filibuster a Conservative motion. This Parliament has seen it all.

The work has been done. That is what the police forces are saying. We said that we would take decisive action and we did. We got to the bottom of things, that is what we did. Four independent reports have been submitted. The CEO resigned. The board of directors resigned. The entity was transferred to the National Research Council.

We are confident that we are taking the right steps for this program's governance.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have a great deal of respect for the minister. However, the problem is that the Auditor General herself said that the minister did not do his job properly and did not do enough to keep an eye on what was going on with his fund.

It is also important to note that it is the people here at the table who are saying that the RCMP does not have all the documents. The only way to resolve this so that the RCMP can do its job and Parliament can get back to business is for the government to hand over those documents to the police.

When will the minister stand up and do the right thing?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, but four independent reports were produced. Not one, but four independent reports were produced.

Even the commissioner of the RCMP openly stated in a letter that he had access to all the documents. In the interest of Canadians, in the interest of democracy, in the interest of the work of parliamentarians, we ask the Conservatives to stop obstructing the Conservatives and let us get back to work in the interest of all Canadians.

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● (1440)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us come back to Bill C-282, which protects supply management.

We were wondering why two senators, Peter Boehm and Peter Harder, were blocking the bill in the Senate. Now we know, thanks to Stephen Harper's former adviser, Dimitri Soudas, who said about these two senators, and I quote, "two former deputy ministers who tried countless times to convince Harper to abandon supply management....I was there".

Two senators appointed by the Liberals are trying to overrule the vote of the House. Do the Liberals think that is acceptable?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that all of the Liberals here are in favour of supply management, just as our Bloc Québécois colleagues are.

The same cannot be said for the Conservatives. I can assure the House that we are having conversations with the senators, just as my Bloc colleague is.

The Senate is independent. The senators he is talking about are independent. They have to do their job. We expect them to do it diligently.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is going on in the Senate is extremely serious. Not only are these two unelected members attacking our farmers, but they are also striking at the heart of democracy.

This chamber is where we vote on legislation. If Peter Boehm and Peter Harder do not agree with the laws and want to pass other ones, they should have the courage to resign from the Senate and be elected by the people. This is the seat of democracy. We represent the people. We supported Bill C-282.

Will the government ensure that these two senators respect democracy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my answer is the same as the one that was just given. My colleague gave a great answer when she said not only that we value supply management, but that it was a Liberal government and the Liberal Party that put it in place decades ago.

We have always held the same positions, unlike some other members in the House. We defended supply management, including against President Trump, who wanted to dismantle it when the Conservatives were asking us to give in.

The Speaker: Before I recognize the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, I would like to invite the members for Mirabel and Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier to hold their tongues until they are recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, passing Bill C-282 will be crucial for dairy, poultry and egg farmers. Canada's dairy, egg, chicken, turkey and hatching egg producers have said as much in their open letter.

This is proof that when the Bloc Québécois stands up for what is good for Quebeckers, sometimes it is so good that Canada even wants a piece of the pie. There is a consensus among producers in Quebec and Canada: This is good for everyone.

Will the parties ask the Senate to stop blocking this consensus and pass Bill C-282?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my Bloc Québécois colleague. We are in favour of the supply management system. We want to preserve it. It is very important for protecting the use of our land.

The bill is in the Senate right now. We expect it to be dealt with diligently.

* * *

[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, crime or corruption. You, Mr. Speaker, ruled that the NDP-Liberal government must hand over documents relating to what the Auditor General found was a \$400-million fraud with 186 conflicts of interest. This is at a time when Canadians are having trouble heating, eating and housing themselves.

When will the Liberal government end the cover-up and provide those documents to the RCMP as it should?

● (1445)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to appeal to the member. As a former Crown prosecutor, he knows something about the independence of our institutions.

When the police take action, they do so without political direction or manipulation. The police make decisions. They then go to a court and ask for a search warrant. It is judicially authorized because it has charter protections.

That is something with which the member used to be familiar. I just wish he would educate some of his colleagues about the importance of these safeguards and why they exist in democracies.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the Attorney General, people would almost think the Liberals believe they have a charter right to line the pockets of Liberal insiders. This is at a time when Canadians are lining up at food banks, when people cannot afford their mortgages and when they cannot find a house, yet Liberals line pockets of Liberal insiders. This is so on-brand for Liberals. It is like they are entitled to their entitlements.

When will the Liberal government end the entitlement for Liberal insiders and hand over the documents unredacted so that Canadians and the police can know the truth?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a qualitative difference between providing documents for the purposes of Parliament and providing documents for the purposes of prosecution. The second we cross that line, we need to impose the protections that the charter provides. That is what that document represents. Most Canadians get behind that document, save for my Conservative colleagues.

Oral Questions

The reason why the safeguards are important is because they protect things like privacy and our freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, again, fundamental precepts that the member knows full well because he used to practise in this area. I just wish he could educate his colleagues about why we need to safeguard important charter rights.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The green slush fund is more proof that the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, crime or corruption. They have violated a House order to cover up for their friends. This \$400-million Liberal scandal has paralyzed Parliament, making it impossible to address the Prime Minister's agenda of crime and chaos.

Will the NDP-Liberals end the cover-up and give proof to the police, so Parliament can get working for Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talking about working for Canadians, now Canadians at home are seeing Conservatives blocking a Conservative motion. We live in a parallel world in this place. The Conservatives are blocking their own motion.

What we did, and what we promised to Canadians, was to get to the bottom of this. There will be four independent reports, including the Auditor General and the commissioner of the RCMP. We said that he has all the documents. Not only did the board resign and the CEO resign, the integrity of the foundation has been transferred. We uphold the august standard in the House.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to do more when it comes to the climate crisis, but the Liberals are so deep into the pockets of Canada's worst polluters that they plan to label fossil fuels as sustainable.

The Liberals are caving to the interests of big banks and big oil instead of protecting Canadians. Oil and gas profits are going up, their emissions are going up and they want to greenwash fossil fuels.

Why are the Liberals helping them?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will quote my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. He said, “This is why, as New Democrats, as progressives, as environmentalists, we are in favour of putting a price on pollution. We support taxing carbon, which already happens in the majority of Canadian provinces.”

On this side of the House, we are not caving to pressure and the disinformation campaign by the Conservative Party of Canada. It is unfortunate that the NDP does not seem to be progressive anymore or environmentalists anymore.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are nothing but excuses from the Liberals, including with respect to

abortion. The Liberals are failing to stand up to Conservative premiers because they will not enforce the Canada Health Act, including Alberta's premier, who is leasing hospitals to Covenant Health, which prohibits emergency contraceptives and abortion services. The Women's Health Coalition says that this jeopardizes reproductive rights.

Will the minister stand up to Conservative premiers, enforce the Canada Health Act and uphold abortion care as health care?

● (1450)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, abortion care is health care. Making sure that women have access to abortion services is essential medicine. We believe this on this side of the House and we fight for it every day.

However, let me go a step further. It is also essential that every woman in the country gets access to the contraceptives she needs to have control over her body. If people are against abortion, against contraception and against sexual education, then, I am sorry, they are against women's freedom altogether.

On this side of the House, we are going to make sure every woman gets the sexual and reproductive tools and support that she needs to have true freedom.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, buying a home is one of the biggest decisions that a Canadian can make in his or her lifetime. Unfortunately, high mortgage costs can be barriers to many, particularly the younger generation seeking to purchase their first home.

Our government has made some of the boldest mortgage reform changes in decades to ensure that younger Canadians can turn home buying into a reality.

Could the Minister of Finance explain to the House how the adjustments to the mortgage amortization period will enhance and improve access to homes for thousands of Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener South—Hespeler for giving me the chance to talk about the important measures we have recently announced to help young Canadians achieve their dream of home ownership.

We have announced for first-time home buyers amortization of 30 years and 30-year amortization for all Canadians buying new builds. Not only will this put the dream of home ownership in reach for more young Canadians, it will help get more homes built faster. That is good news for Canadians.

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Act is clear that a minister shall not be involved in the operations of a business while in cabinet.

Text messages indicate that someone named Randy at the minister from Edmonton's shady company was involved in its business operations, including an alleged half-a-million dollar fraud. No one from the company named Randy can be identified except the minister, and everyone knows why.

Will the minister finally fess up and just admit he broke the law?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that, as witnesses go to committee, they need to share information that is asked of them by the committee.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to be in hiding.

The fact is that it is no coincidence that after months of inquiry there is no other Randy who can be identified but the minister. The minister's own business partner even admitted that the only Randy ever connected to the shady company is the minister.

Again, will the minister stand in his place, fess up, admit he broke the law and, better yet, resign?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, if a witness is called before committee, they are expected to provide the information asked of them.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who is Randy? It is a question that has gripped the nation, and we have yet to receive a truthful answer.

Text messages reveal that the Minister of Employment's fraud-ridden business partner was working with Randy to shake down a medical supply company. The text shows that Randy was in Vancouver the same day as the Minister of Employment was there attending a cabinet retreat. The minister denied speaking with his partner. He claimed he did not even have his phone, but now he admits that he did text and call his partner.

Therefore, will the minister stand up and admit that he has been Randy all along?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have stated all along, if a witness is called to committee and asked to provide information, they need to provide that information.

• (1455)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment denied being Randy. He claimed that he had no business dealings with his fraud-ridden business partner. He said that he never even spoke to him in Vancouver while he was at the cabinet retreat. He said it was impossible. However, after handing over his phone to the Ethics Commissioner, he finally admitted that he did text and call his business partner while at the cabinet retreat in Vancouver.

Oral Questions

The minister concealed the truth from Parliament for months and only after getting caught did he admit his actions. Now the Speaker has even found his business partner in contempt of Parliament.

The minister has had all summer to reveal the real Randy. Will he stand up and reveal himself today?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said and reiterate, as a witness is called to committee and is asked to provide information to that committee, we expect they provide that information.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whistle-blowers with the courage to report federal wrongdoing have to wait three years for an investigation not to be completed, but merely started. Imagine how that must deter people from speaking out. Imagine how it damages the public's trust at a time when the federal government is getting itself mired in one scandal after another, like the ArriveCAN or SDTC scandals.

The Public Sector Integrity Commissioner is asking for the resources necessary to process the information reported in a timely manner.

Is the government going to provide those resources right away?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, my office is working with the commissioner's office to address funding concerns.

At the same time, protecting whistle-blowers is one of our government's top priorities. We have made a number of improvements that support disclosures.

Whistle-blowers play a critical role, and we are here for them.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the federal government is implicated in various scandals, 161 complaints from whistle-blowers are on hold. There are 161 complaints related to wrongdoing or wrongful reprisal against whistle-blowers.

The government has to increase the commissioner's budget, but it must also ensure that whistle-blowers are protected. This reminds us that Bill C-290, unanimously passed by the House, has not yet passed the Senate.

Will the government ensure that the commissioner gets both the funding and the legal framework she needs to do her job?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, as I said, my office is working with the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner and her office to respond to these issues.

Oral Questions

We supported the bill that my colleague mentioned. I hope that everyone at the Senate will support it as well. What is more, an external working group is reviewing the amendments to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

We will continue to be there for them.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, crime is up and costs are up. Time is up. The NDP-Liberal carbon tax is driving up the cost of food, adding to an already terrible food insecurity crisis. It has gotten so bad that doctors are being told to be on the lookout for scurvy. Not only are many Canadians gasping at their grocery bills in advance of Thanksgiving dinner, but also our medical professionals are concerned about the return of a centuries-old disease.

How is the Prime Minister so stubbornly convinced of his carbon tax yet so afraid to call an election?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House that what will not help somebody facing food insecurity in this country that is caused by a global crisis and rising food costs is cutting the rebate cheque. That is what the Conservatives would do.

I talked to an individual named Bob today. He is a senior. The Canadian dental care plan just saved him \$3,000 on essential care that he needed. He was talking to me about what that meant for his family and its ability to afford food. That would be cancelled by the Conservatives.

All the Conservatives have are slogans, and we saw what that did: fake lakes, gazebos and rubber cheques. They are going to go from using slogans to try to win an election to using slogans to explain why they are not doing anything for anybody. We are not going to allow that to happen.

• (1500)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while sunny days are over, everyone should be concerned when leading medical publications are raising the alarm bells about scurvy in Canada in 2024. The disease was an issue 400 years ago. The cost of the carbon tax on food pricing is real. Limited access to adequate food caused by the increase is real. Last, the negative effects on the health of Canadians are real.

Will the government axe the tax to lower the cost of food so Canadians can once again enjoy an affordable family Thanksgiving dinner?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know what is back after decades of having been gone? Tuberculosis and measles are back. Misinformation being spread about things like vaccines and about public health is doing insane damage to people.

I will tell the House that if we care about food insecurity in this world, we should be supporting a school food program. If we care about food insecurity, we should be helping lift families up, not giving them empty slogans with nothing behind them.

We face difficult times in this world right now. This requires serious and real conversations. That is what we are centred on and that is what we think about. Those are the solutions we offer.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything is more expensive thanks to the “Liberal Bloc” coalition: housing prices, gas prices but especially food prices, which have spiked by 22% since 2021. Food banks back home in Beauce barely have enough food to meet the needs of families in the region. However, the Bloc Québécois continues to support this government, which has impoverished Quebecers.

Families are struggling and need help immediately. When will the government listen to Canadians and call an election?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleague talks a lot about struggling Canadians and Quebecers. The Conservative leader's response is to punish them, to hurt them by cutting the benefits they need, including dental care for his constituents.

Worse still, the Conservative leader wants to cancel a school food program to help children in elementary schools in his riding who go to school in the morning on an empty stomach. What will the Conservatives do? They will do away with all that because, according to their leader, feeding kids at school is just feeding bureaucracy.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in all of our conversations with researchers and students, there is one thing that everyone agrees on: The solutions to many global problems can be found through science and research.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry inform the House of the work that our government is doing to support our researchers in areas such as climate change and food science?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent work. We all benefit from investments in science and research. Thanks to the work of the Minister of Finance, in the last budget, we invested \$800 million in 24 organizations that are working on the biggest challenges facing the world today.

Everyone is delighted by the fact that, more recently, Canada joined Horizon Europe, the biggest research project in the world. Our young researchers, teachers and students will now be able to work with our colleagues in Europe. Let us seize this opportunity, let us be ambitious and let us make Canada a leader in research and science.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. What else is up? The number of kids needing to use a food bank is up.

The London Food Bank is already helping over 16,000 people every month. More and more post-secondary students are going hungry. Thanksgiving is this weekend and many families will be going without because the cost of the carbon tax is making food too expensive.

If the Prime Minister is so convinced on his carbon tax, why will he not call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all suffer when some of our fellow Canadians are suffering.

We have made some historic investments, including in 2016 when we brought in the Canada child benefit, which is providing support to over 4.3 million families each and every month. An allowance goes in their bank account every month to help with the basics. This is how we are fighting for and supporting Canadian families.

• (1505)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course the Laurentian elites would not understand. They do not know what it is like to be a parent living paycheque to paycheque, trying to feed their family.

Constant NDP-Liberal tax hikes and inflationary spending mean that one million Ontarians had to use a food bank last year because they could not afford to buy food. In Middlesex-London, that means that 23,000 kids are going hungry.

What parents really want is to give their kids a good Thanksgiving, so will the Prime Minister give Canadians what they want and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are focused on fighting for Canadian families. What does that mean? It means making a billion-dollar commitment to families and children across this country to bring forward a school food program that will

Oral Questions

feed over 400,000 children each and every year. We have already seen progress with Newfoundland and Labrador on board with putting it forward in their schools.

I look forward to more provinces and territories signing on so we can ensure that kids have food at school.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government, young Canadians and Quebeckers are suffering. The high cost of living is causing despair across the country.

Some 1.3 million Quebeckers are food insecure and, on top of that, they cannot find work. In a country like Canada, that is shameful. Quebeckers have had enough of this centralizing, inflationary Liberal government but the Bloc Québécois still insists on keeping it in power. It is unbelievable.

Will the “Liberal Bloc” give young Quebeckers a break and stop supporting this Liberal Prime Minister, who is ruthlessly making them poorer?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “ruthlessness” is indeed the Conservative policy for how to treat Quebec families, including in my colleague's riding.

His Conservative leader thinks that helping families whose children go to school on an empty stomach in the morning and feeding them before school starts is bureaucracy. He said it is just bureaucracy. Would he like to invite his Conservative leader to explain to Moisson Kamouraska, for example, in his own riding, why helping children in those schools is just bureaucracy?

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the Conservative prime minister travelled to the World Economic Forum in Davos to announce the plan to raise the retirement age to 67. The Conservative plan, supported by the Leader of the Opposition, would have taken away OAS from one million Canadian seniors who turn 65 this year.

Can the minister of seniors share how the government has defended Canadians' right to retire at 65 and what further supports for seniors are at risk of Conservative cuts?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is chair of our seniors caucus. The Conservatives' World Economic Forum agenda tried to turn Canadians' two best years of retirement into their two worst years of work by raising the retirement age to 67. We reversed it.

Their World Economic Forum wish list would cut our \$1,000-increase to the GIS that helps nearly a million seniors. It would cut rent relief for vulnerable seniors and would kick 2.5 million seniors off the Canadian dental care plan. The World Economic Forum agenda will not pass.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for three years the Liberals have allowed a company in Union Bay to break apart a massive ship in the high tide zone without its being in a self-contained floating dry dock. This is despite objections of the province, local communities and first nations. Nowhere else in the world would this unregulated chaos be allowed to take place. A recent provincial inspection found that the operations are discharging effluent more than 100 times the limit for copper and more than 13 times the limit for zinc.

What will it finally take for the federal government to step in and put an end to dangerous, unregulated ship-breaking?

• (1510)

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, there is a federal responsibility but there is also a provincial responsibility. There is a responsibility to collaborate on every piece of what the member opposite talked about. We are going to continue to uphold our end on the DFO side. We ask the province to do the same.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, today is the first anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel. On that horrific day, Hamas killed over 1,200 people, including eight Canadians, and over 200 were taken hostage. At home, in one year there have been nearly 5,800 incidents of hatred and anti-Semitism, including Samidoun posters today for a Toronto event under the heading “Long live October 7.”

The government's pathetic condemnation of Hamas with no action on domestic pro-Hamas supporters does nothing to end violence and intimidation.

Will the government give up its veiled support for terrorist sympathizers? The safety of our citizens is the only priority.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will agree with one thing the independent member just said: “The safety of our citizens is the only priority.” That is why we have a national action plan to combat hatred. That is why there is a bill on the legislature floor right now, Bill C-63, that would target online radicalization that leads to anti-Semitism.

How does somebody get to the point where they are targeting a Jewish day school, a Jewish day care or a Jewish synagogue? They are radicalized online. The same bill has augmentation of penalties for willful promotion of anti-Semitism, public incitement of hatred and advocating genocide. It is a bill that not every party in the chamber supports, and it is what we need to get behind.

* * *

[Translation]

ATTACK IN ISRAEL

The Speaker: Colleagues, there have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and I believe there is consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the attack in Israel one year ago.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

[English]

The Speaker: Colleagues, as I said during question period, there is a matter to which I would like to return. After reviewing the transcript, in one of his questions the Leader of the Opposition used language that was very similar to language that was found unparliamentary in the past. Earlier this year, a member accused the Leader of the Opposition of pandering to a regime I think most of us would find odious. That member was asked to withdraw that comment.

In his question today, the Leader of the Opposition accused the Minister of Foreign Affairs of something similar. As I have said before, there are ways to make our points without resorting to these types of comments.

I would ask that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw his comment at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

One of the concerns that we have expressed in the past is related to your ruling. We support your statement, and we want to ensure that all members are treated equally and that the leader of the Conservative Party not be allowed to speak until he has actually given a formal apology.

• (1515)

The Speaker: The Chair has already made a declaration. I think that addressed those points. I invite all members, if they have questions, to read that.

The hon. member for Thornhill is seeking unanimous consent.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the first extremely dark anniversary of October 7, 2023, when terrorists carried out the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust.

After consultation with parties, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House:

Unequivocally reaffirms Israel's right to defend itself from terrorists who attack it,

Expresses support for the victims of the October 7th attack, their families and the people of Israel,

Calls for the immediate release of the 101 hostages still being held captive,

Condemns the grotesque rise in antisemitism and hate towards Jews in Canada over the past year, and

Condemns Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist entities which must be eliminated.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On September 26, the Speaker said the following in the House:

The House has clearly ordered the production of certain documents, and that order has clearly not been fully complied with.

You then went on to say that you “cannot come to any other conclusion but to find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established”.

I would like to table the—

The Speaker: I think the hon. member is moving into debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

The House resumed from October 3 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:17 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

• (1530)

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

Routine Proceedings

(Division No. 867)

YEAS

Members

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Aboutaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Alghabra |
| Ali | Allison |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arnold | Arseneault |
| Arya | Ashton |
| Atwin | Bachrach |
| Badawey | Bains |
| Baker | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barron | Barsalou-Duval |
| Battiste | Beaulieu |
| Beech | Bendayan |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Bibeau | Bittle |
| Blair | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blaney |
| Block | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brière |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Cannings |
| Caputo | Carr |
| Carrie | Casey |
| Chagger | Chahal |
| Chambers | Champagne |
| Champoux | Chatel |
| Chen | Chiang |
| Chong | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Collins (Victoria) | Cooper |
| Cormier | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Dalton |
| Damoff | Dance |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Desilets | Desjarlais |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Diab | Doherty |
| Dong | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| El-Khoury | Ellis |
| Epp | Erskine-Smith |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Fast | Ferreri |
| Findlay | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fortin | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Gaheer |
| Gainey | Gallant |
| Garon | Garrison |
| Gaudreau | Gazan |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gerretsen | Gill |
| Gladu | Godin |
| Goodridge | Gould |
| Gourde | Gray |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hallan |
| Hanley | Hardie |
| Hepfner | Hoback |
| Holland | Housefather |

Privilege

Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Jivani	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khanna	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Majumdar
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Sousa

Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
St-Onge	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Vierson
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 327	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]**PRIVILEGE**

ACCESS TO PARLIAMENT HILL

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege arising from some very disturbing events that occurred just outside this place over the weekend.

On Saturday, the Parliamentary Protective Service, which you are responsible for and provide policy direction to, imposed an ideological test for entry onto the grounds of Parliament Hill. According to a video posted online, a visitor is seen being denied access because he was “not a supporter of Palestine” and does “not recognize Palestine as a state”. The visitor, of course, was denied access to Parliament Hill for the sole reason that he did not hold a political opinion considered acceptable to whoever approved this requirement for entry. To my knowledge, that is the first time that access to Parliament has been subjected to a screening of political points of view, at least documented as such.

Parliament is the beating heart of Canadian democracy. It is where Canadians often come to exercise one of the most cherished constitutional rights guaranteed to them under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and freedom of expression. Therefore, to cherry-pick that point of view, as expressed on Parliament Hill, is simply not consistent with Canadian values. It should be made clear that this is in no way directed at the officer, but a question on the policy direction that you, the Speaker, are responsible for.

It should also be made clear that the very fact that anyone cannot access Parliament Hill because of an opinion they hold, or worse that they cannot be trusted to be in the same place as someone who holds an entirely different opinion, is a stain on the state of our country and demonstrates the divisiveness that has been allowed to fester here. This is a country that has seen hate crimes rise 250% since 2015. It is a country that has seen lawlessness and the mob rule our streets. If two groups of people who have opposing views cannot enter at the same time to express those views in one place, what has become of this country?

Conservatives believe that Parliament Hill must be safe and secure while remaining open and accessible to all, including those who are peacefully protesting. All points of view from all Canadians should be heard. That is their constitutional right, regardless of whether those opinions are politically fashionable among the elites.

The litmus test of recognizing a Palestinian state as the key to enter is, in fact, also the position of the Government of Canada and many Canadian allies. I am not sure what that was all about.

Had Conservative members of Parliament sought to access the House of Commons, our place of work, on Saturday, we would have been denied access because we would not or could not have satisfied that ideological test, even though members are free to access the parliamentary precinct. That is a well-established privilege of Parliament.

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 107, explains, “In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.”

Continuing at page 110, Bosc and Gagnon write:

Incidents involving physical obstruction—such as traffic barriers, security cordons and union picket lines either impeding Members’ access to the Parliamentary Precinct or blocking their free movement within the precinct—as well as occurrences of physical assault...have been found to be *prima facie* cases of privilege.

This is also explained in paragraph 15 of the 66th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, tabled April 1999, which states:

One of the privileges of Members of the House of Commons is a right of unimpeded access to Parliament and the parliamentary precincts. Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed... This privilege dates...back to at least the early eighteenth century, and is part of the heritage of all legislative bodies that trace their origins to the British parliamentary tradition. It is based on the pre-eminent right of the House to the attendance and service of its Members. Any obstruction of Members constitutes a breach of privilege and a contempt of the House...

The point was repeated in the same committee's 26th report, tabled in May 2012, which states, “As part of the parliamentary privilege, Members of the House of Commons have the right of unimpeded and unfettered access to the parliamentary precincts, and are entitled to go about their parliamentary duties and functions undisturbed and without any form of interference.”

Joseph Maingot makes the simple point, in his *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, at page 176, that “No impediment should be placed on the Member in going about his parliamentary business, whether in the House, on his way to the House, or while on his way home.” Further down on the same page, he wrote, “Since Parliament Hill has always been a public place, re-

Privilege

stricting the movement of the general public on the grounds would probably be considered excessive.” To punctuate that point, he added footnote 47, which reads, “There was little if any restriction on the grounds of Parliament Hill even during the 1970 October Crisis.”

• (1535)

Shortly following Pierre Trudeau's invocation of the War Measures Act, the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization recommended in its second report, presented to the House in March 1971:

Your Committee believes that the main problem in connection with security in Parliament is to strike a reasonable balance between the importance of allowing the public ready access to the House of Commons on the one hand and the necessity of preserving the security of the House on the other. Your Committee was governed at all times by the belief that Parliament should not be isolated from the people as a result of exaggerated security measures and that it is important in a democratic society that members of Parliament should continue to have direct communication with the public. Consequently your Committee has concluded that whatever security measures are provided...must be reasonable and consistent with the right of the public to come to Parliament... It is not easy to reconcile these two imperatives but your Committee feels that the balance should always be in favour of permitting the public reasonable and proper access to Parliament...without intruding in any obvious way on the undoubted rights of citizens to approach their Parliament.

That sounds like common sense to me. Canadians, who elect us, have a right to come to Parliament and make their voices heard, yet it seems they have been chucked out the window in favour of the shocking news that ideological purity tests are now needed to access Parliament Hill, which is a very high impediment being imposed. Conservative MPs, even some Liberal MPs and many Canadians would fail to pass these ideological tests. Blocking politicians, especially opposition politicians, from accessing the legislature to which they were elected to plainly represent their constituents is undemocratic and unCanadian. It is the sort of thing that dictatorships do.

To be sure, I am not going to lay any blame on the constable who was seen in the video. Indeed, I do not hold any single frontline member of this service responsible. They would have simply been following directions decided much higher up. Conjuring up political ideological tests for accessing Parliament is not something we would expect any single constable to have simply freelanced, so it certainly comes from somewhere.

Subsection 79.52(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act explains:

The Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons are, as the custodians of the powers, privileges, rights and immunities of their respective Houses and of the members of those Houses, responsible for the Service.

You, Mr. Speaker, are responsible for that service. Subsection 79.54(2) of the same act adds:

The Director shall lead the integrated security operations throughout the parliamentary precinct and Parliament Hill under the joint general policy direction of the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Routine Proceedings

Beyond the matter of any policy directions that you may or may not have given, Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that section 79.55 of the act vests responsibility of “physical security services throughout the parliamentary precinct and Parliament Hill”, delivered by the PPS, in the RCMP. In fact, the director of the PPS is required by subsection 79.56(2) of the act to be a member of the RCMP. Subsection 5(1) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act makes quite clear that the Liberal cabinet appoints the RCMP’s top boss, the commissioner, “who, under the direction of the Minister, has the control and management of the Force and all matters connected with the Force.”

At the end of the day, this boils down to one essential question: Was the direction to require the Parliamentary Protective Service to apply a political litmus test to anyone seeking access to Parliament Hill this past weekend a general policy direction that you approved, Mr. Speaker, or was it the direction of the Minister of Public Safety in relation to his control of the RCMP, which is responsible for physical security on the Hill? No matter how we cut it or which Liberal made the decision, ideological tests for political points of view are shocking and unacceptable and are an impediment to members of Parliament, who must have free and ready access to the parliamentary precinct at all times, not to mention all Canadians, who should be able to come to the Hill at all times for all issues.

● (1540)

Should you agree that this is a prima facie case of privilege, I intend to move a motion to refer this matter to the procedure and House affairs committee for investigation. Allowing this issue to be studied in committee would allow key questions to be answered. Who gave the directive? Was it you, Mr. Speaker, or was it the Minister of Public Safety who approved this ideological test for Parliament Hill access? Have ideological tests been approved for Hill access before this time?

These are very important issues and concerns, and Parliament stands for free speech in its very name. The grounds that surround our building ought to stand equally for free speech. They should not be a safe speech bubble for some speech or, even worse, for acceptable speech, nor should they be reserved only for opinions that are shared by the government or elites or are fashionable at the time.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her intervention.

I see that the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on the same matter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, as is our practice, I am asking for consideration to review the blues and potentially come back in the next day or two on this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a similar matter.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, likewise, we would like the opportunity to review this and come back to you in a timely fashion.

The Speaker: I can assure all members, especially the member for Thornhill, who raised this question of privilege, that I look forward to getting back to the House as soon as possible once the other interventions are made.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

* * *

[Translation]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 94(2) of the Access to Information Act and subsection 72(2) of the Privacy Act, the reports of the Chief Electoral Officer on the administration of these acts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

● (1545)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am truly honoured to present in both official languages the 27th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which is entitled “Enduring and Overcoming: The Struggle of the Hazaras in Afghanistan”.

Given the situation in Afghanistan and what the Hazaras are being subjected to, I would truly recommend that every member of the House take the opportunity and the time to read this report by the subcommittee. I want to thank every member.

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

[Translation]

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, an interim report of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency.

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise on behalf of the Conservative members of the committee to offer this supplemental opinion.

This January, the Federal Court made a landmark ruling finding that the Prime Minister’s Liberal government illegally invoked the Emergencies Act and used it to violate Canadians’ most essential constitutional rights to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. The Conservatives believe that the Liberals must answer for the government’s reckless abandonment of the law and the most basic freedoms of all Canadians.

That is why the Conservatives wanted to call several Liberal ministers before our committee to account for their decisions, as well as ordering them to return over the legal opinion that the government claimed to rely upon for its illegal and unconstitutional decisions. Regrettably, efforts for accountability over one of the most serious decisions any government could ever make were frequently resisted by our Liberal colleagues, backed by independent Senators, so that we still have not been able to get to the truth at committee. We fear this could be a foreboding signal of what is to come given our committee's final report.

The decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was unnecessary from the start. The Prime Minister caused this crisis by dividing people. He proceeded to violate the charter and illegally suppress Canadian citizens. Since then, the government has desperately tried to defend its actions, lying to the public by saying that the police asked the government to invoke the act, something the RCMP and the Ottawa police have both denied.

If a Conservative government is elected, we will ensure that the Emergencies Act can never again be used to silence political opposition, because common-sense Conservatives will protect the charter rights of Canadians and unite our country and our people for hope and freedom.

* * *

ADMISSIBILITY OF ROUTINE MOTION

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Chair has been informed that the member for Winnipeg Centre intends to move a motion. The Chair wishes to make a statement concerning the admissibility of the routine motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of the member for Winnipeg Centre, which aims to modify the Debates of June 4, more precisely to replace part of an intervention made by the member for Saskatoon West.

[Translation]

First, let me commend the member for Winnipeg Centre for a novel use of the motion. There may be circumstances under which a motion regarding the correctness of our records would be admissible.

[English]

Members will, however, recall that the Chair was seized on June 6 with a similar request submitted through a question of privilege, which was also raised by the member for Winnipeg Centre. The Chair determined on June 17 that the edited text of the debates, as published, was coherent with the interventions made that day. The Chair therefore considered the matter closed. I believe this is still the case.

[Translation]

To permit this new motion to proceed at this time would be akin to an appeal of the Speaker's decision, which is prohibited pursuant to Standing Order 10. Consequently, the Chair must rule the motion out of order and direct that it be dropped from the Order Paper.

(Motion withdrawn)

Routine Proceedings

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The original interpretation of the Speaker was regarding a question of privilege, and I would submit that this is quite a different thing. The motion that has been submitted is within the framework of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. This is our bible procedurally, and I refer you to page 1229. It states:

It is a long-standing practice of the House that editors of the Debates may exercise judgement as to whether or not changes suggested by Members constitute the correction of an error or a minor alteration. The editors may likewise alter a sentence to render it more readable but may not go so far as to change its meaning.

The motion submitted by the member for Winnipeg Centre, I would submit, is in order because in Standing Order 67, we have the ability to put forward debatable motions that “may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of its authority, the appointment or conduct of its officers, the management of its business, the arrangement of its proceedings, the correctness of its records.”

In terms of both the question of privilege, which we understand the Speaker has ruled on, and the motion itself, I would submit that the motion is clearly in order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Chair has made the ruling. The hon. member has attempted to challenge the Chair at this point, but my decision stands.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the meaning in Hansard was changed. I have spoken to many people in the legal community. They have pointed to the fact that it is troubling if members of Parliament can change legal records when it does not suit their political interests. This is a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This has now become a point of debate. A decision has already been rendered on this matter; therefore, the matter is considered closed.

* * *

PETITIONS

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition from concerned Canadians and constituents about the situation at Via Rail. Particularly, there is a proposed new expansion that is often mistakenly referred to as high-speed rail. People who love Via Rail tend to want to support it, but the proposed high-frequency rail would hand corridor operations to a private operator. The petitioners point out the Windsor-Quebec corridor is the most lucrative part of Via Rail's network and that 70% of Via Rail's revenue comes from these corridor services. The petitioners point out that this would, effectively, gut Via Rail and negatively affect passenger rail service across Canada.

Privilege

The petitioners ask that the section of the high-speed, high-frequency rail project that hands operations and services in the corridor to a private operator be taken out. This part of Crown corporation Via Rail's service radius should not be privatized.

• (1555)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition in which the petitioners call on the government to permanently scrap its expansion of MAID for when mental illness is the sole underlying condition. The petitioners characterize this as reckless. They note that it is impossible to determine whether someone with a mental illness will get better. It is impossible for clinicians to distinguish a rational MAID request from one motivated by suicidal ideation; therefore, this planned expansion would put some of the most vulnerable Canadians' lives at risk.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the anniversary of the brutal terrorist attack against Israel on October 7, I rise to present petition e-4985, in which 2,250 Canadians are calling on the government to stand against the rise of anti-Semitism. Bomb threats, death threats, violence, vandalism against Jewish homes, schools and synagogues and the boycotting of Jewish-owned businesses are causing many Jewish Canadians to experience retraumatization of the Holocaust and to feel unsafe in revealing their Jewish ancestry. Jewish homes, schools, synagogues and businesses must be protected.

The petition calls on the House of Commons to enact urgent public and national security measures in line with the Constitution and the Criminal Code of Canada.

* * *

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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I feel as though there has been a long rain delay and I have cooled off, but I am warmed up and ready to get going again. I know you are new to the chair, Madam Speaker,

from when I first started, and you missed the first few minutes; if you would like me to start over—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member has eight minutes left to finish his speech.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, that is too disappointing. For the members opposite, I will carry on from where I was, so I do not have to repeat some of the stuff we went through at the beginning.

I will remind members that the Auditor General gave SDTC a clean bill of health in 2017. It was only after the Prime Minister's hand-picked Liberal board members were appointed that the fund began voting to give itself absurd amounts of money. In addition, while SDTC ought to have been at arm's length from the government, in practice, it was not. The minister recommended board appointments, and senior officials from the Prime Minister's Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development sat in on every meeting, monitoring the activities of the board. It is simply unbelievable that senior ISED officials who report directly to the Minister of Innovation said nothing while witnessing how millions of dollars was funnelled to companies in which board members held active conflicts of interest.

In response to these damning findings, in June, Conservatives put forward a motion calling on the government to provide documents pertaining to SDTC to the House. The motion included provisions for those documents to be provided to the RCMP so that it could undertake an investigation on whether criminal offences were committed. I will explain why it is necessary for the House to turn over these documents to the RCMP.

As part of her investigation, the Auditor General conducted a governance audit of SDTC. She did not conduct a criminal investigation, which could explain why no criminal intent was identified. The whistle-blower has told the public accounts committee he is confident that, if these documents are turned over to the RCMP, criminal intent will be identified. The SDTC whistle-blower who testified at committee stated:

I think the Auditor General's investigation was more of a cursory review. I don't think the goal and mandate of the Auditor General's office is to actually look into criminality, so I'm not surprised by the fact that they haven't found anything criminal. They're not looking at intent. If their investigation was focused on intent, of course they would find the criminality.

Privilege

A majority of members in the House passed this motion. In response to the motion, many of the Liberal government's departments either refused the House's order or redacted documents that were turned over, citing provisions in the Privacy Act or Access to Information Act. In response to this blatant disregard for the powers and privileges of the House of Commons, the Conservative House leader brought forward a question of privilege, arguing that the rights of parliamentarians had been breached. The Speaker of the House agreed that the House has the unequivocal right to order the production of papers and found that there was a clear case of violation of the privileges of parliamentarians. Conservatives will continue to seek the truth about the \$390 million that has gone to Liberal insiders through this green slush fund. On the other side of the House, the Liberals are opposing the production order for documents to be turned over to the RCMP; it appears that they are not concerned about such a flagrant misuse of funds.

It is shocking and infuriating to me, my colleagues and the great people of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte that the Liberal government feels comfortable wasting hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds and will not even allow an investigation into how or why this corruption occurred under its watch.

The misappropriated funds are tax dollars. They are dollars that the constituents in my riding worked hard to earn. People expect the tax dollars that they remit to the Government of Canada to be used wisely; through this appalling misuse of taxpayer funds, the government has broken the trust of these hard-working Canadians whom I represent. People are right to expect answers from the Liberal government and for the Prime Minister to be held accountable.

I want to remind the House that this is not the only Liberal scandal we have seen in the past nine years, when the Liberal government has been in power. However, it may be the costliest.

I will mention a few other examples. In the early days of the pandemic, the Liberal government tried to shut this place down and give itself unlimited taxing and spending powers without the oversight of Parliament for two whole years. I am thankful that my Conservative colleagues and I stopped this.

We also saw the SNC-Lavalin scandal, in which the Prime Minister pressured the former attorney general and minister of justice, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to give SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement so that the scandal-ridden company executives would not have to go to court and face a trial for their misdeeds. The Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking ethics laws in this case.

We also saw that the Prime Minister was prepared to take the former Speaker of the House to court to prevent the release of the Winnipeg lab documents.

The Prime Minister also prorogued Parliament in the middle of an investigation of the WE Charity scandal to prevent an embarrassing committee investigation from continuing. In this scandal, the Prime Minister gave a \$900-million sole-sourced contract to the company, with which he had close family ties.

• (1600)

The former Liberal finance minister, Bill Morneau, ended up resigning over this scandal when it was revealed that he received a \$47,000 gift from WE Charity to fly his family on a luxury vacation and that his daughter was employed by the company.

The Prime Minister also had several scandals related to his luxurious vacations. In the first, he broke ethics laws when he was flown on a private aircraft to a billionaire island by a registered lobbyist. There was another incident in which the Prime Minister received a \$9,000-a-night gift from a friend, who also happened to be a major donor to his family's foundation. Who can forget the ArriveCAN scandal, in which the Prime Minister gave millions to companies that did no work on an app that did not work. The app actually sent 10,000 Canadians into quarantine by accident.

I mention these incidents because they speak to the broken trust between the Prime Minister and the Canadian public. Time and time again, the Liberal government has shown a careless disregard for ethics laws and for taxpayer money.

Today, we are seeing the same pattern: A scandal occurs, and the Liberal government tries to cover it up. Conservatives will not stop until we get to the truth of this most recent scandal. Each member of the House, regardless of political affiliation, has a duty to ensure that the government is held accountable and that it is spending the money Canadians work so hard to earn in an appropriate manner.

We should not just throw up our hands, sit back and let Liberal insiders line their pockets with Canadian tax dollars. My Conservative colleagues and I are committed to ending this corruption.

I encourage all colleagues, even Liberal members, to stand up and right this wrong. We cannot allow corruption to fester in our government programs and institutions. We must get to the bottom of this issue. The Prime Minister must hand over all documents related to his green slush fund. Canadians deserve answers.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is clear that this is nothing but a game to the Conservative Party of Canada. They are more interested in having an immediate election than they are in what is in the best interests of Canadians, with political parties working together to do tangible things for Canadians.

Privilege

This is an arm's-length organization. We have already established several independent investigations into the issue, one of which is by an independent officer through the Auditor General of Canada. The RCMP is providing comment in regard to the tactic that is being used by the Conservative Party, which has caused a great deal of concern. Most Canadians see the RCMP as a very respectable institution.

To say it is nothing but a political Liberal is just wrong, because Annette Verschuren herself was an adviser to Brian Mulroney and an appointment that Stephen Harper also made at one point.

Canadians deserve better from their official opposition. Why does the Conservative Party continue to play this game?

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, there are no games being played on this side of the floor. We are trying to get to the truth of a horrendous scandal and an egregious violation of the people's rights and the taxpayers' money right now. We have been speaking on this issue for a little over a week.

This could end at any time if the documents were just produced. There is no "if and or". We have said that this will end when the documents are produced. We want to get to the bottom of this situation. Canadians need to know. I need to know. The members and residents from Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte want to know and insist on it. As soon as those documents are produced, we will get on with the important legislation in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary tried to interject again, and I would just ask him to wait until the appropriate moment to do that.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Shefford.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It really caught my attention when he talked about control of the public purse, the nation's finances.

I want to come back to a subject that is near and dear to my heart, and that is Bill C-319, which his party supported. The government is telling us that there is not enough money to increase OAS, a program that helps seniors. How are we to feel when we see so much of taxpayers' money being wasted, when the government could easily spare the 0.57% of the budget, or \$3 billion per year, needed to implement Bill C-319 if it were not wasting so much money?

[*English*]

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, that is a very good point. I am hearing daily when I go out that taxpayers are tight on money right now. They are tired of paying taxes that are being wasted. My hon. colleague down the aisle brings up a great point. This money that was wasted could have been spent in so many better ways. A good example is the bill she brought forward, which Conservatives supported, giving extra money to some seniors.

I agree that things are tough right now. Money is tight. A lot of people are going to food banks. A lot of people are struggling. They are having trouble paying their rent. Canadians are struggling. Liberal cronies and buddies are not struggling. We need to make sure

this ends, return that money, and make sure we are doing our due diligence and the money is being spent wisely. We are obviously seeing and hearing, day in and day out, that it is not right now.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very interested in this issue of accountability and sharing documents. We find in a June 2024 national security and intelligence committee report that foreign agents for the Chinese and Indian governments interfered with the Conservative leadership race. Those documents are redacted, but I am sure the Conservatives know a lot more than they have told the Canadian people, and those documents back up the interviews with Erin O'Toole and with lawyers about interference that led to the guy who is living in Stornoway now.

As such, I am asking my hon. colleague whether the Conservatives are willing to share those documents about foreign interference, because it might explain why the leader of the Conservative Party is unable or unwilling to get national security clearance. What is he trying to hide?

• (1610)

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, on this side of the aisle we are trying to hide nothing whatsoever. We are trying to get to the bottom of scandals and issues that are going on.

Right now, this week, we are talking about the scandal of SDTC, a scandal that has caused hundreds of millions of dollars to go missing. That is what we are talking about. That is what we are trying to get to the bottom of. There are always scandals around Parliament. We are always looking to get to the bottom of everything. We are here to do the right job, but today we are here to talk about the green slush fund, how it has been wasted, where the money has gone, and the cronyism of the Liberals' friends, family and businesses. We need to recoup that money and make sure we are doing the right job in here.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I am always struck by the member for Winnipeg North, who is one of the Liberal attackers of Conservatives in this place. No matter how untenable the Liberal position is, he will put it forward. It really is striking to me that all the Liberals have to do is turn over unredacted documents to get to the bottom of this, and yet they will not. It is a completely untenable position.

What does my colleague think of that? Why do they not just turn over the darn documents?

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, my opinion is that they are trying to hide something. I would like to read again something I have read before, because I think it is very imperative, especially with regard to the question I was just asked.

The statement was from a member of SDTC who was in committee. This is a direct quote: “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.”

I think that quote sums up why we are seeing this lack of openness in the production of documents and why we are seeing a cover-up. Hopefully, we can get those documents. Hopefully, we can find out where the money went. Hopefully, we can recoup the money and get some back for taxpayers. Hopefully, soon we can get back to doing the productive day-to-day work we are sent here to do in passing legislation for the good people of Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is clear that the order we are debating is to see this issue go to the procedure and House affairs committee. That is actually what we are looking for. The Conservative Party brought in the motion, and all we need to do is have that vote: all agree to a vote on division. We can pass it to the committee. The Conservatives are getting what they want.

The issue is whether they are actually violating privileges of other members, because as opposed to allowing that to go through, they, as the member commented, are not going to stop talking until there is unredacted information, something that Harper never provided. Unless we are prepared to do it, they are going to blackmail the House of Commons until that materializes. That seems like it might be a violation of privilege of other members.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, what we are doing is holding the government to account. It was ruled by the Speaker, the Liberal Speaker himself, that these documents must be produced. It is interesting.

I would like to relay a little story—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to correct the hon. member. I am sure he is aware that the Speaker is elected and there is no party attached to the position. I would ask him not to refer to that.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to mention that I was at a large function on Saturday night. A lot of people in my riding, let us be honest, do not pay close attention to what is going on here at Parliament all the time. I could not believe how many people on Saturday night came up to me and were angry. They were upset. They know about the issue that is going on. They want answers, they want to know where the money went and we are here to get those answers for them.

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

I rise today to talk about what has seized Parliament as more information comes out on what is becoming one of the biggest, and most costly to taxpayers, corruption scandals in Canada. There is a possibility it could be criminal. For Canadians watching, I would like to lay out why this debate is so important and how we ended up here. I am here today to discuss the ruling of the Speaker of the House of Commons with regard to the production of documents ordered by the House on the Liberal scandal involving Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, or as it has quickly be-

Privilege

come better known, the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund. This agency was created to invest in innovative, environmentally friendly technologies here in Canada, but under Liberal governance and management, it became a hotbed of corruption.

The reason for the debate today is simple: The Liberals refused to follow the will of Parliament after the Auditor General of Canada, the Ethics Commissioner and whistle-blowers uncovered clear and widespread corruption that favoured Liberal insiders. The issues all began in 2018, when the Liberals pushed out the existing chair of SDTC because he was critical of government legislation. This is another example of how the Liberals do not want independent voices around them. They only want their friends.

The Liberal industry minister at the time, Navdeep Bains, chose to appoint a new chair, an entrepreneur who was already receiving government funding through one of her companies. It was revealed that the Liberals were warned internally of the risks associated with appointing an obviously conflicted chair. They were told that up until that point, the fund had never had a chair with interests in companies receiving funding. The Liberals appointed her anyway. The new chair went on to create an environment where conflicts of interest were tolerated and “managed by board members”. This is as described by the Auditor General.

Board members went on to award SDTC funding to companies in which board members held stock or positions. Liberal minister Bains went on to appoint two other controversial board members who engaged in unethical behaviour in obvious breach of the Conflict of Interest Act by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership stakes. Department officials witnessed 186 conflicts at the board, but they did not intervene.

In January 2021, the current Liberal Minister of Industry replaced Minister Bains. In November 2022, whistle-blowers raised internal concerns with the Auditor General about unethical practices they saw at SDTC. In September 2023, the whistle-blowers took the allegations public, forcing the Liberal industry minister to suspend SDTC funding.

Privilege

In November 2023, the Auditor General started to conduct an audit of the governance of SDTC. Here is how the Auditor General of Canada found Canadian tax dollars were used by the Liberal-appointed members of the SDTC board: Many approved projects were found to be either, one, ineligible for funding; two, a conflict of interest; or, three, both. The Auditor General found that \$58 million went to 10 ineligible projects that, on occasions, could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or development of green technology, and that the Liberal-appointed SDTC board approved \$334 million, over 186 cases, to projects in which board members held a conflict of interest. This is really quite unbelievable.

• (1615)

The Auditor General found that the Liberal minister did not sufficiently monitor the contracts that were given to Liberal ministers. There are a few points I want to make here. The Auditor General gave SDTC a clean bill of health in 2017. It was only after the Prime Minister's hand-picked Liberal board members were appointed that the fund began voting itself absurd amounts of taxpayer dollars. The government will say that SDTC was at arm's length, but SDTC was not at arm's length from the government.

The minister recommends board appointments, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, has senior department officials sitting in every meeting monitoring the activities of the board. It is unbelievable that a senior department official said nothing while witnessing hundreds of millions of dollars being funnelled to companies in which board members held active conflicts of interest. Are the minister, Liberal-appointed board members, and senior government officials all inept, complicit, corrupt or all of the above?

Another point is that as part of their investigation, the Auditor General conducted a governance audit at SDTC. She did not conduct a criminal investigation, which could explain why no criminal intent has been identified so far. However, the whistle-blower has told the public accounts committee that he is confident that if the documents are turned over to the RCMP, criminal intent will be identified.

Is this perhaps the reason the government has redacted documents and refused to turn them over to the RCMP: to prevent criminal intent from being identified? The Liberals touted themselves before the 2015 election, saying that they would be a transparent government. Why are the Liberals fighting so hard to not bring to light what has occurred? How bad is it and what are they trying to hide?

What makes the actions of the board of directors of SDTC so egregious is that when someone receives a Governor in Council appointment, as a person appointed by the government and entrusted to oversee taxpayer money, they are not to personally profit from their work on a committee, as a Governor in Council appointee, and neither is their family. However, that is exactly what happened, from the Liberal-appointed chair to other appointed board members.

In a five-year period, there were 405 transactions approved by the board. The Auditor General sampled 226 transactions, only about half of them, and found that 186 of the 226 transactions were

conflicted. That is 82%, which represents the \$330 million. Statistically speaking, if the Auditor General were to look at all 400 transactions, the rest are probably just as conflicted. The 400 transactions at 82% potentially represent \$832 million of taxpayer money. Is that why the Liberals are so desperate to not turn over unredacted documents to the RCMP?

This is the level of corruption that brings down careers and governments. All of the revelations of what we know so far confirm what Canadians already know about the Liberal government: It is wasteful with the tax dollars of Canadians. Just look at the Prime Minister's lavish vacations, tens of billions in corporate welfare or the arrive scam. The government prefers to reward Liberal insiders at the expense of everyday Canadians.

Currently, Mark "carbon tax" Carney's conflict of interest is skirting his Liberal advisory position. The Auditor General of Canada says the federal government ignored proper contracting policies and was unable to show contracts got value for money when the government awarded \$209 million to contracts to consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

• (1620)

The Liberals present themselves as green crusaders while wasting taxpayer funding on technology that has nothing to do with meeting the parameters of green technologies as laid out to receive government funding. All this is at a time when Canada has slipped to the 62nd place out of 67 ranked countries on the latest climate change performance index.

The Liberals are asleep at the wheel of their own government, allowing corruption, waste and incompetence to fester right under their noses. They continually mismanage files and departments, all at the expense of taxpayers. Multiple ministers across the government have tried to skirt accountability for matters that they are directly responsible for.

The Liberal foreign affairs minister said she was not aware that her department had purchased a \$9-million condo in New York City in a neighbourhood known as Billionaires Row. The Liberal minister of immigration said he was alarmed by the number of foreigners entering Canada on student visas, even though he approved of the numbers.

The former minister responsible for passports did no planning for passport renewals postpandemic, which created absolute chaos at passport offices. She has been promoted now to government House leader. The former Liberal public safety minister said he was outraged after his office was briefed and approved the move of a dangerous Canadian serial killer to a medium-security facility.

Privilege

The minister of industry's response to the Auditor General's report on the green slush fund was given not with clarity but with cover-up. The minister shut the entire agency down, which forced Parliament to step in to ensure that proper authorities could get to the bottom of the corruption. On June 10, the House adopted a motion calling for the production of various documents related to STDC to be turned over to the RCMP for review. It will be up to the RCMP to launch an investigation, but Canadians cannot trust the Liberals to provide the documents to the RCMP, so Parliament ordered them to.

It is a founding pillar of our democracy that Parliament remains sovereign. What the House votes for must happen, and this is what Canadians expect. It is how our system works. However, in response to the motion adopted, government departments either outright refused the House order or substantially redacted documents. Nothing in the House order contemplated redactions. The House has the absolute and unfettered power and authority to order the production of documents. That is not limited by statute; the powers are rooted in the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

The House leader of the official opposition raised a point of privilege in response to the failure to produce documents. He argued that House privilege had been breached due to the failure to comply with the House order. On September 26, the Speaker of the House issued a ruling on the question of privilege raised and found that the privileges of the House had in fact been breached.

The current Liberal Prime Minister once said that sunlight is the best disinfectant. He certainly is not living up to that statement. The Prime Minister clearly has never believed his own statement, as he seeks sought to cover up corruption from the democratic representatives of the House.

This is not the first time that Liberals have tried to deny the will of Parliament. The Liberals prorogued Parliament in the middle of a scandal investigation of the WE Charity issue in order to prevent that investigation from being completed. The Liberals violated the privilege of the House when Parliament explicitly demanded unredacted documents relating to the firing of two scientists at the Winnipeg lab, the National Microbiology Laboratory, reportedly involving national security concerns. The Liberals even took the unprecedented step of suing their own Speaker to block the release of those documents.

Conservatives are the ones who exposed those scandals, and Conservatives will ensure that the Liberals comply with the order of the House to provide the SDTC documents directly to the RCMP and that they are unredacted so they can be investigated properly.

• (1625)

The conclusion of their own Speaker could not have been clearer: "The procedural precedents and authorities are abundantly clear. The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any and all documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties." How will the Liberals choose to respond this time? Will they continue to hold up the work of Parliament by extending the debate into their own violation of House rules when it could be ended immediately by simply providing the documents,

as a majority of the House has requested? Will they drag the office of the Speaker to court once again to delay these matters?

They were forced to drop their lawsuit the last time they did this to try to stop documents from being released, but will they do this to delay information coming to light before an election? Will there be a similar scenario to what happened in 2021, when the Public Health Agency of Canada was found in contempt of Parliament for refusing to hand over documents related to the firing of two high-security virus scientists at Winnipeg's National Microbiology Lab over leaks to the regime of China during their time?

Will the Liberals prorogue Parliament, as has been whispered in the halls, to hold off being accountable for the mismanagement of government? Proroguing would wipe not just the current debate; it would wipe the work of our committees studying serious issues like labour, persons with disabilities and housing. It would destroy legislation not passed. As a reminder, the Liberals prorogued Parliament in 2020 to stop the pressing investigation into the WE Charity scandal.

Over the past nine years, for all the secrecy and the extreme lengths the Liberal government has gone to with attempts to hide information and documents on scandals during their watch, the information always seems to find a way to eventually come to light, whether through access to information requests, through whistleblowers, through arm's-length agencies or through offices like that of the ombudsman, the Ethics Commissioner, the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Auditor General.

If the Liberals do not trust the current Parliament, there is only one solution: a new Parliament after a carbon tax election to let Canadians decide whether the Liberals' wasteful, unethical mismanagement should continue. Canadians can decide whether they want to continue to pay for an ever-increasing carbon tax. Canadians can decide whether they wish to continue with the revolving door of violent repeat offenders, or a return to jail, not bail for those who terrorize our communities with repeat violent crimes. Canadians can decide whether they want to continue to see more money spent on fewer housing starts, or a Conservative plan to build more homes.

Canadians asked Conservatives to clean up the ethical mess of the last Liberal government and its sponsorship scandal. We will not allow another cover-up of waste, fraud and unethical misuse of taxpayers' money by the Liberals. If the Liberals seek to shut out the proper authorities from investigating their scandals, they will only shred the public confidence of Canadians in the government even further.

Privilege

I would like to close with a quote from a whistle-blower that brought forth the situation:

Just as I was always confident that the Auditor General would confirm the financial mismanagement at SDTC, I remain equally confident that the RCMP will substantiate the criminal activities that occurred within the organization.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to emphasize that SDTC was an arm's length organization. It is very important to recognize that fact. If we take a look at the internal investigations that have been done, we see that two of them were within the department. Then there was the Auditor General. There were then hours and hours at the standing committee. Now the RCMP is looking into it.

What we are talking about is redacted information. Every previous prime minister had redacted documents tabled at some point. What is being called for is the blurring of judicial independence, and that has been established through the RCMP's concerns and the Auditor General's concerns.

Does the hon. member not recognize those institutions as strong and healthy? Can she address their concerns? Why does she think—

• (1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, in the member's question, he referred to SDTC as being an arm's-length organization, and it was, in fact, not arm's-length. The board members were appointed through the minister. They were government appointments.

We know how SDTC operated. Senior government officials sat in on its meetings. They were privy to the decisions happening at the board level. They were there observing everything that was going on at the board level. They were not a completely arm's-length organization.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I agree that we need to get to the bottom of what was an egregious violation of basic conflict of interest guidelines. This has been cleaned up now in transferring SDTC operations to the National Research Council.

In a previous speech, I was able to go over the details, so I will try to do this very quickly. I want to talk about what we call “green funds”. Being the leader of the Green Party, spelled with a capital G, I worry about the small-g use of the term. Quite a lot of this money was for technology that benefited some of the Sustainable Development Technology Canada projects done in conjunction with Natural Resources Canada. It included funds going to an unproven technology called carbon capture, utilization and storage, which went to Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Cenovus Energy and Suncor. Some of the large oil sands companies are part of this emerging funding of so-called green technology.

Does that make any difference to my colleague's analysis?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, the Auditor General found that, with SDTC, there were 10 ineligible projects, worth approxi-

mately \$58 million, that could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or development of green technology.

Herein lies the issue: The Auditor General has found 186 incidents of conflict of interest. There was funding going to projects that do not appear to follow the parameters of green technologies. That is actually part of the issue of what happened here.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an egregious use of funds. Just on a basic principle of responsible government, it is appalling. For someone who cares deeply about tackling the climate crisis, I find that it is doubly egregious when it means that the government is not actually tracking whether this money is making a difference.

My concern is that the Conservatives keep putting up speaker after speaker. I would like this to go to committee, so we can hold the government accountable and get to the bottom of this.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is not often I agree with what that particular member says, but on the premise at the very beginning of her question, I do agree with how egregious this was and how funding went to projects that did not meet the parameters. Therein lies the seriousness of this issue.

This was not one or two conflicts of interest, which in itself would be a serious issue. We are talking about 186 conflicts of interest that were found by the Auditor General. The Auditor General did not audit all of the contracts. This was only part of it.

This issue is so massive and so egregious. We have whistle-blowers saying that this needs to be looked at even more because, so far, what they have said has pretty much come to fruition. That is why it is so important that unredacted documents be turned over to the RCMP.

• (1640)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member said that the SDTC abuse was similar to the revolving door for criminals. We have the end the revolving door act for criminals. What would the member suggest for the solution to the revolving door of this dark green money?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, the revolving door act, just as a reminder for the House, was a private member's bill of mine to gain, for individuals who are incarcerated federally, mental health assessments, addiction treatment and recovery in federal penitentiaries to help with recidivism and the revolving door.

Privilege

However, we absolutely have a complete lack of transparency. We have such an obvious and massive amounts of conflict of interest. The extent of this is beyond anything else we have probably seen. This is why this is very important and needs to be taken very seriously, and this is why all of the documents, unredacted, need to be forwarded. They need to be produced by the government, and they need to be forwarded so they can be properly investigated and the RCMP can do its investigative work. The House is not directing the RCMP. This is a matter of turning the documents over so that it can look to see if there are, in fact, criminal elements here.

When we look at the scope of this, when we are looking at the chair and directors of the board taking part in this, it is just absolutely beyond anything that we have seen before.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, right from the very beginning, since the government found out about this, we have been pushing for it. We have been pushing for accountability. We will ensure that there is accountability to the taxpayer, and there is no doubt about that.

The question I have for the member is this: The motion that we are debating, or what the Conservatives proposed, is to see this issue go to the procedures and House affairs committee. The only thing that is stopping it from going to that committee is that the Conservatives have now made the determination that they want to blackmail the rest of the members in the chamber to get the unredacted documents. They will not allow this issue to go to committee, even though that is what they wanted.

Does the member see that they are being obstructionist to their own obstructionist policies? Is there a fear factor of how they can blackmail the rest of the parliamentarians because of their attitude?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, this shows just how unserious the government is taking this. He talks about as soon as the government found out, but this is another example of how the ministers are not overseeing their responsibilities. Everything is a surprise to them. Everything seems to be a surprise. They lack the basic governance and management skills of even overseeing their departments.

Most of the time, they seem like they do not know what is going on. I gave several examples in my intervention of ministers being completely blindsided and completely shocked. This just shows how they are prioritizing other activities rather than actually taking responsibility for what they are responsible for with their mandates and with their departments. This is just another example.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Service of Canada; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Victoria, Financial Institutions.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am both pleased and displeased to take part in this debate. I am pleased because the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent gave me a mandate to be here in the House to defend them. Therefore, every time I rise here, I think first and foremost of those who

gave me that mandate, but I am also seeking to ensure that public funds are managed fairly, transparently and consistently, and above all, to hold the government to account.

Indeed, that is the problem. We are rising today because, for the umpteenth time, this government is having ethics issues, even corruption issues. Worse still, the government is defying an order of the House.

I will quickly lay out the case. On June 10, we submitted a request for the RCMP to gain access to documents concerning a financial scandal. On September 26, the Speaker ruled that since the documents requested had not been properly tabled, the organization had to make the information public.

Here we are again in a situation where an order of the House and the will of parliamentarians are being challenged. The public service is not producing the documents, and it has the full support and backing of the government. What are we talking about? We are talking about a green fund to improve the quality of the air, the quality of life and the quality of the environment in Canada. In that respect, the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, or SDTC, clearly has very good objectives.

The fund allocates \$100 million a year to companies as long as they invest it to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution for all Canadians and improve the quality of the environment. We have no problem with that. When we were in government, we supported that project. The then auditor general audited this Crown corporation in 2017 and gave it a clean bill of health. There were no issues. Unfortunately, people were appointed under this government, and that is when the issues really started.

We are talking about ethical problems. The government appointed managers and members of the board of directors. Through SDTC, these people were giving their own businesses subsidies. This is obviously a conflict of interest. Some might say that they could have left, but that would have been called a revolving door. Had they left the board of directors during a vote, we would have been talking about revolving doors rather than empty chairs, because there were so many of them. Ultimately, if the chairs are empty, perhaps we should fill them with people who are not in a position of conflict of interest.

Unfortunately, this is what was happening for years. It was a modus operandi. When a person is not too sure about something, but they get away with it the first time, the second time and even the tenth time, then it becomes the norm. Unfortunately, that is what we have seen.

First, an anonymous whistle-blower informed the media of problems at SDTC. Immediately, we began asking questions and we brought up the major ethical issues within that organization in the House. We dug a little deeper, talked to people, obtained information, asked questions and did our job as parliamentarians, which led the Auditor General to conduct a proper audit.

Privilege

She combed through all the contracts awarded through the lens of how public funds were managed. We are not talking about criminal activity here. The Auditor General's job was to ensure that the money was managed properly. There was no question of a police investigation at the time. It was simply a financial matter. The Auditor General's findings were terrible for this government, for that organization and for the people who were appointed by this government.

● (1645)

In all, we are talking about 186 situations of direct conflict of interest. We are talking about nearly \$400 million of taxpayer money that was not managed properly. That is a lot of money. Let us get into the details of what this might look like. We are talking about \$58 million that was allocated to 10 ineligible projects, some of which could not even demonstrate an environmental benefit or the development of green technology.

For the past two years, I have had the privilege of being a member of the shadow cabinet. Our leader, the member for Carleton, the leader of the official opposition, honoured me with his confidence by appointing me the shadow minister of the environment and climate change, a position I am very happy with. I have met around 400 environmental groups since I have been here. I am no better than anyone else. I do my job. It is my job to meet people, as it certainly is the case for the Speaker. There is a reason she has been here for some time now. I do not want to be ageist, but it is due to her merits, which is to her credit. As for me, I have been here for 16 years and there is a good reason for that, too.

I was saying that I meet with a lot of environmental groups. I always ask them what they could have done with \$58 million for projects that produce results instead of projects of no demonstrable benefit to the environment or green technology development. They could do a lot with that money. When I want to twist the knife a little more, I tell them about the Volkswagen project in Ontario. I ask them what they could have done to save the planet with the \$18 billion that was given away to a multinational corporation. They came up with quite a few good ideas.

Getting back to the case of SDTC, \$58 million was awarded to 10 ineligible projects, and \$334 million was divvied up in 186 cases to projects in which board members held a conflict of interest. That is exactly what not to do. Some will say that it takes people who know how environmental businesses operate to make decisions about environmental businesses. The instinct is then to pick people from environmental companies, but that is a mistake. That is not how it works, because naturally, an approach like that puts these people in a conflict of interest. That is what the government failed or refused to understand when it appointed these people.

I doubt anyone wakes up in the morning and decides they are going to defraud the system. I tend to assume that people are acting in good faith. It is a bit like what I was saying earlier. The first time, the person might hesitate, but they get away with it. They may do it another 10 times and still not be sure, but they get away with it again. After 186 times, they still may not be sure, but they keep getting away with it.

That is why the people appointed to a board of directors should not be placeholders, as they are called in the industry. Those who

know a little about the world of public administration know that there are quite a few placeholders on boards of directors. This is also true in the world of private administration. People say they are so proud to be appointed to the board of such-and-such a company. They go to meetings two or three times a month. If they are placeholder directors, they spend the required amount of time sitting on a committee and then leave. However, others do a really good job.

I recently met a businessperson who told me that he was very impressed with another businessperson who was a member of his board of directors. He told me that every time that person asked a question it was a "killer question" because it was not easy. Those are people who were appointed based on their skills and their independence, and who are able to make effective decisions that benefit everyone. It is clear that is not what happened at SDTC where they appointed people who were clearly in permanent situations of conflict of interest. The thing to do in that case would be to appoint different people.

Thousands of Canadians know how to run businesses. Institutions, universities train people to do that. A colleague was talking to me about that recently. He told me that he took a course to be a director of a company. Yes, there is a course for that. Yes, people go to school for that. Yes, there is a diploma for that. There are thousands of Canadians who are ready to do this service for the government and who will not be in perpetual conflict of interest, as we have seen.

We are talking about \$58 million that was allocated to projects that did not meet the terms of the contribution agreement. Meanwhile, a public servant said in a telephone call that this was complete incompetence on the part of this government. What is more, in her report, the Auditor General did not go easy on the current Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. She said that he did not sufficiently monitor compliance with the contribution agreements, and we know how that turned out.

● (1650)

That is how we ended up in this mess. Why are we talking about it in the House today? It is because of the issue of documents. As I said in my introduction, we moved a motion that was adopted by a majority here in the House, with the support and assistance of the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. We are very happy about that. We thank them, of course, on behalf of Canadians. A majority of members in the House are demanding that we get to the bottom of this and allow the RCMP to put this organization under police scrutiny to determine exactly what is going on.

Why are we going to such lengths? Of course, it is not easy, but at the same time, it has to be done, because the person who blew the whistle on this situation internally said the following when he appeared before a parliamentary committee:

I don't think the goal and mandate of the Auditor General's office is to actually look into criminality, so I'm not surprised by the fact that they haven't found anything criminal. They're not looking at intent. If their investigation was focused on intent, of course they would find the criminality.

Later on, he said:

Privilege

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.... I know that the federal government, like the minister, has continued saying that there was no criminal intent and nothing was found, but I think the committee would agree that they're not to be trusted on this situation. I would happily agree to whatever the findings are by the RCMP, but I would say that I wouldn't trust that there isn't any criminality unless the RCMP is given full authority to investigate.

The RCMP needs access to all the documents to be able to conduct the investigation. The whistle-blower says that the Auditor General of Canada did not have the mandate to look into criminality, but that if the RCMP conducted a criminal investigation, it would find something. It is not me, the Conservative Party or the opposition members saying that, it is the person who blew the whistle on this scandal that, unfortunately, is tarnishing our country's reputation once again.

We must take action. Let us not forget a very significant quote from the former president and CEO of SDTC, who told the Standing Committee on Technology and Science:

My employee in the government relations lead told the minister's office. Yes, I expressed concern, and I did it at multiple levels. That's my duty, and that's what I did. When the minister then decides to not accept that advice, I have to accept that too.

It is false to claim, as the government did, that it took measures as soon as it was informed. No. The Auditor General says that the current minister did not act as quickly as one would expect from a steward of public funds.

That is why, today, we are asking for the documents so that the RCMP can do its job. In fact, the Speaker was very clear in his ruling on September 26, in which he agreed with the request made by the official opposition, with the support and assistance of the other opposition groups. I quote:

The procedural precedents and authorities are abundantly clear. The House has the undoubted right to order the production of any and all documents from any entity or individual it deems necessary to carry out its duties. Moreover, these powers are a settled matter.... To lend support to the absolute nature of the power to order the production of documents, the House leader of the official opposition relied on the ruling on a question of privilege of April 27, 2010, from Speaker Milliken, centring on the House's right to order documents. He stated in the Debates, at page 2043, the following: "procedural authorities are categorical in repeatedly asserting the powers of the House in ordering the production of documents. No exceptions are made for any category of government documents".

That is where we are right now. We are enforcing the procedure and enforcing our rights and privileges as parliamentarians. We are doing our job. We want to get to the bottom of things, and in order to get to the bottom of things, the RCMP needs access to these documents. That is the point of the proposal, which was supported by the majority of the House. Unfortunately, the government failed to comply and was called to order by the Speaker's ruling of September 26.

• (1655)

This brings back some rather powerful memories for me. I was at the centre of the action when these events occurred. This is not the first time that an entity has sought to withhold documents on a sensitive issue. We all recall the very murky story of the Winnipeg lab.

I remember it quite well, because at that time, I had the great privilege, honour and pleasure of being the House leader of the official opposition. The extraordinarily clever and amiable team at the office of the House leader of the official opposition and I led the charge for truth and transparency. I would remind the House that the Winnipeg lab affair happened right in the middle of the pandemic. Scientists had slipped out of sight overnight. These scientists came from the country ruled by the dictatorship in Beijing, and they also worked with those people. We had a thousand questions about that. We had a duty as parliamentarians to get to the bottom of the matter.

Unfortunately, through its representatives, the Winnipeg lab refused to comply with the order of the House to testify and produce the documents we were requesting. Since they did not comply, in a rare moment in the history of our Parliament, one of the senior officials from the Winnipeg lab was summoned to the entrance of this chamber to be admonished by the House. I did not take that lightly. As a parliamentarian, it is my duty and the duty of us all to take action and get to the bottom of things.

Here we are again today facing the same situation. Our constituents honour us by giving us the mandate to ensure that the taxes Canadians pay are put to proper use. I would remind my colleagues that none of the GST that Canadians paid today will go toward services or programs. All of it will go to support the colossal debt racked up by the current government. I may be digressing a little from this evening's topic of discussion. However, since we are here to talk about public finances, that fact needs to stay front of mind. This scandal broke, and unfortunately, it was only one more in a very long, despicable and sorry list chalked up by this scandal-ridden government.

Everyone remembers WE Charity. Pressure was mounting on the Prime Minister's family and close friends—we are talking about friends of friends and millions of dollars—when Parliament was conveniently prorogued. The member for Carleton, the current Leader of the Opposition, who was the finance critic at the time, had him backed into a corner. The Prime Minister had no other choice because the people at WE Charity were in so much trouble. The only way the government could put an end to the investigation was to prorogue the House. That ended the investigation and marked a fresh start. There was the WE Charity scandal, and then there was ArriveCAN. Hundreds of millions of dollars was spent on that pitiful app, which, in the end, was used for a matter of months. It could have been done at a fraction of the cost.

Privilege

Jody Wilson-Raybould, a great woman, an indigenous woman, was appointed minister of justice and approached the role with the high-mindedness and independence it deserved. She said no to the Prime Minister's partisan demands, so she was thrown under the bus. Unfortunately, she took the health minister with her. Then these people boast about being feminists. Yes, they are feminists in front of the camera, but as soon as they run into trouble, they throw women under the bus.

Nothing like this had ever happened before in the history of Canada, but let us not forget that the current Prime Minister has been rebuked by the Ethics Commissioner twice.

My time is running out. I have so much more to say. I would just add that we are, above all, here for Canadians. Canadians want the truth. Canadians want to know what is being done with their money. That is why, today, we are fighting for all Canadians.

● (1700)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been listening to this debate on a privilege motion for several days.

Some people who are also listening to this debate are saying that several members from several parties agree that the committee should do its job. They are wondering why we have not had a vote. I would like to know if the member can give an answer that does not include a slogan.

Why not vote now so the process can continue?

The member said that these documents are important to the RCMP. Is it only through the House that the RCMP can obtain these documents, or can the RCMP get the documents directly from the relevant department or individuals?

I want the member to—

● (1705)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but time is up.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for her question and congratulate her on the quality of her French. We were both privileged to be elected in 2015, and people can say what they like about the class of 2015, but everyone who was elected then for the first time, regardless of their party, shares a special bond. That is not to denigrate anyone else, of course, but we watched one another arrive here and learned the ropes at the same time.

My colleague asked a very relevant question, but that is what happened. The Liberals were issued an order from the House, and that order was not honoured and respected. That is what the Speaker said.

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, there are precedents that clearly indicate that the House has the power to demand documents. When the order was not respected in the case of the Winnipeg lab, as I am sure my colleague remembers, the head came here to be admonished, or reprimanded. Now here we go again.

Why, then—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. We need to leave time for more questions and comments.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier on, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House asked, as my Liberal colleague just said, why not send the matter to committee as quickly as possible? That is my first question.

My colleague was talking about how redacted documents have become the norm, and so on. We are not dealing with a matter of state, a state secret or a trade secret. We are dealing with conflicts of interest. We simply want people to have all the tools they need to do their job. In a context like that, to be sent redacted documents is completely unacceptable.

My colleague seems like a highly virtuous person, so will he give us his word of honour today that he would table unredacted documents if, by some unfortunate turn of events, he ended up in a situation like this some day?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, this member is another colleague who was elected for the first time in 2015, even though we knew each other before then because he was a member of the Quebec National Assembly. I do not think that we served there at the same time. I think he left in 2007, and I arrived in 2008. In any case, we know each other well and we have served together in committee.

Of course the answer is “yes”. In the event that Canadians were to place their trust in the Conservative Party, members can be sure that, under a Conservative government, led by the member for Carleton, all members, all ministers and, above all, the Prime Minister would be very transparent because we have not spent our time here speaking out against wrongdoing only to commit wrongdoing ourselves, quite the opposite.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I love listening to my Conservative colleagues, who are all shocked and appalled by the old corruption and insider gifts that go back to the rum bottle politics on the Rideau. I certainly remember Nigel Wright and the secret cheques. I remember Mike Duffy, the most unworthy Senate candidate since Caligula appointed his horse. Now we have another example of insiders getting graft and looking after their friends. I say welcome to Ottawa.

If Conservatives are serious about this, why are they filibustering a motion to get this to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs so we can deal with it? We have work to get done in the House. Let us get this motion to PROC; let us investigate this and do what Parliament should do instead of wasting our time with useless speeches about all the shock and horror that Liberals have been bad. My God, they have been bad forever. We have better things to do than go through the lowest hits. I would ask the Conservatives this: Is Dean Del Mastro out of jail yet?

• (1710)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my experienced colleague. Can we say that in English, “experienced colleague”? He has white hair like I do, but maybe not as much.

Let me be clear: We are talking about almost \$400 million of taxpayer money that was not well spent. That is why we are here in this room. As long as we are in this room, and as long as I have the privilege to sit on behalf of the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent, I will fight for transparency and to spend each and every penny correctly, unlike the Liberals have done for the last nine years.

My point is this: Each and every time the member had an occasion to say that he did not trust the Liberals, he voted in favour of them, and today he is talking about that. How can he support or talk about the Liberals like that when, for the last three years, he has supported all the key elements of the policy of the government?

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to share something I heard this weekend when I was canvassing in both the Vaughan—Woodbridge area and the King—Vaughan area. Constituents asked me how we can trust a government that will not release these documents, so that we can report to taxpayers on the inefficiencies that the the Canadian population has suffered under the current government, along with its NDP colleagues.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my newbie colleague, who was elected three years ago. I welcome her. After three years, she is doing a great job. We are very proud of the member.

That is my point. I am sure we hear in each and every part of this country that people are fed up with the government. It is time to move forward. After nine years under the government, we can look at where the country is.

More than ever, unfortunately, we are talking about the mismanagement of taxpayer money and, sometimes, corruption. If we want to go deep, to learn from our mistakes and to see exactly where the mistakes have been made and fix them, we can do so by giving the RCMP access to the documents. The RCMP will do its job.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not plan to partake in this debate, but I want to rise and give the hon. member credit. He is the first Conservative, all term, who has been able to count. He referenced the fact that we were in a confidence and supply agreement for three years. Normally, the Conservatives would like to pretend that it has been nine years. That is not the case. If he followed Hansard correctly and watched what transpired at committee, he would know that it was our interventions that led us to the revelation that the president and the chair

Privilege

of the board were in a conflict of interest. In particular, it was my participation at ETHI.

It was not their work. This is not something they discovered. This is something that the opposition discovered collectively using the committee process, which is exactly what we are trying to do right now.

Will the hon. member allow this to go to committee to do the good work so that all the Conservative backbenchers can finally get a chance to speak?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question and his declaration. They are very important. He used the words “very important” when talking about the opposition. Being the opposition means that we are the loyal opposition of the current government. We have a job to do. We do not work with those guys to draft something, say it is over and that we are going to scratch the deal and then, suddenly, after two weeks and a by-election, bang, we get back to the reality of the Liberal-NDP coalition government.

Each and every time this gentleman, for whom I have a lot of respect and appreciation, has the particular occasion to show or not show support and confidence in the government, he assures the government that it should not be afraid. He is on the government's side, and it will remain in office. The Prime Minister will remain the Prime Minister, the cabinet ministers will remain ministers and the NDP will remain in opposition for life.

• (1715)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, we find ourselves in an incredible mess. I have been around this place for some time, and I can tell members that it is rare for a government to be so blatantly obvious in protecting those who have engaged in outright corruption. One would wonder this: What drives this unbelievable motivation to ensure that the evidence on the corruption that has been uncovered by committee members, followed by the Auditor General and now the RCMP looking into this, is not released? I do not know, but I have known folks who have been guilty and wanted to hide evidence. I am a dad, and I have been there. I asked my son when he was younger, “Kyler, did you eat a cookie that you weren't supposed to?” Well, he immediately backs up and moves into the corner, where there is evidence of the cookie crumbs, trying to hide them. The government reminds me very much of my four-year-old child trying to hide the crumbs, the evidence of the crime.

Privilege

The government has been in power for nine years, and over its nine years, it has engaged in many different things that were found to be corrupt. Obviously, lining the pockets of Liberal insiders has become what the Liberals are known for. What is increasingly devastating is the fact that this behaviour just keeps happening again and again. It seems as though they get caught once and they say, “Well, now we know how to do this, and we will do it a bit better next time. Maybe we can do it in such a way that we don't get caught.”

The Liberals have decided, after having been found out and found guilty for so many different things, that the tools of government should now be used to simply cover the evidence. We have seen this before. We saw it when the Prime Minister was found guilty of having accepted an illegal vacation; there were attempts to cover the evidence. We have seen this time and time again with the government; the Liberals have decided that the best way to defend themselves is by trying to hide the cookie crumbs.

This scandal is unprecedented in recent history. This is \$400 million of taxpayers' money that was handed out. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest, meaning that the people who were doling out the money were in conflict. They would be benefiting themselves personally with the money they were handing out. These people were appointed by and, in many cases, good friends of the Liberal Party. However, rather than saying, “You caught us. We're going to come clean”, now the government says, “We're going to stop at nothing, including ensuring that this institution isn't able to do what it must constitutionally be able to do.” That is to demand the evidence.

This did not just happen in the last number of weeks. As a matter of fact, the government has had some time. All the parties of the House, except for the Liberals, voted to ensure that this documentation, the evidence, would be released to the RCMP.

Now, the government claims that this would be a massive charter violation, which is its new defence. It is completely laughable. Every student of history should know, or does know, that the charter is there to protect Canadians from the government, not to protect the government from Canadians. Canadians deserve, through their Parliament, to be able to demand that evidence be brought forward; that is one of the rights and responsibilities of the House.

• (1720)

Constitutionally, it is our responsibility to hold the government to account on behalf of taxpayers. Our number one job as parliamentarians is to oversee the spending and the misspending of government. Our members found the misappropriation of funds. The Auditor General, having reviewed that, found 186 conflicts of interest, \$400 million that was given to members, Liberal appointees. They gave the money, nearly \$400 million, to companies that those individuals were actually part owners of.

Imagine that. At a time when millions of Canadians are lined up at food banks because of the policies of the Liberal-NDP government, with millions of Canadians unable to feed their kids, individuals who were appointed by the Liberal-NDP government were lining their own pockets to the tune of \$400 million. It is unbelievable. Now the government says that the evidence the Auditor General

found, which the government has in its possession, should not be handed over to the RCMP.

We have talked a lot about the numbers, 186 conflicts of interest and nearly \$400 million that has been handed out inappropriately to line Liberal insiders' pockets. What is startling is that there were just spot audits; there was not a full audit of the program. As a matter of fact, when they went through and just chose individual grants and contributions, they did not even get to half of them. What they found was that 82% of those they reviewed were in conflict and were ineligible, in many cases, to even have the money distributed to those particular programs.

Imagine an 82% failure rate, an 82% corruption rate. Imagine if they had done an audit of the entire program. We would see that the number would have been significantly higher if the entire program had been audited.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I hear the Liberals laughing, chuckling and saying that would not be the case. Well, I wonder whether the hon. member would put that to the test.

The member has all of a sudden lost his tongue. If he actually believed that were false, he would be happily trucking the documents over to the RCMP and saying, “Look through them. We have nothing to hide.” What they have is something to hide. If they did not have anything to hide, they would have already released the documents.

An hon. member: Call the question.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, there is another Liberal member saying, “Call the question.” We will.

What the Liberals so desperately want us to do is to shut up about the corruption scandal.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, they are clapping now because that is exactly what they want. They want us to engage in their cover-up alongside them—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that we will have 10 minutes of questions and comments, so members can participate then. I would just ask them maybe to hold off, just listen and jot down their ideas, their questions or their thoughts until it is the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie has the floor.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, there is clearly incredible unease on the other side.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, the heckling continues. As a matter of fact, I am hearing the Liberals saying that they want to speak to this. I know that they do, because there are backbencher Liberals over there who did not get elected for this to happen. They have no idea why their counterparts in cabinet and the Prime Minister allowed it to happen. They did not get elected so Liberal insiders could sign cheques for themselves in the amount of \$400 million.

What we could not do as a nation with 400 million bucks. That is big money where I come from.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I hear some Liberals say that it is nothing. I do remember when governments worried about every dollar, dime, nickel and penny that was spent to ensure that they got the best return for the people from whom the money had been taken. It is unbelievable that we have now gotten to a point where \$400 million here or a billion dollars there goes into the ether and Canadians live in a more difficult and precarious place than they have in over a decade.

When we look at the stats about the last decade that have been released over the last number of months, we see an incredible story that is heartbreaking to anyone who wants to cheer for this country. The gross domestic product per capita has nearly stagnated over a decade in this country. In the past, Canada's GDP has always kept pace with that of the United States, as our economies are so closely aligned.

We have general commodities that have always been closely aligned to the United States. We have products that they want. They have economies and production of the products that we produce, so there have been a lot of reasons that for nearly a century, our economies have stayed relatively aligned. When theirs goes up, ours goes up, and when theirs goes down, ours goes down. We have always been pretty much linked.

However, over a decade, it has been incredible to watch the stats as our GDP per capita has stagnated while the Americans' has grown by nearly 20%. That has amounted to the average worker in Canada versus the average worker in the United States having a differential of \$20,000 in buying power when all things are considered, including the value of our dollar. There has never been such a spread since the Second World War.

We have not only seen our people being paid less over the last decade, but we have also seen unprecedented growth in the price of our food, housing and utilities, our gas and electricity, in this country. What we have now is a situation where, under the NDP-Liberal government, life has become difficult for everybody.

What the government often likes to say is that there are winners and losers in the economy and we just have to balance it out. However, when we look at the entire size of the pie divided by the number of people who need to eat that pie, everybody's slice in this country has gotten smaller over the last decade—

An hon. member: You are describing capitalism.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, now a member of the NDP is yelling at me, saying that this is capitalism. That is what it

Privilege

is. What is incredible is that it has been under the co-operation with the NDP that we have seen the reduction in the size of the pie and the amount that each person gets to eat. The experiment has gone completely off the rails.

• (1725)

It has been unbelievable to watch the New Democrats agree time and time again, even as they see the evidence of everybody having to live with less. The New Democrats cheer it on and keep supporting it. New Democrats continue to see the people who live within their communities struggle more and more. What the New Democrats have done time and time again is double down. They say, "Tax the people more. Take more from the people who live on limited incomes." What the NDP has been cheerleading for is an increase, a quadrupling, of the carbon tax in this country.

An hon. member: Tax the corporations.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, what is unbelievable is that the hon. member from the NDP is yelling, "Tax the corporations." What is incredible is that the rich are paying less today than they did a decade ago. The average person who has to pay the bills is paying more. Why is everyone paying more and getting less?

It is because of the very few who are getting ahead and getting more. They are the Liberal insiders, the folks who are getting the \$400-million payouts. This is unprecedented in this country. There was a time when Canadians would not stand for that and when their representatives in the House would not stand for it.

However, the New Democrats are claiming that they are there for the small guy. They, number one, endorsed the program of giving massive corporate handouts to large multinational corporations. They have supported that again and again under the government. So much of the money that is being collected in higher taxes is being funnelled here to Ottawa, only to be distributed amongst those people who are most closely connected to the Liberal Party, those who have the greatest lobbyists.

There is \$21 billion of the money being sent to Ottawa on an annual basis that is going to Liberal insiders and consultants in the government. Imagine that. When we talk about \$400 million in the program and the Liberals' refusing to turn over the evidence, having been found guilty of 186 conflicts of interest, as well as the many cases where the individuals who got money were not even eligible for the program, we know that it is just the tip of the iceberg.

It is heartbreaking to watch people struggle from coast to coast. I have heard, time and time again, that people just wonder where the money has gone. They are paying more and getting less. They are working hard and not getting ahead.

We now have the evidence of what was happening. The audit was an administrative one. In 82% of the spot audits that were done, the government was found to be in violation. What has not been done yet is a criminal audit. That is why it is essential that the documentation that the government is withholding from the RCMP be released to the RCMP. If anybody is ever going to be held accountable for theft at this level, it will be because the RCMP was able to do its work.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Privilege

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, the hon. member from the Liberals is yelling, “Let them.” The RCMP cannot do its job if it does not have the evidence, and the government knows that. The government has used the protection of cabinet confidences to keep it out of legal trouble in the past. The Liberals will use whatever tool of government they can possibly use to ensure that the RCMP cannot do its job. That is why Parliament has had to take on the responsibility of ensuring, through the power that is bestowed on us on behalf of our constituents, that the documents be released to the RCMP.

• (1730)

We are not saying to publish them in the newspaper. We are saying to hand them over to the RCMP. I would think a government that believes in institutions would be rushing to do that, unless it had something to hide. We know the Liberals do not believe in institutions. We know they have something to hide. That is why they refuse to let these documents be released.

I believe it is incumbent on us as parliamentarians to take our responsibilities into our hands and demand that the Liberals produce these documents, as the Speaker has ruled, and ensure the RCMP can have them so it can finally do the work of investigating this massive scandal.

• (1735)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have had exchanges in this debate, and a constituent from Waterloo just asked me to ask about Dean Del Mastro, the former Canadian MP who was “convicted of cheating during the 2008 federal election and covering up his crime”, as *The Canadian Press* notes. “He was granted bail...but not before spending a night in jail after being marched to a waiting van wearing handcuffs and leg shackles—TV cameras rolling all the while.” Canadians remember this.

My constituent asked me to put on the record that Vern White, a Conservative senator who spent 25 years in the RCMP and served as the chief of police for the Ottawa Police Service, said, “I was in policing for 32 years, I don’t think I’ve put leg shackles on a person in my life—and I’ve probably done 29 people convicted of murder.” This constituent noted my questions to the Conservative who spoke previously and asked me to repeat the same two questions.

As to my first question, it appears that members from multiple parties definitely want to see a question be called so that PROC can do its work, because the debate does not end here; there is more work to do. Does the member agree that this question of privilege should be referred to PROC?

As to the second question I asked of the Conservative who spoke previously, which my constituent would like repeated, can the RCMP request these documents on its own or is it only through the House of Commons that it can receive them?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: These are important questions, Madam Speaker. Can the RCMP get these documents without the government releasing them? The short answer is no. The RCMP cannot get unredacted documentation, and this is important. The hon. member is shaking her head as if this is news to her. This is exactly why we are here. It is what brought us to this point.

The Speaker has ruled, exactly to this point, that the complete documentation has not been sent over. The reason is that the documents have been redacted, meaning that important evidentiary documentation was not included. The RCMP was not able to receive the full unredacted documentation.

It is interesting that the hon. member talks about politicians walking off in handcuffs. We currently have a member of this House, the Minister of Environment, who was marched off in handcuffs before he entered this place. I think that it is very interesting.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member is heckling me having been reminded of that. It is disappointing to her, and maybe she is learning it for the first time. There is no—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will ask hon. members to not have conversations and sidebars and heckle while someone is trying to answer a question.

The hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, the member for Waterloo is very disappointed by the facts. The fact is—

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I do not need somebody telling me how I feel in this House. I would ask him to stay focused on the debate at hand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would like the hon. member to answer the question so we can go to another one.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, you asked her several times to quit heckling. I assumed she was disappointed with the results.

The fact is that crime is up under the government. As a matter of fact, what is heartbreaking is that more people are not being arrested for the crimes being committed across this country. They should be marched away to prison, not just returned back to the streets. That includes the white-collar crimes that we are seeing so evident in the government.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, but after listening to all this today, I cannot help but think that there is something wrong with the entire federal system. Let me explain. If the government keeps interfering this much in Quebec’s areas of jurisdiction or refuses to grant the transfers requested by Quebec and the provinces, for example in health care, we are headed straight for disaster with the fiscal imbalance, which is plunging Quebec and the provinces into a much more difficult financial situation.

Another question in this debate has to do with what the government is doing with our money. For example, our money is being put into this foundation, which has turned out to be a failure, somewhere our money should not have been invested. The problem is that it has not worked for a long time. I will give an example. From 2002 to 2013, an expert study was conducted on federal interference in the health and social services sector, a sector that is crucial right now and that needs these transfers badly. It was finally proven that, during the years when the Conservatives were in power, 37 federal programs interfered in health care. The government is trying to interfere in certain areas of jurisdiction, but it is not transferring the necessary funds.

I am not sure where this federal system is taking us. Frankly, in recent years, we have seen governments come and go, yet the situation remains problematic. It does not change.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, there is no question that we have seen the most centralizing government under the NDP-Liberals over the last nine years. It has been noted that it is not just the Government of Quebec fighting the government. Again and again, provincial governments across this country have been forced to take the Liberal-NDP government to court. Take the imposition of the carbon tax, which has devastated the futures of so many Canadians. Premiers across the country banded together to fight this intrusion into what should be provincial jurisdiction. It is the imposition of what is very unethical taxation, with massive taxes on those who can least afford it.

My hon. colleague asked where the money goes. Unfortunately, we are finding time and time again that the money is lining the pockets of Liberal insiders. In this case, it is \$400 million, but we know there is \$21 billion going to insider consultants in this city. It is unbelievable. Imagine how much better off we would be if \$21 billion less was collected from the Canadian people. That money could be invested in education, our children's futures and nourishing families. We could be investing in our communities. Consider small businesses and the amount of money they could invest to create employment opportunities and grow communities. It is \$21 billion, and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are all in agreement on this motion and believe in cracking down on Liberal scandals. That was not the opinion of the Conservatives, though, when they were in power.

The member was talking about taxpayers' money. He would be aware of the various scandals, so I just want to mention a few of them that the Conservatives blocked Parliament and committees from ever getting to the bottom of. There was the ETS scandal of \$400 million, the G8 misspending of \$1 billion, the F-35 procurement scandal of untold billions of dollars, the \$2.2 billion for the Phoenix pay system, and the anti-terrorism funding, with no clear paper trail, of \$3.1 billion. That is a lot of taxpayer money, and the Conservatives refused at committee and refused in Parliament to let us get to the bottom of things.

Are the Conservatives now willing to acknowledge that not only did they screw up terribly, but their scandals were atrocious and

Privilege

they should have allowed Parliament and parliamentary committees to get to the bottom of each and every one?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, just because the NDP calls something a scandal does not make it a scandal. What is remarkable—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie has the floor.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the F-35 jets. He claimed that was a scandal because a fund was put forward to study whether it would be the right jet for our Canadian men and women in uniform. The NDP and the Liberals ran election campaigns calling it a scandal, saying that this jet should not be chosen by the Canadian military and our air force. What happened? After the Liberals starved the air force of resources for years, guess which jet they finally purchased. It was the F-35 jet. It gets better. Who supported them in that purchase? It was the NDP. This was so scandalous that the NDP got on board with the Liberals to make the purchase a decade late.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of the people of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry as a Conservative member to speak to the paralysis in which we have found ourselves in the House of Commons over the course of the last week.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I am about 15 seconds into my speech talking about a \$400-million corruption scandal, and the New Democrats are bursting out laughing already. This is—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am shocked that 15 seconds into the member's speech, he is launching vicious personal attacks. I would ask him to withdraw them. If he heard any laughter, it was about the insincerity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is clearly debate, but let us try not to throw accusations at one another.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, the Liberals refusing to provide the RCMP with full access to the documents on their \$400-million green slush fund is funny to the New Democrats and the Liberals. They are laughing and mocking it, a further slap in the face to Canadians.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am not sure we have quorum.

And the count having been taken:

Privilege

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not have quorum. The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

SITTING SUSPENDED

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5:48 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 5:49 p.m.)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We now have quorum.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, does there have to be more than one member in the House from the Conservative Party to have quorum?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order. The hon. member should know that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

• (1750)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals, in addition to their laughing, mocking and heckling again 10 seconds into my speech, are desperate to break up the Conservatives' ability to stand and remind Canadians that here we are—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member accused us of trying to break up his speech when it was the Conservatives who ran like rats out of the chamber to have a quorum call.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to avoid the expression he used and retract it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I apologize for calling the Conservatives rats, Madam Speaker, and withdraw it.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, a Conservative on this side uttered one or two words during some heckles and was shut down quickly. We are hearing a lot of heckles. I would ask that the rules be applied evenly.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We try to apply the rules equally as much as humanly possible.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I am concerned, because when the hon. member began his speech, he made a false claim that the people I represent and the New Democrats were laughing about a serious issue. What we were laughing at was that his own party—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start that debate again.

We are going to allow the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry to conclude his speech.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I will conclude the speech that I was literally 15 seconds into before several Liberal and NDP MPs started laughing, heckling and mocking the very serious subject for which we are here.

To go back, in the points of order by the member for Timmins—James Bay, he notes his constituents. I find it very interesting that

after many years of service, he became so out of touch with his constituents, because he never goes to his riding of Timmins—James Bay, that he decided to retire—

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, that is just so cheap. After 20 years of service, do I have to put up with this guy? Could you ask him to withdraw and apologize? I come here to do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would invite the member to withdraw comments referencing the member's presence in his riding.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, those comments were unbecoming of a member of Parliament, and the member should apologize and withdraw.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member did answer me that they are allowed, even if not necessarily—

An hon. member: I didn't make the rule up. That is the rule we all follow.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): However, it is creating an incredible amount of disruption in the House, and I would invite all members to be very wise in the choice of expressions and words they use while trying to make speeches.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order. It has been asked by the Conservatives that both sides be treated the same. You have asked the member for Winnipeg North to withdraw the comment, and you repeated it to make him say it a second time. You have asked this member to, but I have not heard him do that yet.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It was not an insult, per se. It was an accusation, but it was not an insult.

What did the hon. member for Waterloo ask me?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, you had asked him to withdraw it, and then you had another point of order. Since you have already made that ask, it would only be suitable for members to respect the chair occupant and that he should withdraw—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did invite the hon. member to withdraw the kind of comments that provoke disruption in the House. That is how we judge if they should or should not be withdrawn. I would like the hon. member to make that effort so we can continue with the speeches.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, we need to have some clarity on the language that is allowed or not allowed in the House. The hon. Liberal member—

Privilege

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If I may answer the hon. member, the clarity that is used by the Chairs is, generally, if it causes disruption or not in the House. That is the way we judge, if we ask other members to withdraw comments that cause disruption.

• (1755)

Hon. Mike Lake: On that point, Madam Speaker, can you please clarify the language that you are deeming unparliamentary? I think it is critical right now that we get some clarity. The members on the other end who brought this up caused disruption—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did not call any language unparliamentary; I just said it caused disruption. There is a difference. I asked the hon. member to withdraw the comment because it caused disruption in the House. I did not say any language was unparliamentary.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I think what would be kind of ironic in all of that, as I stood here in the House to speak about this issue, it is not a point of order, it is on the debate itself, in 15 seconds—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I certainly respect the rules, but to make a claim that I do not work for my constituents, I would say that would be a lie, but you would call that unacceptable. You have asked him to withdraw—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are starting into debate. I did make my point to the hon. member, and I did ask him to withdraw the comment that caused the disruption. Yes, I am trying to give him a chance to do it.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, as you have said, after you realized and looked at the comments, and we can clarify with the Table, I did not say anything that was out of order. Again, from a disruption point of view—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will look at the Hansard, and we will come back to the House if necessary, but right now, we are going to continue debate.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I am just seeking clarity on the application of rules. I was asked to withdraw a comment and I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will come back.

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, if I may, I am seeking clarity on the application of the rules so that they are fair. Two weeks ago, I was asked to withdraw a comment; it was later ruled that I did not have to withdraw it. I was unrecognized for half of the day until the Chair came back and said they made a mistake, but I suffered the consequences. This member, you are saying, will not have to suffer a consequence on your order to withdraw—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did not say that. I said we will look at the Hansard and we will come back to the House, if necessary.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I will try again to stand here in the House and make my contribution to the privilege motion to-day regarding the government's \$400-million corruption scandal.

More importantly, the government is so obsessed with denying the RCMP access to all the documents in this major corruption scandal that it is allowing the House to be paralyzed and seized with this issue because it will not provide the documents—

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

This whole issue about the language being used in the House has been going on for three days. We have sat in this House, or wherever we are, listening to this: “corruption, corruption, corruption”. There are members who have talked about something disrupting the House and somebody having to respond to it in a bigger way. When there is continual talk about corruption, the way hon. members are doing, it smears every single one of us in the House.

I would suggest that those kinds of words should not be allowed in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will definitely take it under advisement. I thank the hon. member.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I wish the Liberal member had the same furor and upset that she has about the use of the word “corruption” about having the government provide the RCMP with all of the information and all the documents that this democratically elected House has ordered it to provide.

In the past few days, millions of Canadians have watched the continued stonewalling and blocking by the Liberals. They wonder what price, exactly, the Liberals are willing to pay and why they are doing this, making it so the House has been seized with this issue. Let us make it very clear why we are here debating this motion of privilege. It is because the Liberals were ordered by the House, by a majority of members in this House. The Auditor General found that \$400 million of taxpayers' money was given by Liberal insiders and appointees, in a very incestuous-type conflict of interest scheme they developed over the last number of years, to those who were not eligible or, in 186 cases of conflict of interest, they were giving themselves, where they sit on different boards, a bunch of money.

We said the RCMP is looking at criminal intent in this whole scandal. The RCMP deserves to have full access to all of the documents. The House spoke on June 10 and said the government must produce the documents and give them to the RCMP, so there is no question that the RCMP does not have all the information and all the documents it needs to see, and it can look at the case and determine what exactly is going on when it comes to criminal intent regarding \$400 million of taxpayer money.

Privilege

The fact that the Liberals are so worked up and still stonewalling with respect to providing this information, and that they will give up days of government business, shows us just how out of gas they are when it comes to their own priorities. After nine years, the Liberals are just tired and out of fresh ideas. The Liberals will have the House seized for days on end, making sure the pressure stays on them.

If there was nothing to see here, nothing to hide and no problem, a government with integrity that believes in sunny ways and says it is “open by default” would provide those documents. It makes us truly wonder what is behind the scenes. What has the RCMP not seen that either has not been given by the government or has been heavily redacted? It makes us wonder exactly why the Liberals are so desperate to bring the House to a standstill because they do not want to turn over something.

This is not pocket change, by the way. Today, I have been looking up the context of the magnitude of this latest Liberal scandal, and history is repeating itself. There are parallels with the sponsorship scandal that brought down the last Liberal government 20 years ago. There are incredible similarities and parallels here.

Let us think about this. The Liberal government of the day of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien created a federal fund to help promote the Government of Canada in Quebec after a close call in the 1995 referendum. It had to let Quebecers know what the federal government was doing for them in Ottawa and for national unity, saying, “Yes, we have to do our part. We are proud to be Canadian. We have to have this fund and promote Canadian federalism and the Government of Canada.”

Well, what happened? Who benefited? It was Liberal insiders with millions of dollars in contracts for little to no work, all benefiting Liberal Party insiders and donors. The Gomery commission came in, and this defeated the last Liberal government. This is not denying the fact that a couple of million dollars of stolen taxpayer money, corrupt money, for little to no work is serious. It is.

● (1800)

However, here the Auditor General has found 186 cases of conflict of interest on money that was approved to those who were ineligible, and the total is not a couple million dollars in wrongful bad decisions, but \$400 million. This was all in the name of green technology, the feel-good thing, “Oh it's green technology, we are helping the environment and doing all of these things”. They were helping Liberal insiders, and they got caught.

They hate the fact that we have to talk about this, because it reminds Canadians that things never change with the Liberals. They clearly did not learn from the sponsorship scandal. We can see from the corruption that happened in the last Liberal government, a major reason it was brought down, and what we are seeing here the expression that “Liberals are going to liberal”, which is really what it comes down to.

Here we are in the country today in a brutal economic situation. Housing costs have doubled. The Liberals have doubled our national debt more than any other prime minister and government combined in Canadian history. They have a carbon tax that is driving up the price of gas, the price of food and the price to heat our homes.

Two million visits are made to food banks every month in this country. There were 24 million visits to food banks in Canada in 2024. Forty-seven thousand people have died from opioid-related deaths in this country. More people have now died, under the Liberals' watch in the last nine years, from opioids alone, and their failed approach when it comes to so-called safe supply and tax-paid funded drugs, a lack of rehab and treatment options for people to have redemption and a second chance at life, than all Canadians in the Second World War; that is the magnitude.

However, with all of those issues combined, what are the Liberals obsessed with? It is not coming up with another idea; every one they have had the last nine years has made things worse. They are obsessed with stonewalling, denying accountability and allowing the RCMP to have full access on this massive, multi-hundred-million-dollar scandal and corruption that is going on.

I am sorry if a Liberal member gets upset with me using the word “corruption”, if that is their issue or what triggers them, but this is \$400 million by Liberals appointed by this Liberal government itself. The Liberals appointed these people, and when they got caught and the whistle-blowers started coming forward, they still did not get it. They are still trying to protect the insiders and all of those who stole taxpayers' money, and who were ineligible to receive it.

Another note that is important in this debate for all Canadians to know is that the Liberals say they are looking at it and are coming up with a process to review it, but it has been years now since whistle-blowers came forward. How much of that money has come back to the Canadian treasury? Not a penny; not a dollar. Out of 186 cases, with resignations all over the place, an Auditor General's report and the RCMP confirming that it is under investigation, not a single dollar has been returned to the treasury, which is absurd and tells us everything we need to know after nine years.

I want to share a couple of things here tonight in my contribution to this debate. I think one of the things that we need to understand is the depth and magnitude of the conflicts of interest that were outlined on this situation, verified and confirmed by the independent Auditor General of Canada in the scathing report that we saw. Members can picture this, because this is literally what happened.

Privilege

The Liberals appointed members to the board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC. They put their own members on a board of directors, and they got a bunch of applications in. However, this is 101 of ethics and 101 of conflict of interest. I served in municipal politics, and a declaration of pecuniary interests started off every meeting. We, as members of Parliament, have the Ethics Commissioner. We do our disclosures and our filings, as do members of cabinet, with one under investigation for breaching this because we cannot find the other Randy, but I will put that aside.

• (1805)

We know that if we are involved in or are making a decision on something that gives us a financial benefit, we have to say that we have a conflict of interest. We have to leave the room, we cannot be involved and we cannot sway that decision. We had appointees around a table and they were voting on giving themselves and their own businesses money on multiple occasions, with government officials there overseeing all of this.

A few brave whistle-blowers came by and blew the whistle on all of this. We see the list produced in one of the exhibits in the Auditor General's report, with directors' names that were on the board and the millions of dollars. They are a member of a company, they are a director on the board and they approve funding of \$100,000, \$5 million, \$1.9 million, \$4 million, \$5.3 million, \$2 million, \$4.2 million, 186 times. One of the basics of being on a board is understanding governance and conflict of interest. It was not as if it were a couple of times we did it, nothing to see here, that it was an innocent mistake, because 186 times, \$400 million, is not an accident.

That is why the RCMP needs to have full access to all the documents with no redactions. The House did not say that redactions were allowed. The House did not say to hand over whatever documents they think we might want to see. The irony of all of this is that there is a conflict of interest in this case of conflict of interest. The government under investigation for appointing Liberal insiders to the board is saying that it is going to redact this and that, that maybe we do not need this document and that it is not really sure if we do. It gets to decide.

I cannot say the number of times that I have now spoken in the House and at PROC committee about this. This is like the accused getting to tell the jury members what evidence they get and do not get to see. The government is in a conflict of interest situation. It is under investigation and it gets to be the referee and arbiter of what investigators of the RCMP get to see.

What the House said on June 10 was that the government does not get to decide. Give them everything. Let them have full access to make the determination whether there is criminal intent here. Do not buy it for a second, because I have heard this in the last couple of days: the Liberals said that the Auditor General looked at it, and yes, found some conflicts of interest and some wrongdoing, and that they are trying to get the money back, although no money has been returned yet. They will not give an update. I asked at committee a couple of months ago how much it is thinking about getting back. How many have they reached out to? There is no answer, not a dollar, not an update, nothing.

They are saying that they are going to look after it and to not worry about it, that the Auditor General said there is no criminal intent there. The Auditor General's mandate was not to examine criminal intent; it is the job of the RCMP to do that.

As a Conservative member of Parliament, as a member of Parliament, as a Canadian who is sick and tired of the stonewalling and the waste and Liberal insiders getting ahead as it gets worse off for Canadians, it is tiring. It is tiring to have to keep telling the government to open up the books, to open up the access to law enforcement to investigate and get to the bottom of this. Liberals did not learn 20 years ago in the sponsorship scandal. We are seeing on full display here today, by their laughing and their ridicule at the beginning of my speech, that they still do not take the waste and misuse of taxpayers' money seriously at all. It is shameful. The longer they stonewall and evade accountability, the shorter the runway is getting.

Canadians are going to have their say in a carbon tax election. I would love for that to kick off tonight, tomorrow, the next day or so. We tried within the last couple of weeks. In the course of the last while, it is getting more intense. When I talk to folks in my part of eastern Ontario, and I have visited parts of the GTA and many parts of this great country, people are asking when we are going to have an election, to have a say. They evade that as well.

• (1810)

The Liberals are claiming all the wonderful things they are doing, how great life is, how the carbon tax is no problem and it does not matter and that people insist they want it quadrupled, yet they will not have an election to let Canadians weigh in on it.

After \$400 million has been confirmed as being misused and misappropriated, a circle of Liberal insiders approved money to each other back and forth, and years after whistle-blowers came forward, not a dollar of taxpayer money has been returned.

All we are saying is to let the RCMP fully investigate so it can give an answer to Canadians. If charges of criminal intent are there, it can go through the judicial process. The fact is that we are sitting here and the Liberals are so desperate to avoid that. They will allow this debate to continue for the simple reason that they just will not provide the accountability and the documents.

Privilege

After nine years, after the endless scandals, the endless ethics investigations and convictions, including of the Prime Minister twice, Canadians have had enough. What could end this is just providing the documents. If there is nothing to hide, if there is no criminal intent, if the Liberals did nothing wrong, they should give the RCMP the documents and it will prove that. The government just shrugs because it has been a week without having government business by the NDP-Liberal government. It does not even care right now. It would rather have it highlighted over and again. It is stonewalling accountability. The AG has looked at it. It is time for the—

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are so many areas that I would love to be able to address.

First, let me start off with the so-called Liberal insiders. If the member is not aware he should be aware that the chair of the SDTC, Annette Verschuren, was an adviser to Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper. I understand she was a donor to the Conservative Party. She would not be classified as a Liberal insider.

If we look at what the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie said, which was that the RCMP cannot get the information so we have to get the information for it, let us think about that for a minute. Are we saying that, with respect to any government agency or bureaucrat out there, if there are any issues whatsoever and we want to get information to the RCMP we just go to the Conservative Party and it will just hand over everything unredacted? Talk about a blur of judicial independence. Conservatives do not care what the RCMP and the Auditor General are saying. They are more focused on character assassinations and doing whatever it takes to precipitate an election than they are about Canadians. Shame on them.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I love debating with the member. Some days it is really easy.

He is now saying that, on this side of the House, because we want to expose corruption and make sure that law enforcement in this country has full access to investigate criminal wrongdoings, which in this case is the \$400 million of taxpayer money that was given in conflict of interest cases, how dare the Conservatives do that? I bet the Liberals are guilty on that one. They are trying to block their own investigation into their own wrongdoing.

We are having this debate because the RCMP said that it does not have all the information. It should have it all. The government is blocking it.

Let us think about this for context. We talk about history repeating itself. I mentioned the sponsorship scandal in the previous Liberal government. Let us go to the current Prime Minister and SNC-Lavalin and the number of times we have heard from the RCMP that it closed the investigation without laying charges because it did not have all the information. The Prime Minister refused to waive

certain confidences he hid behind in the situation with himself, Jody Wilson-Raybould and SNC-Lavalin.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are in a situation where the whole House has said that this issue is serious so let us send it to PROC. The Conservatives have decided to stop the work of Parliament so they can carry on about all the Liberal crimes through the years, which is all based on not having memory.

I remember Brian Mulroney, who accepted cash in a paper bag in a hotel room. The great parliamentarian Pat Martin told him that Hell's Angels and drug dealers accept money in a hotel room in a brown paper bag, but former prime ministers do not. The reason I mention Brian Mulroney is we have now learned that Stephen Harper hit the taxpayers up for CERB payments. We know how the Conservatives hated CERB. They did not think that people who could not work should be given any help. The CERB was there for waitresses and maintenance workers, not Stephen Harper. Here is what Harper and Associates claims he offers, the “insight of a G-7 Leader to create value for clients.”

Do members think this grifter deserved money to survive the pandemic on the pension that he gets? I would like to ask the hon. member about the attacks the Conservatives waged against people during the—

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, here is the interesting thing about the member for Timmins—James Bay—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, they yell and heckle in an attempt to distract here.

We are talking about this case and the RCMP having full access to documents on a scandal of the magnitude of \$400 million. Here is the thing the NDP says, and again, it is so typical. Over the course of the last couple of years, we have found out about this through committee work. This issue has already been discussed, and it is the digging on the part of the Conservatives that has gotten the information.

We called for the Auditor General to come in to do an audit and take a look at this issue, which produced a report. We have had public accounts, government operations, the ethics committee, opposition day motions, debates, and an Auditor General's report to discuss this. It is so NDP to back the Liberals up and say, “No, they don't have to produce it. Don't worry. Let's just send this to another committee.” This is not a committee to produce the documents, but to talk about it and study it.

Privilege

I am going to argue that Canadians are done talking. Canadians are done studying and thinking about it. Canadians do not want the Liberals, just as we have heard here, being propped up by the NDP, trying to make every excuse in the book while talking about the issue. I ask them to just give all the documents to the RCMP so it can do a full investigation. The NDP and that member have lost their way if they are thinking otherwise.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned ad scam, the sponsorship scandal, and back then they still could not find \$40 million after the Gomery inquiry. We had a gentleman who used to stand up every day asking, “Where is the \$40 million?” Now there is \$400 million missing, that we know of. That was what happened with that \$40 million during the last decade of darkness. Now, we have had almost another decade of darkness, and there is \$400 million.

On that trajectory, should the Canadian people ever make the mistake of putting a government such as the Liberal-NDP coalition in place again, what level of corruption can we expect at that time?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, there was \$40 million in the sponsorship scandal, and there is \$400 million in their latest scandal. Inflation has been pretty bad, but I would argue that that is pretty excessive. It is ten times the size it was for the sponsorship scandal.

We can think of the outrage that Canadians had when that money went missing, and fast-forward to the next Liberal government, we now have \$400 million. The Liberals never, ever learned. That is baked into their history and their entitlement.

The NDP, though, is the party that really frustrates me because its members pretend to be in opposition and that they are so sick of the corporate insiders, yet they are the ones, for the last three years, who have backed them up, including voting for the very program now under criminal investigation.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the member opposite has himself mis-spoken. He said that the Prime Minister was hiding behind cabinet confidence in the case of Jody Wilson-Raybould and SNC-Lavalin. The cabinet specifically waived all cabinet confidences in relation to that matter to allow necessary witnesses to speak to it. I also recall reading the Gomery report, which concluded that there was no malfeasance and no wrongdoing on behalf of any cabinet minister at that time.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, the member can defend and say that, at SNC-Lavalin, there was nothing to see. The RCMP made it very clear that its investigation closed and that it did not have access to everything that it wanted to see to do a full-scale investigation of that issue. That is the bottom line, and that is what happened.

Here we are again in a massive corruption and spending scandal where the Liberals are stonewalling and pretending to be the ones who should have the right to decide what the RCMP sees. If the Liberals are so upset about the misspending, if they are so upset about the 186 cases and the \$390 million for conflict of interest cases alone, they should give all of the documents, unredacted for full

access, to the RCMP so it can investigate. If somebody did wrong, they should see the consequences.

• (1825)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are supporting the motion because we do not believe in supporting Liberal corruption, but we do not support Conservative corruption either. The most corrupt government in Canadian history, the worst financial manager in Canadian history, was the Harper regime. It was unbelievably bad. At no point did Conservatives ever allow any investigation into the massive scandals, the insider trading, of the Conservative corruption that we saw over a number of years.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, of course, Conservatives laugh at this. They laugh at corruption. They laugh when insiders in the Conservative Party get their benefits. We certainly have seen how lobbyists have taken over the Conservative national executive and their campaign organization, so good luck with any grocery food price gouging ending because the Conservatives are embedded with lobbyists.

I wanted to ask my colleague about this. The ATS scandal was \$400 million. Conservatives blocked any investigation. The G8 misspending was a billion dollars, and they shut down any inquiry. The Phoenix pay system cost Canadian taxpayers, under the Conservatives, \$2.2 billion, and Conservatives refused any investigation. There was also \$3.1 billion in anti-terrorism funding that had no paper trail, and Conservatives shut down the investigation.

The question is very simple: Do Conservatives apologize for all of their corruption and misspending during the Harper regime?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I had to check the seating chart to make sure it was a member of the NDP criticizing anybody else after they voted confidence in this out-of-touch and tired government after nine years.

The \$400 million under investigation, they voted for it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe the member for Humber River—Black Creek provided the title for this speech: “Corruption, corruption, corruption”. The member for Edmonton Griesbach gave the theme and the reason behind the whole debate, and that is to pay for the consequences of bad actions.

I am pleased to rise on behalf of the industrious and innovating residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Today we are debating a very important motion. The motion would direct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study the government's cover-up of the corruption at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. There is really not much actually up for debate. The facts are clear and well established.

Privilege

The former head of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC for short, told the government that appointing a person who had received money from SDTC to be chair of the board was a bad idea. The government ignored the advice and appointed the Liberal donor anyhow. Then, to absolutely no one's surprise, the board members started handing out grants to companies they had a stake in. Naturally, the employees at SDTC started to feel uncomfortable with the actions of the board. These employees carefully documented the conflicts of interest and followed the proper procedures for reporting to the ministry responsible for SDTC. These employees followed the rules and were granted a meeting with the deputy minister. The employees explained the situation. The deputy minister said it was worse than the sponsorship scandal ad scam. He said that the minister would flip his lid.

Unfortunately, the deputy minister had placed too much faith in the minister. Rather than flipping his lid, the minister tried to put the lid on it. Of course the government wants to cover it up. It was explicitly, directly and clearly warned that appointing this particular Liberal donor to be the board chair was a problem. The government ignored not only the warning lights, but also the warning signs and the warning bells. The Liberals ignored all of it and appointed even more compromised people to the board. That is like warning a bartender to stop selling drinks to minors, and then he starts giving them away for free. According to the Auditor General, this involved at least \$400 million of taxpayers' money and 186 conflicts of interest, that we know of.

As I mentioned, this is not really a debate. Those are already the established facts, just like the ruling that the Speaker issued finding the Liberals had violated an order from the House to hand over the documents to the RCMP.

Now the Liberals' junior partner is complaining that all of this is distracting the government from pursuing its socialist agenda. Once again, the NDP is revealing that it does not understand that the role of Parliament is to hold the government accountable. This is our number one job, and it is not just for opposition members. Every member not in cabinet is supposed to hold the government to account. Maybe if the Liberal backbench spent more time doing that and less time spreading conspiracy theories about hidden agendas on social media, the government might not be so badly out of touch.

This motion is not distracting Parliament from its work. This is its work. If the issue were getting legislation passed, then the Liberal cover-up and Liberal corruption are the problem. That, and the NDP enablers. Enabling this corruption is the problem. Not pulling it out at the roots is the problem. Liberal corruption and incompetence is the real problem, and it impacts the lives of Canadians just as much as, if not more, than any single piece of legislation before the House.

The founder of an exciting technology company in my riding has informed me that he may have to move his company to the United States. He will be taking the high-tech jobs it created with them. There we have collateral damage. How much of that was lost that we know of? We have a productivity crisis that is making Canadians poorer every day, yet the NDP socialist coalition is driving away exactly the types of companies we need to tackle this crisis.

The government has spent the last nine years piling straw onto the backs of small and medium-sized business. However, for a particular company in my riding, it was SDTC.

● (1830)

This is why holding the government accountable is so critical. Liberal corruption and incompetence will cost people their livelihoods. It does not matter if someone is 80 kilometres from Ottawa or 800 kilometres. Decisions made here have an impact out there. The Liberals decided to appoint a donor to be the chair of the SDTC down here, and hundreds of jobs are lost out there.

The only person who should have lost his job over the scandal at SDTC is the Liberal minister, whose lid remains firmly unflipped. I can see that calling for a Liberal minister to resign is being met with eye rolls across the aisle, and I know that when Liberals hear a Conservative calling for a minister to resign, they will just dismiss it. They think we are just trying to score points because that is, to them, the point of a parliamentary democracy.

When a government makes a mistake, our job is to point it out. When something goes wrong in a department, the minister is supposed to resign. That way, a new minister can come in and clean house. Not only that, but the new minister is also strongly incentivized to keep a close eye on what is going on in their department, yet I would not wager a single current minister even knows half the programs being run underneath them.

Jean Chrétien tried to kill the idea of responsible government in our country, but the Prime Minister, with his outspoken admiration of communist dictators, took it off life support and smothered it with a pillow. Common-sense Conservatives will resurrect it. We will restore democracy, responsibility and accountability, and those are not just sound bites.

As I mentioned earlier, this scandal has nothing to do with any of my constituents, yet some of them are paying the price for it. Had there been a minister who listened to the advice of the outgoing SDTC president, none of this would have happened. Good governance is good politics.

By demanding the accountability of our ministers, Conservatives get quality ministers. Better ministers are better at passing Conservative legislation and advancing Conservative policies. Bad governance is bad politics, and this motion is all the proof the Liberals need.

Privilege

None of this would be happening if the minister had done as his deputy predicted and flipped his lid. Everything that transpired at SDTC was not just predictable. It was actually predicted. This is a troubling pattern with these progressives. They are warned that their bad policy will have a predictably bad consequence, and then they accuse the policy critics of spreading disinformation.

They pass the policy, and it goes exactly as miserably as predicted, so they start to gaslight Canadians. Whether it is the streaming censorship act, the news censorship act or the hug-a-thug act, the results are playing out as the critics expected. Less news means less choice, and more crime means more chaos.

Now, thanks to Liberal corruption and incompetence, Canada will have less sustainably developed technology, the kind of technology that saves lives and boosts productivity, developed by the kinds of companies that create jobs and pay the taxes Liberals love to spend. Instead, after nine long, scandal-filled years, all Canada has is more corruption, more debt, more taxes and more crime. Thanks to the carbon tax pushing up the price of food, Canada now has more scurvy too, yet all we hear from the Liberals is that everything is awesome. That may be true for the shrinking Liberal base of support, but for the rest of us, things are far more awful than awesome.

• (1835)

The motion is a chance for the Liberals to turn their sinking ship around. Liberals will ignore this advice, but a little humility goes a long way with Canadians. They can turn over the documents, sack the minister and apologize to Canadians. That is just common sense.

While I promised to be brief, there is one more element to this story. Regular viewers of my Facebook Live streams may recall this from last June. To recap, SDTC gives grants and loans to companies developing green technologies. The Liberals had ignored advice from public servants warning them not to appoint Annette Verschuren as chair of the board of directors, because Ms. Verschuren owned a company that was getting funding from SDTC. Despite the warnings to the Liberals, she was appointed as chair. Shortly afterward, Ms. Verschuren voted to give her company additional money. She was not the only board member who was in a conflict of interest.

Fortunately, employees blew the whistle. The Liberals tried to sweep it under the table, but eventually it was reported to The Globe and Mail. The CBC did several stories on the issue, and it resulted in parliamentary hearings. Ms. Verschuren appeared at the committee, claimed she did nothing wrong and then resigned a few weeks later.

If we search Google, we can find dozens of media stories reporting all the details over several months. The Liberals appointed someone to lead an organization that hands out taxpayer money, and that person gave money to her own business in an obvious conflict of interest. The legacy news media gave it appropriate coverage, Parliament investigated and the Liberal appointee resigned.

The legacy media like to point to this type of reporting and argue that exposing this type of corruption is why the legacy news media is a pillar of democracy and, therefore, should receive taxpayer-

funded subsidies. The Liberals listened and have created a whole new slew of funding programs for legacy news media. One of those programs is the local journalism initiative. It gives media outlets money to hire a local journalist. The program is run by the news media lobbyists. The lobbyists selected a panel of seven people to be the judges on who gets the taxpayers' money. The judging panel reviews applications, selects recipients and decides on funding allocations. Of the seven judges, five are in blatant conflict of interest for having approved funding for their own media outlets.

For example, one of the judges, Linda Solomon Wood, is the CEO and editor-in-chief of the National Observer. The National Observer received funding to hire three journalists. Most outlets only received funding for one journalist. Just as with SDTC, we have a group of people in charge of handing out taxpayer money, and these people are giving that money to their own companies. We have identical scandals, but just one news outlet has ever mentioned it. This is Blacklock's Reporter.

The entire legacy media has dropped a cone of silence over this scandal. The reason they are all covering up the Liberal corruption is that, even if they do not receive money from the program, they can profit from it. Part of the program requires that all the taxpayer-provided journalists must share their reporting for free. News outlets can access the database of free articles through the radical far-left outfit called The Canadian Press. By the way, one of the seven judges is also the executive director of The Canadian Press.

• (1840)

Now the government has released an evaluation of the local journalism initiative. The Liberals give themselves an A plus, but that is what happens when we hire our evaluators. More outside consultants were hired by Canadian Heritage's evaluation directorate to evaluate how well the government is doing at giving away taxpayer money to well-connected special interests. Surprisingly, the people getting the government money think Liberals are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member.

Having reached the expiry of the time provided for today's debate, the House will resume consideration on the privilege motion at the next sitting of the House.

*Concurrence in Committee Reports***CONCURRENCE IN COMMITTEE REPORTS***[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of the good constituents of Edmonton Griesbach; like many of my colleagues, they are being ravaged by a very dangerous but predictable housing crisis. I say “predictable” because this is a crisis that was in the making.

The Auditor General's report makes clear several times over that there are serious issues relative to the national housing strategy in its current rendition, but how did we get here? This is an important piece of our dilemma today, and I will speak about it.

We had consecutive federal governments from the 1980s to the 1990s, Liberal and Conservative, that largely pulled out of new affordable housing. For example, the national housing strategy was cancelled in 1993 by then prime minister Paul Martin. What are the implications of that loss? Nearly \$2 billion annually was cut from that period of time to today. The pure capital infrastructure deficit has now been downloaded, in the Liberals' own admission, to the provinces. They say it is provincial jurisdiction.

However, it has not always been that way. It is certainly not the history of Canada, and it is not the history that many who found affordable housing after World War II or who found co-op homes during the 1970s and 1980s remember. They remember a federal government, and two of our earlier predecessors, to their credit, that were able to see something. They saw that an economy with only market housing would result in those who could not afford a home becoming homeless. What a shame it is that we could have predicted such a terrible crisis as far back as 1993.

I think some of my colleagues will find some humour in this, but there were two things that happened in 1993. One was the cancelling of the nearly \$2 billion of annual revenue for the national housing program that had seen people getting into homes, whether co-ops or non-market homes. We saw that happen. The second thing is that I was actually born in 1993. What a reality, to have experienced a federal government that does not want to get into the business of housing for my entire lifetime. What a shame to be a student of history to then be born and learn of the fact that many in this place could easily recall what happened in 1993. I have great colleagues in this place, from all sides, who remind me of that history all the time. However, I think what we are unanimous about, something that we all agree on, is that the federal government has a place in national housing.

The Auditor General said some damning things that are worth noting. The report on public accounts, which was published and released in November 2023, suggested that “Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC] did not know whether their efforts to prevent and reduce chronic homelessness were leading to improved outcomes”. In addition, “Canada

Mortgage and Housing Corporation did not know who was benefiting from its initiatives”. It went on to suggest, “There was minimal federal accountability for [reaching] the National Housing Strategy target to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by the 2027–28 fiscal year.” However, we do not know whether the investments that are made under the current national housing strategy will actually have an impact on the number of people experiencing homelessness. This is a real shame because we are seeing significant growth across the country.

CMHC's definition of “affordable housing” as 80% of the market rate is different from the government's recommendation of spending no more than 30% of income on housing. With rent soaring, this is increasingly difficult for many people. These are serious problems that are resulting in really serious issues. When we do not take seriously our lack of ability to plan or foresee this crisis, of course there is going to be a gap. As I mentioned, the crisis originated as early as 1993, with the cancelling of the national housing program. Non-market and other social housing initiatives have seen nearly \$2 billion of revenue lost annually. Of course we could have predicted this.

There are statistics from StatsCan, for example. I will back up a little just to describe exactly who this is affecting. According to a point-in-time report from 59 communities, on any given night, based on 2021 data, 32,000 people experience homelessness. This is a 12% increase since 2018, which should break all of our hearts.

If we can be unanimous in the House when it comes to ending homelessness, it is truly achievable. However, it takes a real effort to understand how we got here, as well as an incredible effort to understand that we have to go beyond some of the very partisan pontification that often happens in this place, when we have the solutions in front of us.

• (1845)

The great thing about the Auditor General's office and about the public accounts committee is that there is not a group of members from the chamber relegating or creating recommendations. It is the Auditor General, who has an immense staff, immense capability and immense integrity, and is not only able to review the information presented to Canadians, like the statistics I just mentioned, but has also offered real, credible solutions, like fair reporting, that can fix some of the issues.

Imagine if we just reported fairly on the investments by CMHC toward the real number of people who are experiencing homelessness according to the census versus the data that cities collect, for example. The data is non-aggregated. The data is really difficult for a lot of the people who are working in this space to actually find a target, but we do know the number is increasing. On top of all of that, indigenous people represent nearly 30% of people who experience homelessness each night, despite being just 5% of the general population.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

This is a point that personally touches me. I had a relative who has passed on now; in 2019 he died on the streets of Edmonton because he did not have housing. He was a very good person. Many times, people would walk by him on the streets. When I would go to assist him, I would ask him what was wrong and whether he needed anything, whether I could get him something and whether he wanted a place to stay.

He would respond by saying that he needed to help the people in his community, that he needed to help the people living on the streets. He said that a lot of them are young people, that we need them to know that we care about them, that they have relatives and that they know they must have a chance to be seen as human.

He did that work, but we need governments to do that work now. We need governments to see homeless individuals as real human beings. Housing is a human right. New Democrats have been consistent in our message that there are rights, there are needs and there are wants. Let us leave the wants of Canadians up to the market. Does someone want an Xbox? Sure, the free market should deal with an Xbox. I do not care. New Democrats support that.

However, what we do not support is when one treats a home, food and water like commodities. Every single one of us needs those things. A person cannot ever get a job if they do not have food, if they do not have water and if they do not have shelter. These are some of the basic organizing principles of any country. Look after one another.

Let us look after the people in our communities so they may be able to fulfill the deep dreams they have, which I know so many do, and so they can contribute to our country. Imagine if the cure for cancer lived in the heart and the mind of someone who was homeless. To know that we could not have the ability and a social safety net to pick them up and make sure they could contribute to our great country is a real shame.

I want to share the story of one of my constituents, named Margaret, who grew up in the Rat Creek neighbourhood in Edmonton Griesbach. She is nearly 95 years old. She came from the Netherlands just after World War II. She married a very brave and noble soldier from Edmonton. After the war, she came to Edmonton, Alberta. However, they did not have a home. They found themselves living in the basement, with her husband's brother and his family, of the family home that he had grown up in. It was overcrowded.

At that time, there was an unprecedented growth in Canada's population. There was a boom, which resulted in the many baby boomers whom we call our parents and our grandparents. It was a generation that had to suffer, very early on, a very traumatic housing crisis. However, the government did not relent and say it was a jurisdictional problem for the provinces. It did not say people should work a little harder to make more money because they cannot afford a home. The government said it would make the conditions possible so people could have a home. This was the post-war housing corporation.

Many may not be familiar with this anymore. The post-war housing corporation was tasked with building the homes, before the war, that soldiers required. This was so that, whether they were on military bases or otherwise, their lives could be sustainable and they

could have the means and fulfill the requirements to train on a military base. After the war, these brave soldiers came back and had no homes, and the government created the post-war housing corporation.

The post-war housing corporation was tasked with building thousands of homes, particularly in my community of Edmonton Griesbach, where Margaret, who was living in the basement of her in-laws' house, feared she would never have a house of her own. She was able to meet with me some months ago, and she recounted a story that I think would inspire many of those people who are hoping to one day have a home too.

Margaret found that the post-war housing corporation was able to build thousands of bungalow units across Edmonton, beautiful little homes that everyone cherishes. They are a mausoleum to our history, to our co-operation and to what it means to live a good life, a humble life and one where we take care of each other. She was able to spend \$50 a month buying the house from the government, with a down payment of \$500. Imagine how incredible that opportunity was for her.

Margaret quickly moved from being in the position of not having any hope to being able to move into a home quickly. She had four children and a loving husband. She and her husband lived right into their golden years, and she still lives in that home today. That was all because the government acted. The government decided to invest and to ensure that people had a home.

This is what New Democrats are calling for today. We believe in a country that can build the homes that people desperately need: non-market homes, co-op housing and a variety of multi-generation homes that are now needed for our growing and differing population. These are solutions that can manifest into real hope for Canadians.

- (1850)

In the chamber, we so often speak about young people in particular and their inability to ever get a home. It is true that many young people, and many Canadians generally, believe that it is impossible now to get a home. However, the other factor that is not being spoken about is the fact that we are losing homes, affordable homes and non-market homes, very rapidly, and that is adding to the incredible challenge and the requirement of participating in the market.

Imagine a single mom who is having a very difficult time. Let us say that she, like some people in our country, loses her job, unfortunately, and misses one month's rent. The options for that person are dire. Reports suggest that most Canadians are just one paycheque away from losing their house. It can be nearly anyone.

Chronic homelessness can be something we all experience; however, we can also all support ending it, and it is something we can actually re-engage and create hope about. If we created, for example, an affordable housing strategy that truly met the needs of Canadians, it would be one that invested in co-op housing, in non-market housing and in transition homes and holistic supports for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

In particular, that would mean indigenous people who have been largely living on the streets at a rate of 30% for a very long time, some of them upward of 12 years before they access a service. That is an incredibly long time and it is very difficult to try to support them, but we have to do it. It means involving community. It means investing in holistic community cultural supports like language. It means understanding the deep impacts of intergenerational trauma and the realities of the impacts of residential schools and the sixties scoop on one's own ability to manifest a future where they see themselves in a home.

Let me give an example of that. Many residential school survivors have reported, particularly within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that they did not have the life skills upon exiting residential schools to truly ensure that they had the understanding and the ability to have a household that would cherish and love its own children. Many residential school survivors report that they found it difficult to even speak the words "I love you" to their children because of the immense abuse and suffering they faced in Canada's horrific residential schools, places where they were not told who they were, where they came from and whether they were loved.

Imagine the impact of, as a little child, being boarded away in a big building without any role models to suggest that they deserve to be in a home and that they were loved, or that they could even see a future for themselves. These are the people who are living on Canada's streets. They are people's relatives. These are Canada's consequences. We must have the courage to not just invest but also to truly listen and change. How do we do this work?

Beyond that, we know there are solutions. Homeward Trust, which is a fantastic organization, created what we call the Homeward Trust By Name List in Edmonton. It counted 4,011 people who are either unhoused or without stable housing, which is up 2,728 people since January alone. The CEO, Susan McGee, says, "We've not seen this kind of month-over-month...increase in any year prior".

This is an emergency that we must take seriously, and throughout the course of the discussion today, we are probably going to hear from my Conservative colleagues that the Liberals have failed. I would certainly agree with that. We are going to hear the Liberals say that the Conservatives are going to gut and cut. The truth is in between both of these positions.

Since the eighties, both of these parties have conspired toward the very real rejection of social, co-op or non-market housing. We have nearly gotten out of the business. It is a sad state of affairs when we know we can do it. With a country as wealthy as ours, we know we can afford to house everyone, but for the very deep pursuit of pleasing the mega-elites of the country, particularly real estate investment trusts. The very unfortunate and real relationship that these groups, very large private investors, have had with consecutive governments has put at risk the livelihood of Canadians. The 4,000 Edmontonians I just mentioned are at risk because they are not being heard.

● (1855)

Instead, these large megacorporations are being told that they can get public money and can make a profit if they build these homes.

Let us do a quick summary of that scenario. If public land comes up for sale, a developer can get a great sweetheart deal on that land and can build whatever they want on it. The government says they should build some affordable homes, and not even a majority but at least 30%. In many instances, they are not even doing that, at the very least, and are using access to public funds and public land to build for-profit housing. If their goal is to build for-profit housing and make profit, they have an option between two units. They can develop a small townhouse model that is modest at a decent rental or purchase cost, or they can build a mega mansion and sell it for millions of dollars. If they are in the business of making money, they are going to build the mega mansion and sell it for as much as they possibly can.

That is the story of Canada's national housing program today: to give truckloads of money to developers without any guarantee that they are going to build homes that people can afford. We have seen this time and time again.

The Auditor General made very clear in her report that she found it very difficult to ascertain whether the Liberals have reduced homelessness with the investments they have made so far. Although the national average is 30%, in Edmonton, 51% of homelessness is experienced by indigenous people, even though we make up just 5% of the population. It is a real shame.

We know that indigenous people in particular have the solutions to end this crisis in their own communities, whether that is through innovation in sustainable building products and new ways to build on reserve or off reserve, or through ensuring that workforce development programs ensure that young people have the training and skills to do the work themselves. It would get the lobbyists and consultants out of the room, save some money and build more homes. That is what they want to do, but time and time again they find it too difficult.

We have the solutions to fix this crisis, and the Auditor General has pointed out to us the very real issues. We must have the courage to build homes that people desperately need: non-market, co-op and social housing.

● (1900)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I, too, share the passion the member has for the problem of homelessness and affordability. Our government has been committed, for the duration of our time in office, to working toward resolving these issues, starting right from the get-go and certainly through the national housing strategy. As the member mentioned, it may have some deficiencies, but we are interested in resolving those deficiencies. We are keen to support the homeless population and provide affordable solutions across the country. We have done so in many ways, but we have also been supporting non-market housing and co-ops throughout because we believe the government needs to act and needs to be involved in this problem.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his comment in relation to the public accounts committee report on chronic homelessness. For all of our benefit, it would be important for me to cite some of the important recommendations I found within the report, namely four of them.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

The first recommendation with which I agree is that Infrastructure Canada must provide a report outlining several things, including estimates on emergency shelter use, its research plan and timelines. These are incredible data points. If we want to see whether investments toward targeted relief programs are working, we need to know the results of those programs. This is one thing that the Auditor General makes clear is important to her. Second, another report must be provided by Infrastructure Canada showing how many communities have implemented coordinated access for housing support services. Third, CMHC must provide a report outlining the housing needs of vulnerable groups and evidence that these groups are receiving housing assistance. Finally, a joint report must be provided by CMHC and Infrastructure Canada indicating what measures are being taken to improve the coordination between federal departments and homelessness agencies.

• (1905)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, with respect to homelessness, I want to ask the NDP member about Conservative Bill C-356, the building homes not bureaucracy act. I suspect that the NDP would propose other measures that are not in this bill, but it is odd to me that the NDP voted against it because it contains some very obvious common-sense measures, such as requiring municipalities to set targets for the construction of new homes. They would benefit from exceeding those targets and be penalized if they do not.

What exactly in Bill C-356, the building homes not bureaucracy act, from the Leader of the Opposition, led the member and his NDP colleagues to oppose it?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-356.

My biggest problem with Bill C-356, which, as I mentioned in my speech, is an accelerator to the housing crisis that the bill codifies, is using public land that taxpayers have owned collectively for generations and that we have all benefited from given the public good it has provided. Those pieces of land should be used to build non-market homes that people can live in if they cannot afford a market home.

When it comes to housing, the free market has access to almost a majority of the land in municipalities across the country. We are saying that it is important to have a social safety net that provides housing for those who cannot afford it, whether it is because they have lost a job, are a single parent or have suffered tough economic times that have resulted in lower income. They should not have to be homeless just because they lost their job. They should not have to be homeless just because certain things outside of their control were made a reality.

That is why it is so important to have have social housing, co-op housing and non-market homes on that land. Then those who cannot afford it can get a roof over their head and have an opportunity to get back on their feet and continue to contribute to our society and economy.

I voted against this bill because it would have given access to that land to rich developers, real estate investment trusts and billionaires, and they would have turned it into mansions to sell for profit.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member for Edmonton Griesbach. He has been an extraordinarily effective spokesperson for housing in Edmonton and right across this country. He is very articulate when speaking to the needs that Canadians have for affordable housing in the midst of the affordable housing crisis.

I want to ask him two questions. First, we know that the Liberals gutted the national housing program 40 years back. The reality is that to get to the crisis we have today, successive Conservative and Liberal governments simply ignored the issue of affordable housing and ignored putting in place all of the investments that are critical to maintaining a housing stock. What would the impact have been if the Liberals and the Conservatives had not gutted affordable housing funding decades ago?

My second question is looking toward the future. If an NDP government is elected in the next election, what would that mean for building affordable housing? How quickly would we be able to build the housing stock that would make a difference and ultimately result in every Canadian having a roof over their head at night?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, who is an incredible advocate for not only his community but all Canadians in the fight for housing for all.

I want to speak to the imagination of many Canadians, including me. If these programs had not been gutted, we can imagine, for example, that the nearly 800,000 units that were sold off under the Harper government would still be here. They would have families in them. They would have people who can contribute to our economy rather than being on the streets.

Let us go back even further. If in 1993 Paul Martin had not cancelled the national housing strategy, largely getting Canada out of the business of supporting those who do not have homes, we would have nearly \$2 billion in revenue today, maybe even more, to put toward social housing, co-op housing and transition housing. We would not have seen the problem get worse, and we could have eliminated the problem by now. What an incredible feat that would have been.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

However, there is still hope. There is still a chance to get Canada back on track, to utilize the memory of many Canadians toward the great investments we have made for those who do not have homes. We can reinvigorate our economy. We can reinvigorate the imaginations of Canadians. We can rebuild optimism in our country if we just act, if we have a government that takes seriously the housing situation, not just off-loading the problem to rich developers, as the Conservatives would do, and not ignoring programs, as the Liberals do. A New Democratic government would truly build affordable homes by ensuring we build affordable units, co-op units and non-market homes, and we would end this crisis.

● (1910)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the member's earlier comments, he talked about some of the federal programs that rich and wealthy developers were able to benefit from. I do not completely disagree with him, but I am wondering why the New Democratic caucus, along with its Liberal friends, voted for the rental construction financing initiative. This program accounted for over a third of all funds allocated under the national housing program, and in that program, there is no requirement for developers to offer below-market rental housing units after 10 years. For those that are marked below the market rate, in many cases, like where I live in British Columbia, they are still not affordable.

Does the member believe that this program could have done a lot more to help low-income working Canadians, and why did his party support it?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, my heart is with those in the member's community who are experiencing homelessness. It is a real tragedy. If we could get unanimous support for the solutions that are offered to build very desperately needed social housing, perhaps we would be able to solve this crisis.

The reality of the rental construction program is that we have a terrible dichotomy between the Liberals, who do not want to do enough, and the Conservatives, who want to get more out of the business by cutting programs that many people rely on. We are stuck in this difficult situation.

We often hear from our constituents that this is an emergency and that we must invest what we can. The rental construction program could have been better. For example, imagine if we required, something the New Democrats fought for, that a portion of rental units had to be below the market rate. There are also additional items that relate to the ownership framework. After 10 years, one could dispose of those assets, transform those assets or transfer those assets to provincial or municipal governments or non-profit agencies.

The solution to the problem with the rental construction program is an acquisition fund. Imagine if we had an acquisition fund of \$5 billion that would allow non-profits to buy rental units at a reduced cost because those rental units are subsidized. For example, if Boyle Street Community Services in Edmonton had a chance to buy them, it would—

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

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are into our fourth week here in Ottawa since the summer recess of this chamber. Over the summer, like many people here, I spent a large amount of my time door knocking. I reconnected with my constituents and, indeed, British Columbians across the province. Irrespective of where I went in British Columbia over the summer, two issues came up every single time: First, people cannot afford to live there; second, the cost of living has gone up so much. I separate those two issues because the second is about groceries, car payments, insurance and so on, just the general cost of life. The shelter issue just deals with the exorbitant costs that British Columbians are faced with. I would argue that it is probably more acute where I live in the Fraser Valley and in the broader Vancouver region, the Lower Mainland. Some questions I heard from young Canadians are as follows: "What did I do wrong? What did my kids do wrong? Why is there no pathway for the life that I envisioned when I was growing up in British Columbia?"

A colleague and I were talking earlier today, and we reflected on when we graduated from university, around 2006-07, and the prospects we had for owning a home in the Lower Mainland, even in Vancouver. Back then, it was still affordable. Today, a six-figure salary, living in Abbotsford, is barely enough to cover rent and basic necessities. I never thought in my wildest dreams that we would come to a place in Canada where a six-figure salary would no longer necessarily be enough to raise a family. Let us break that down. Someone may be taking home \$6,000 or \$7,000 a month after taxes and any pension contributions on that salary, or maybe a little bit less. They may be making between \$5,000 and \$6,000 a month, or maybe a bit more, on a \$100,000 salary. Right off the bat, they are going to be paying \$3,500 of that to rent a house or a unit that will enable them to have kids. After that, they are going to have their car payment, their Fortis payment for natural gas, their cellphone bill and then, of course, their groceries and clothing.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

If someone is starting out today and living on a salary of around \$100,000 a year, it is not necessarily enough to get by. That is the sad reality of living in Canada right now. It does not have to be this way. It was not like that before. Many Canadians surmise that the Canada they once knew is no longer there. They do not know what happened; it happened so quickly. Was it during the pandemic? Was it afterwards? They did what they were told. They went to BCIT, UFV, SFU or UBC to get that degree. They landed that first job, maybe even working for government or a small business. They thought the money they were making right now would be enough to save up for a down payment, to start a family and to live the life they always wanted to live. That dream is dying at an alarming rate in British Columbia.

In fact, I am 40 years old. Some of the friends I grew up with just did not get in soon enough before housing costs skyrocketed in 2016, and then again in 2019, at such an alarming rate. They wonder about this. They have great jobs and their kids are in school, but they just do not have the security of home ownership. Alberta or the Maritimes are looking a lot better today than they did five years ago.

British Columbia is about the most blessed place that anyone could imagine. We have the best agricultural land found anywhere in the country in the Fraser Valley, in the Okanagan Valley or in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island. British Columbians have natural resources in forestry, liquefied natural gas and mining that are essential to the security and well-being of all Canadians, yet we are not profiting from the wealth of our province. Many factors have led to this.

● (1915)

Most important is the housing market that has accelerated at a rate that young people who grew up in the province just could not keep up with, in terms of the market changes that happened so quickly. For many years, we tied it to the role of foreign buyers. The Conservative Party put forward a platform commitment to ban foreign buyers. The New Democratic Party put in a satellite tax for people not making money yet taking advantage of the generous social programming we have in our province.

However, the young person staying here today, the young nurse working at Abbotsford Regional Hospital who did everything right, does not care about all the different variables. The only things she is thinking about are when she can start a family, when she can settle down and when she can live a reasonable life that she should get as a British Columbian, as a Canadian, who followed all the rules. I guess our social contract seems a little broken right now.

Part of the reason it is broken relates to small businesses. The majority of Canadians are employed by a small business. Businesses with one to 19 employees employ 5.2 million Canadians. In 2023, small businesses reported lower revenues compared with 2022, and in 2024, they “remain less optimistic than larger businesses” in respect to their viability moving forward. In fact, three in 10 businesses in the one to 19 employees category reported lower revenues in 2023 compared with 2022. I would suggest that the numbers in 2024 may not be too different.

If our business owners do not feel they can offer salaries and paycheques at a rate that is tied to the cost of living, then young

people are not going to want to stay and work in those positions. If someone works in public administration or in health care, the government cannot afford to give them a salary that keeps pace with the rampant inflation we have seen as well. Young people are stuck between a rock and a hard place.

I know that for a future Conservative government, we have some big challenges to address this problem, to create powerful paycheques again and to give these young people hope. Right now, they do not know what they are going to do and that is a problematic place to be.

One thing we could be focusing on that we have not addressed yet, and which, I think, there is broad unanimity in Parliament to address, is housing supply.

Yes, in my previous question in tonight's debate, I talked about the rental construction financing initiative, but there has been a historical amount of money allocated to building homes in Canada. Unfortunately, we have not seen those homes built yet. In the report we are discussing tonight, they talked about hearing from Infrastructure Canada, which is working with CMHC to address the real challenges young people are facing in our country. I think those are good recommendations and good points to follow up on.

One of the things the Conservative Party wants to do is tie future infrastructure dollars to the number of new homes being built. Across the board, the number one thing I think all governments recognize is that we need to build a lot more homes. Parliament is only one level of government that needs to play an active role in this but an important one, because we hold the federal taxation power.

The federal government funds a large portion of all infrastructure in Canada. I believe the federal government needs to start signalling, in real and concrete ways, to municipalities that until municipalities start permitting more, until they start being more efficient with the taxpayer dollars they collect through property taxes and development cost charges, and until they build the homes that young people need, the federal government is not going to give them the infrastructure dollars. I think we need to start with that.

It is not just me saying it. Romy Bowers, the president of CMHC, has said it again and again. I think every economist in the country understands that if we do not get a handle on supply, we are not going to meet the objectives of young Canadians. We have to meet the objectives of young Canadians.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

• (1920)

The Conversation reported, “Canada’s housing market is among the most unaffordable, with one of the highest house-price-to-income ratios among OECD member states. Housing prices soared over 355 per cent between 2000 and 2021, while median nominal income increased by only 113 per cent.” Home ownership is increasingly precarious.

For people like me, us millennials, who are talking to their baby boomer parents or their parents' friends, when we say it is so much harder to get a home, they will say, “People just need to pull up their own bootstraps and get that second job.” Well, no. Today in British Columbia, in the Fraser Valley or Lower Mainland, it would take, on average, about 25 years just to save up for a down payment to purchase a first home. I think some of the cheapest homes in the community I live in, looking at townhouses, are easily over \$600,000, probably \$700,000, and for a single detached home, if you can still get one, it is more like \$1.3 million or \$1.4 million today. Even if someone is making a six-figure income right after graduating from one of our universities or trade schools, they are not going to be able to afford to get into the market. That needs to change, and supply needs to be a central component.

One of the biggest challenges we face related to supply, going back to our businesses, is that insolvencies have increased year over year. In the last report from Statistics Canada, the number of businesses in Canada has decreased by 9,000, most notably in the construction sector. Until we start doing something to change business confidence in Canada, we are not going to see more homes built because right now, be it because of the capital gains changes, the CPP and EI tax increases or the red tape that small businesses face, we are not going to see more people start businesses in the home-building construction sector. They do not see a path to profitability like they used to in Canada, despite the growing need. We have to change things on housing. We have to change the number of homes being built and how businesses feel that they can operate in the economy today.

I would be remiss in my time if I did not quickly touch upon homelessness because the biggest consequence of not building enough homes is that people are falling between the cracks more and more often across Canada. In October 2023, there were more than 30 homeless encampments spread out across the Halifax regional municipality. By July 2024, the number of homeless had risen to 1,316, a 30% increase in just nine months. According to Cheryl Forchuk, a professor at Western University in Ontario, “Government data estimates that there are some 235,000 homeless people across the country, but that is only counting people who access shelters.”

In some cases, even our refugees are homeless, including, for example, Ukrainian evacuees in Calgary. Agencies have said that they have found newcomers sleeping on the streets, at the airport or at homeless shelters because nothing else is available. Toronto's shelter system has seen a 283% rise in violence over the last decade due to overcrowding and inadequate mental health support. The PBO has outlined “that the number of chronically homeless people has increased by 38% relative to 2018.”

Habitat for Humanity noted, “61% of young Canadians aged 18-34 are concerned about their ability to pay their mortgage or rent over the next 12 months.” RE/MAX outlined in its fall 2024 market housing outlook, which just came out on September 3, that 28% of Canadians said they are considering moving out of not only British Columbia, but also our country for greater affordability. On October 31 of last year, The Globe and Mail reported, “A new survey suggests stalled construction projects are holding up the delivery of at least 25,000 homes across Quebec...the figure potentially represents just a fraction of the true number of blocked units...since just 42 of the association's members responded to the survey” related to housing construction in Quebec.

• (1925)

Regarding some of the government's responses to this, the housing accelerator fund has been a big failure. After giving Toronto \$471 million, Toronto increased development cost charges by more than \$20,000. Those costs are passed on to first-time homebuyers and others alike. After giving Ottawa \$176 million, Ottawa increased its development charges by 11% and 12%.

Vaughan was given \$59 million to reduce red tape, and within a year, it increased development charges by 25%, or nearly \$40,000. Mississauga increased development charges by over \$10,000 within a year of receiving \$112 million from the Liberals under the housing accelerator fund. Abbotsford, my community, is proposing to increase development cost charges by 53%, despite receiving \$25.6 million from the housing accelerator fund.

My next point is that municipalities cannot be putting their bureaucracy and red tape onto the buyers, who need more affordable homes, and the government has to put stricter conditions on funds like the housing accelerator fund if municipalities are going to access federal dollars.

One of the other consequences of our precarious housing market is the use of food banks. The need for food banks in British Columbia has never been greater than it is today. With 382,000 British Columbians living in poverty, according to the market basket measure, B.C. currently has the second-highest poverty rate in the country. This number includes 40,000 children in low-income families and 36,000 seniors.

In my own riding of Mission, it is reported that over 5,000 people access the food bank each month, in a town of 46,000 people, and 38% of those people are under the age of 18. Archway Community Services, also serving my riding, reports that Abbotsford can no longer meet the demands for increased food bank usage and is urgently looking for more space to fill donation bags and give children, especially, nutritious food.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Food Banks Canada's 2024 poverty report shows that almost 50% of Canadians feel financially worse off compared to last year, while 25% of Canadians are experiencing food insecurity. On top of this, Food Banks Canada reported that the cost of living has become so high that food banks have seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021.

As a direct consequence of the Liberal government's inflationary spending and taxes, millions of Canadians are struggling to keep their heads above water. New research from the Salvation Army shows that nearly a third of Canadians continue to feel pessimistic about their future and their personal finances, while 25% of Canadians continue to be extremely concerned about having enough income to cover their basic needs.

For this reason, Food Banks Canada downgraded the government's grade from a D in 2023 to a D- in 2024. Canadians desperately need relief, but the Liberal government is no longer listening. Last month, the Prime Minister decided to hike his carbon tax again, which is going to increase the cost of food again.

In conclusion, as food security worsens in this country, Conservatives are going to continue to call for an election to axe the carbon tax, to build more homes, to fix the budget and to stop the crime, which is an issue I did not even touch upon tonight. The Canadians I met with this summer at doorsteps reflect some of the damning statistics I listed off this evening. That is, they followed all the rules in Canada; they did what they were supposed to do, but the Canada they once knew is not the Canada today; and they do not feel they can get ahead in their province or in their country like their parents' generation could.

On this side of the House, Conservatives want to give young people a future again. We want to provide them hope, and right now they just do not feel that. We need to work to call an election, to have a carbon tax election, and bring Canadians affordability and change to restore hope once again.

● (1930)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to suggest to the member that it is incorrect to think of this as a new problem. One of the first meetings I took as a new MP back in 2016 was from people who said they could not afford to buy a house. That is one of the reasons we, as a government, put together all the means, the studies and the money to undertake the national housing program.

It is also true that the housing costs increased during the previous administration, not only the Harper years but certainly the Martin-Chrétien years, as well as in the previous administration, or the Mulroney years. In the Mulroney years, housing prices went up dramatically.

This is not a problem of government, it is a problem much more systemic than that. It is much more broad than that. It is unrealistic to expect that sweeping in with a new government and great new ideas is going to fix these underlying systemic problems.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I will push back and say that the government allocated approximately \$100 billion to make housing more affordable, but despite these record investments, we did not see the homes built that Canadians need. Government does indeed

have a role to play. The leading reasons why homes are not being built are, number one, red tape and permitting processes; number two, access to workers to build the homes we need; number three, access to businesses to do that work to build the homes.

I believe that the government could have designed its programs more effectively, and the Liberals could have pushed municipalities to push for more density in the period of time that they have had in office. They did not even mention pushing for densification or tying infrastructure dollars to the number of housing starts until the last few months, even though it is well known that these are some of the key things that we can do to increase supply.

● (1935)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, we share a lot in common in terms of the problem. The problem is clear: Whether it is in British Columbia, in Alberta or here in Ontario, Canadians cannot keep up with the cost of their mortgage or their rent.

However, we differ in terms of the solution. I would agree with the member that the Liberals have spent a lot of money, but they have spent that money giving it out to large corporations like real estate investment trusts and other groups that build for-profit homes and sell those homes for profit. Any public spending should go to public good. In this case, the Liberals' housing strategy is public money for private good.

The Conservatives' solution is more of the same as the Liberals' approach. Rather than investing, however, we would still require municipalities or real estate investment trusts to build the homes that people could afford, but they are not going to do it. Their objective is purely profit.

How can the member square the circle that selling off public land to rich developers is in any way different from giving those same developers a boatload of money or a boatload of public land? The result is the same: Canadians have no homes. We need to have the courage to actually speak about non-profit and social housing. Could the member speak to those two points?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, with respect to the future objectives of a Conservative government, we can do a lot more to see housing starts improve drastically in Canada without actually spending any additional dollars. That would take leadership, and it would take a federal government that is willing to incent municipalities to improve processing times to get more homes built quickly and then tie housing starts to infrastructure dollars for other matters.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

The federal government also has a role to signal, like with respect to the housing accelerator fund where all these big municipalities took federal money and, in addition to that, put more taxes on to the backs of homebuyers. We can stop all those things as well.

With respect to the comment about federal lands, I believe that the Treasury Board can establish efficient guidelines to ensure that people who are purchasing land from the federal government to build housing are subject to criteria that ensure that the land is being used for the best purposes of all Canadians. Maybe even in some cases, those lands are used for co-operative housing or different societies that want to help people suffering from addiction. We can do a lot more if we put the proper parameters in place. My argument today is that the current government never did.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, even in opposition, Conservatives have put solutions before the House to address the housing crisis. One of them is Bill C-356, the building homes, not bureaucracy act. I am perplexed by the fact that all other parties voted against this common-sense piece of legislation. I asked the New Democrats tonight why they had opposed this bill and they said they had certain objections to the section about selling off federal lands.

However, notably, the section on selling off federal lands in this report would not prescribe particulars around what kind of housing would be constructed there. It does not contain limitations on additional policies that might be put in place around that. It simply says that a report would need to be tabled on an inventory of public buildings and land, identifying land suitable for construction and to propose a plan to sell at least 15% of any federal buildings; and that all land would be appropriate for housing construction subject to certain exceptions, and would require the Minister of Public Works to place these properties on the market within 12 months of tabling the report. The report does not contain any of the sort of strictures or necessary implications that the NDP has applied. It simply talks about making buildings and land more available.

On that basis, I do not see any credible reason why the other parties would have rejected the common-sense proposal that Conservatives have already put forward to the House. Does the member have any insight into why the other parties would have voted against this common-sense piece of legislation?

• (1940)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, indeed, I am baffled that the Liberal-NDP government did not vote in favour of some of the measures in here because, now, after our leader tabled the bill, it is trying to steal some of his policy measures and take credit for them, namely that cities must increase the number of houses built by 15% each year and have that compounded.

In addition to the comments by my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, the building homes, not bureaucracy act would actually provide a 100% GST rebate on new residential rental property for which the average rent payable is below market rate. Imagine if a housing society or a group of concerned Canadians in a community wanted to build a new addictions treatment centre. The government would incentivize that through the GST rebate to get the type of housing Canadians need right now.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I would like to have an opportunity to reply to some of the concerns related to the NDP's position on the Conservative housing program proposal.

In an ideal world, a group of concerned Canadians would come together and maybe access the 100% GST tax break, but the reality is, if they are going to be selling public lands, that goes to the group that is the highest bidder. Think of a real estate investment trust that is buying up land. The latest report suggests that 20% of all land is owned by real estate investment trusts. The problem lies in the market. Relying on the market to be the solution or incentive for why people should build homes on land they cannot afford is a silly proposition.

What I am suggesting is that a more realistic approach to the Conservative plan would allow the most wealthy among us, the billionaires, to outbid their neighbour for something they want to buy. To top it all off, the Conservative plan would give them, they just mentioned it, a 100% GST tax break. Therefore, the GST tax break would go to the billionaire who buys the public land, so the people are out of public land where they can build an affordable unit and are out the opportunity to collect revenue for real programs and services. That is why we are opposed to it.

Would the member comment on the importance of investing in social housing that is not on the market to avoid the program the Conservatives' bill would propose? Our solution to build affordable housing on public lands would actually put people in homes. Does he support it?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I will reiterate the point I made to the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Under a Conservative government, we would have put in place effective due diligence measures established by the Treasury Board to ensure that those purchasing federal lands would do so in a way that would serve the broader public interests.

In respect to the difference between a Conservative government and New Democrats, they would probably do more of the same big, flashy announcements with dollars, but not the requisite follow-ups and checks. That is what we have seen from the NDP-Liberal government over the last 10 years.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, of course, the House has been seized with debate over another scandal in the NDP-Liberal government for a number of days now. It has been seized with a question of privilege because the government is refusing to hand over documents that the House has ordered it to hand over.

Tonight, we are proceeding with concurrence debate; this is debate on whether the House should agree with the 31st report of the public accounts committee. This is a very important report that deals with the issue of homelessness.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Before getting into the particulars of the report, I think it is important to reflect on where we are as a country. For a long time in Canada, we had a deal, we had an understanding that if we worked hard, played by the rules and worked to serve our community to advance the common good, we would be able to live a healthy, happy and comfortable life. Sadly, as a result of policies pursued by the NDP-Liberal government over the last nine years, that deal is now broken.

As we turn to the issue of homelessness tonight, and to the issues of poverty that surround homelessness, more and more Canadians are struggling who never would have expected to be in this position before. People who spent their lives giving to food banks are now receiving from food banks as a result of changes in their situation because of decisions, actions and policies by the NDP-Liberal government.

The public accounts committee has a mandate to study and review reports of the Auditor General. The Auditor General analyzes various programs and policies of the government to see if they are meeting their stated objectives. It is not the Auditor General's role to make a priori determinations of the good, of what a particular policy should be. Rather, the Auditor General's role is to determine whether particular programs are lining up with the stated objectives, doing the things they are supposed to do and measuring the things they are supposed to measure, as well as whether actions of government accord with policies and objectives that have been put in place.

I have had the opportunity to serve on the public accounts committee. I am not currently a regular member, but I am there often nonetheless, and I was a member of it previously. Reviewing reports of the Auditor General, we found her consistent disappointment with the government failing to measure up to its stated objectives in its actions. The members talk a good game about a lot of things, but they fail to follow through and to deliver results. We see this time and time again with reports that come before the public accounts committee, in the fact that the government is not meeting its stated objectives, and it is not measuring or following appropriate policies in the process.

If we take a macro look at what the government is all about, what the problem has been over the last nine years, it is that we have a government that fundamentally believes it is the thought that counts. They want to express that they care. They want to put in place policies and frameworks with names that sound good, that exude a sentiment of solidarity. However, they are uninterested in whether these programs actually deliver results. They believe that it is the thought that counts. We believe that it is the results that count. We can have a policy that sounds good, but if it does not actually deliver positive outcomes, then what is the point? It is not the thought that counts.

Moreover, we often hear from the government members that we can read whether they care about an issue from how much money they spent on an item. They will tell us they are spending more on this and more on that. I think that is supposed to be a demonstration of their concern for a particular issue. They are spending a bunch of money on something under a particular policy heading, and we are supposed to read into this that they care about those kinds of issues.

• (1945)

What Canadians are really interested in are the results. If the government is spending more on something but the results are worse, then quite obviously people are worse off than they were before. I think what Canadians care about, particularly now when so many people are struggling, are not the good thoughts or the good intentions, or even the amount of money that is spent. They care about the concrete results and how they impact their lives.

As Canadians are struggling, they are reflecting on the fact that one cannot eat a good thought and cannot live in an announcement. A good intention will not keep them warm at night. This is the problem with the situation presided over by the NDP-Liberal government. Despite its desire for Canadians to conclude that it is the thought that counts, Canadians are realizing that they cannot eat a good thought and cannot live in an announcement, and that good intentions will not keep them warm at night.

That brings me to the particulars of the 31st report of the public accounts committee, which is extremely damning in its assessment of the government's performance when it comes to the issue of homelessness. I will just read, from the beginning of the report, the key findings of the Auditor General. The first is that "Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada did not know whether their efforts to prevent and reduce chronic homelessness were leading to improved outcomes". They did not know whether what they were trying to do was actually leading to better outcomes. That is incredible.

The next finding is, "Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation did not know who was benefiting from its initiatives." The third key finding was "minimal federal accountability for reaching the National Housing Strategy target to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by the 2027–28 fiscal year". That is incredible.

That is the government's much-vaunted housing strategy, and we find that the government literally does not know whether its efforts to prevent and reduce chronic homelessness are leading to results. It has no idea. It cannot claim that it is producing good results because, according to the Auditor General, it simply does not have that information. It is not tracking it. CMHC did not know who benefited from the initiatives, and there was minimal accountability for reaching the targets in the national housing strategy. That is extremely damning.

The government loves to talk about the fact that it has a national housing strategy. It says it has a great announcement, a great statement and a great framework, but it is not even assessing or measuring the results. It does not have basic information. It is not tracking whether its efforts actually produce good outcomes.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

We can only conclude, from hearing the way the Liberals talk and then looking at the Auditor General's report, that they really believe that it is only the good thoughts that matter. They think it is the thought that counts instead of the results that count. It is time we have a government in this country that is authentically concerned about the well-being of Canadians; is concerned about the results of policies; is focused on virtue, not virtue signalling; and is focused on what happens to Canadians, not on wrapping itself in the aura of showing it cares through announcements and through expenditures, yet not tracking the results.

There is a damning report from the Auditor General after nine years of failure on housing. Of course, Canadians did not need to hear the report to know that the government is failing on housing. Canadians know that the deal that has defined our country, the deal that hard work leads to opportunity, has been broken under the government. Canadians know that the price of rent, the price of housing and the price of food are way up, and that life is becoming less affordable as a result of policies pursued by the government.

There is a failure to support the construction of new housing. The carbon tax has made food less affordable. Inflationary government spending far outstrips anything we have seen in this country before, more than doubling the national debt. These are concrete policies that are having concrete negative impacts on our national life.

● (1950)

It is time we have a government that is focused on virtue, not virtue signalling, and that cares about good results over good thoughts. In that spirit, Conservatives have not only begun to plan for an alternative government but have also concretely put before the House, in this Parliament, proposals to address the housing crisis right now. A more wise and more humble government would have adopted these proposals, but sadly the government has not.

Conservatives put forward Bill C-356, a comprehensive plan to address the housing challenges facing our country. It was put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. Bill C-356 is the proposed building homes, not bureaucracy act. People following at home can actually find the key recommendations in Bill C-356 and in the Conservative supplementary report at the back of the 31st report of the public accounts committee.

They are common-sense recommendations that I think any reasonable person would find worthy of support, yet all other parties in the House voted against the bill. It does not make any sense to me that members of the NDP-Liberal coalition would reject this common-sense plan. Of course, if there were particular details that they wanted to adjust slightly, they could have supported it at second reading and proposed those amendments at committee.

However, they did not just vote against particular provisions at a later stage; even if they thought the bill was imperfect, they were willing to throw it out wholesale. I do not think the bill is imperfect; I think it is an excellent bill that could have been adopted in its present form. NDP-Liberal members who are quibbling about details could have supported it to go to committee at least, but they did not; they rejected the principle of the bill.

What is in Bill C-356? First, it calls for the establishment of “a target for the completion of new homes in high-cost cities that in-

creases 15% every year and ties federal infrastructure funding allocated to high-cost cities to that target”. Essentially, municipalities would have a target for new home construction, and if they exceed that target, they would get a bonus, but if they fail to meet that target, they would lose out on some federal funding. It would use federal funds to stimulate municipalities to take action to allow the construction of more homes in their community.

It would create an incentive for municipalities at the local level to remove red tape that prevents new home construction. It would not be prescriptive on how they do it. It would respect the principle of subsidiarity, allowing local decision-making around development, but it would set vitally necessary targets in order to move us forward in the direction we need, which is building more homes in this country.

The bill would “provide for the reallocation of \$100 million from the Housing Accelerator Fund to municipalities that greatly exceed housing targets”. That is about rewarding municipalities that exceed their target.

Next is requiring “that federal transit funding provided to certain cities be held in trust until high-density residential housing is substantially occupied on available land around federally funded transit projects' stations”. In other words, if the federal government is putting money into a big transit project, it is common sense that we would expect that there be substantial new housing built around those transit stations.

That is a reasonable thing for the federal government to expect in the process of providing the funding. We would not want to see big new transit projects that were not associated with people's ability to actually live at and around where the transit stations are. The bill would also “make it a condition for certain cities to receive federal infrastructure transit funding that they not unduly restrict or delay the approval of building permits for housing”.

The bill would:

[amend] the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act, the National Housing Act and the Excise Tax Act in order to

eliminate executive bonuses unless housing targets are met, and reduce executive compensation if applications for funding new housing construction are not treated within an average of 60 days...

Bonuses should be based on results, something that, again, the government does not seem to believe. It thinks that it is the thought that counts. Conservatives believe it is the results that count, which is why we would tie any bonuses to the achievement of real outcomes.

● (1955)

The bill would provide a 100% GST rebate on new residential property for which the average rent payable is below the market rate. This is a specific incentive around average rent being below the market rate. I think there was some confusion about that earlier in the debate, so it is important to clarify. Finally, there is the point that the NDP apparently took issue with, which is this:

Require the Minister of Public Works to table a report on the inventory of federal buildings and land, to identify land suitable for housing construction and to propose a plan to sell at least 15% of any federal buildings and all land that would be appropriate for housing construction, subject to certain exceptions. In addition, require the Minister of Public Works to place these properties on the market within 12 months of tabling the report.

This is what the NDP objected to. Conservatives are proposing that we sell public land and public buildings for housing; the NDP said we cannot do that because wealthy people and corporations would then buy these lands, and we cannot have that. The point is not that we would give these lands away but that we would sell them and, in the process, promote the construction of new homes people could live in.

As part of the plan, we have to make more space available. We have the problem in this country that we are not building nearly as many homes as we did back in the 1970s, when we had far fewer people. We are not building homes in general to keep up with demand. Obviously, if we have supply not growing to keep up with demand, that is going to lead to higher prices, so we need to increase the supply overall.

The bill, as I read, contains provisions specifically around below-market rent, but part of the solution has to be increasing the housing supply in general. That is just basic economics, but other parties do not appear to appreciate or understand it.

If we had passed the bill, we could have begun the work of substantially increasing the supply of housing in this country right away. This would have led to more housing affordability. We did not wait for an election; we put Bill C-356 before the House, yet the NDP and the Liberals voted against the building homes not bureaucracy act.

As such, it is not the thought that counts; it is the results that count. Let us look not at the announcements or the spending figures; let us look at the results. Canadians are struggling. Housing costs and rent are way up. The price of food is way up, and crime is up as well. These changes are the result of policy decisions made by these governments.

Fundamentally, the Liberals are not working. Their agenda is not working. They are not attentive to the impacts that their agenda has had on Canadians, and this is why we need a new government in this country that will rigorously hold itself and the entire apparatus of the federal government to the achievement of results. It will focus not on good thoughts and good intentions, but on good results and on the common good.

We will replace the NDP-Liberal government, which has failed to deliver in so many areas, with a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. We will do this through such measures as Bill C-356, measures that make housing more affordable in reality; we

Concurrence in Committee Reports

can simply contrast the clarity of our common-sense legislation with the damning assessment by the independent Auditor General of the government's performance. They did not know whether their efforts prevented and reduced chronic homelessness; they did not know who benefited from their initiatives. There was minimal accountability for reaching the national housing strategy targets.

The government has failed. The Liberals have failed to even assess or measure the results. They have failed to show that they have any real concern about the outcomes for Canadians who are struggling. We need a new government that is concerned about outcomes. Since they insist on voting against the constructive proposals we put forward, the only choice now is to have a carbon tax election where we will bring about the change we need and give Canadians the homes they need. Let us bring it home.

● (2000)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question to the member is about the pattern this report finds, which is so similar to a pattern we see repeated over and over again under the government.

We could look at the promise to plant two billion trees, with results that are wildly at variance and much lower, as a representative example. We expect governments to be imprecise, I suppose, and inefficient compared to the private sector sometimes, but why is the current government so spectacularly off its targets and so spectacularly inept in what it fails to accomplish as compared to its grandiose statements? What makes the government stand out as compared to others in the past?

Mr. Garnett Genus: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right to situate what we are talking about in the context of this report within the larger context of a government that does not care about results. It seems to believe it ought to be judged on its intentions instead of on the results it produces. However, Canadians are struggling and suffering, and they are not comforted by the fact that the government purports to have good intentions.

There are other examples of this failure to be concerned with results that I was going to get to and did not have the chance. One issue we are studying right now at the government operations committee is indigenous contracting. The government has a policy that is supposed to benefit indigenous businesses, yet it has been inept at actually determining who and what an indigenous business is.

Adjournment Proceedings

It has allowed non-indigenous businesses that are not on any recognized list created by indigenous groups, or on anyone's list but its own, to claim to be indigenous and to then benefit from these programs and asides. The effect of that is that the government is able to say, "Look at us, we are helping indigenous businesses." Then we have the AFN coming before committee and saying that only a small percentage of those claimed indigenous businesses are actually indigenous businesses.

The government gets to make its claim, but the outcomes are nowhere near what it claims. I think that happens so much because the government simply does not care to measure the results. It only cares about trumpeting its good intentions.

Canadians are seeing through that because they are experiencing the negative effects of the NDP-Liberal government's policies.

• (2005)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no further members rising for debate, pursuant to order made earlier today, the question is deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 66, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 9, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians are increasingly worried about the broken promises, half measures and watered down policies of the Liberals. Time and time again, we see the government exempt companies that are making record profits while their emissions go up and up.

This summer, we heard from concerned environmental groups that the government was going to once again walk back its promises when it comes to delivering a strong, sustainable finance framework. We were appalled but not surprised to find out the government was looking at including fossil fuels in its sustainable labelling system. This means the government believes that some fossil fuels are considered sustainable. This is completely unacceptable. It is greenwashing the actions of the big banks, it is greenwashing fossil fuel companies and it begs the question of why the Liberals are doing this greenwashing dirty work for them.

Canadian banks are already among the worst in the world when it comes to funding the oil and gas industry. The oil and gas sector is now the only sector in the Canadian economy that is increasing its emissions, not reducing them. For that, it is being rewarded. Recently, the Competition Bureau and Ad Standards have been investigating greenwashing in advertisements about the claims made by big oil on clean gas. If the Liberals include fossil fuel subsidies in the taxonomy, they will join oil and gas lobbyists in misleading

Canadians. Also, reports show that when emissions are included from production, processing, pipeline transportation, liquefaction, shipping, and regasification of gas, exporting it will not reduce global climate emissions, as the oil and gas industry claims, but will make global warming worse over the next three decades.

The Conservatives and big oil love to point to China's coal use as the reason we need to continue expanding oil and gas in Canada, yet the amount of wind and solar power under construction in China is now nearly twice as much as the rest of the world combined. According to recent reports, new research shows that fossil fuels could displace this renewable energy.

The Liberals are listening to the misinformation spread by Conservatives and oil and gas lobbyists. Maybe this should not surprise me, because the government has met with oil and gas lobbyists over 1,200 times. That is nearly five times a day. Our planet is burning, and the Liberals continue to listen to oil and gas lobbyists instead of climate experts.

Environmental experts are saying they would rather see no sustainable finance taxonomy than one that includes fossil fuels. Greenwashing the sustainable financing labelling system is the wrong choice. Can the member confirm whether the government will be once again caving to the interests of big banks and big oil and gas? Will it make loopholes that allow fossil fuels to be labelled as sustainable?

• (2010)

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, as I have said many times before in the House after debating with the hon. member of Parliament for Victoria, and generally, with any non-Conservative member who would like to talk about fighting climate change, lowering our emissions and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, it is heartening to be able to discuss how we fight climate change, not if we fight climate change.

It does seem, however, that the Conservatives are hell-bent on increasing our emissions. Indeed, the failed former leader of the Conservative Party, the member of Parliament for Regina—Qu'Appelle, seems to believe that Canadian emissions are actually superior, that they are better than emissions from other places. He often says a CO₂ molecule does not have a passport. That is true. That means one emitted in India, Canada or China is relatively equivalent in that manner, so we need to be focusing on global solutions as well as our carbon footprint here at home.

We have proven measures to lower our carbon emissions here in Canada. It is true that Canada is about 0.5% of the global population, with a little bit more than 40 or 41 million people. Out of 8 billion, that is 0.5%. However, we are responsible for more than 1.5% of global emissions. That means, through basic math, that a Canadian is unfortunately responsible for three times the global average. That is because we are a developed country, and we are an oil and gas-producing country. We are rather wealthy. We heat our homes in the winter, and we cool them down in the summer. We know that all of those activities need to change over time. That is why our government is bringing forward a taxonomy for the sustainable finance of the future.

Back in 2021, Canada signed the Glasgow statement, where we committed to end new and direct support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector. We are also the first oil and gas producing nation in the world to put a cap on oil and gas emissions. We are taking huge steps forward on conservation, committing to 30% of Canada's land mass to be conserved by 2030. Just recently, a little bit more than a year ago, in July 2023, the Government of Canada released the inefficient fossil fuel subsidy assessment framework and its guidelines, which will ensure that all federal government subsidies provided to any fossil fuel industry align with the climate agenda.

Oftentimes, the NDP likes to paint all fossil fuel subsidies or any kind of support for the energy sector with the same brush. That is not just simplistic, but it is also the wrong approach. Some oil and gas subsidies go to clean up orphan wells, and others make sure that we have energy, sovereignty and solutions in the far north. Those things are important. However, we are also at the same time taking concrete action to eliminate those inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. That is not all we are doing. Over the past couple of years, the government has worked to transform Canada's financial sector and provide the enabling conditions to align private capital with our sustainability goals.

In budget 2022, the federal government committed to moving towards mandatory reporting of climate-related finance risks across the Canadian economy. As the member knows, because we sit at the environment committee together as colleagues, this includes new requirements for federally regulated financial institutions to disclose climate-related risks. Our government believes that big polluters should be held responsible for their actions. In line with that commitment, effective fiscal year-end 2024, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, which is OSFI, published its guidelines for the management of those climate-related risks. I am happy to say that, in a very short time, we are going to have what is called a taxonomy, so a list, a glossary of terms for the sustainable finance of the future.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I find it incredibly disappointing that today, when I asked the minister a valid question about his government's plan to label fossil fuels as sustainable, his only response was misinformation about the NDP and carbon pricing. Two weeks ago, when I asked him if the Liberals would put a hard cap on emissions and make the biggest polluters pay what they owe, he responded with misinformation about the NDP and carbon pricing. Yes, the Conservatives are misleading Canadians on the carbon tax and the rebates, but the Liberals have also pitted com-

Adjournment Proceedings

munities and whole regions against each other and allowed loopholes that let the biggest polluters off the hook.

New Democrats have repeatedly said that there should be a price on pollution, but we are critical of how the Liberals are doing it. We think the biggest polluters, the oil and gas companies who are raking in record profits, should be paying more, but the Liberals' fetishization of the consumer carbon price seems designed to distract from their capitulation to big oil. It shows that Liberals—

• (2015)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I was going to avoid talking about the NDP's recent backtracking on climate action. It is 100% backtracking when one says that carbon pricing is not as important as another party wants to say it is. Our emissions are down 8% since 2005. We are making remarkable progress and that is due in part to carbon pricing. The speaker opposite just said that we are not doing anything on the industrial side, which is so false. We have an industrial price on pollution. We are managing to lower our emissions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, as I speak, I am being heckled from the other side.

We are doing a lot on climate. The NDP want to claim that its platform was somehow stronger. That was refuted by all of the environmental non-government organizations and research groups. It does not have a climate plan. When the going got tough, the Conservatives turned their tail and did exactly what the Conservatives said the NDP should do, and they turned their back on evidence-based, science-based solutions—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, my intervention is about corrections but I have to correct something that the hon. member just said a second ago, that our emissions were down 8%. Our emissions were up several thousand per cent last year, 2023, because our forests were on fire. We became the world's third largest emitter. The lousy forestry practices of the government are a substantial contributor to that ecological catastrophe.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am here to follow up on a question I raised on September 27 regarding a conflict of interest in which cows have been purchased from members of an advisory group styled “prison farm advisory panel” in Joyceville, Ontario. This panel was set up by the Liberals as a first step in fulfilling their 2015 election promise to reopen the prison farm at Joyceville, which at that time had recently been shut down. The minister's approval of the panel's request to include cows in their plan for a reopened prison farm was contingent on the panel's assurance that this would be an achievable goal at “no extra cost” within the farm's original \$4.3-million budget.

However, following a litany of errors, the costs of constructing the cow barn have ballooned to \$16 million. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that in order to create a situation in which these cows would be purchased and thereby financially benefit the members of the advisory panel, it has been necessary to spend many millions of dollars that would not have been spent had the project actually been about what it was supposed to be about, which was providing job training to inmates.

The entire reason for reopening the farm, the entire ostensible reason, was that the newly elected Liberal government rejected Corrections Canada's rationale for shutting down the farm. The rationale was that, in the form in which it then existed, the prison farm was not teaching marketable job skills to inmates and thus was not helping them to reintegrate into the community. The Liberals brushed this reasoning aside.

Immediately following the 2015 election, the then-minister of public safety, Ralph Goodale asked Corrections Canada to outline options and recommendations for reopening the prison farm.

In a November 2015 briefing note, the CSC responded that prison farms did not enhance offender employment. CSC pointed out that prison farms are actually counterproductive. They actually lead to less employment and more recidivism because they direct financial resources away from more effective offender training programs. CSC was particularly opposed to reintroducing dairy operations. Instead, CSC recommended that if a prison farm program did have to be opened, it should have minimal start-up costs, no expensive equipment or infrastructure, and must at a minimum break even.

To achieve these goals, CSC recommended small plot farming in lucrative specialty crops, such as lavender and garlic, which former inmates would be able to grow in small amounts with limited capital investment and to sell at venues such as farmers' markets that are open to someone with a history as an offender.

All of this was ignored and, at present, the plan is to hand this \$16-million barn over to McGill University. The barn will be staffed by four people, none of whom will be inmates. CSC has identified only two offender positions related to the dairy research and this is in basic data entry. Otherwise, prisoners will gain only generic soft skills from doing groundskeeping tasks such as whipper-snipping. These are activities that prisoners were already engaged in before this project came along.

Why has so much money been spent on something that will achieve so little to prevent recidivism—

• (2020)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada remains committed to evidence-based policy that is informed by experts. That is why a prison farm advisory panel was established back in 2017. The panel works to bring together agricultural and farming leaders, among others, to provide informed recommendations on program ideas and how we can better protect our communities through offender rehabilitation.

Regarding the claims being made, there has been no preferential treatment or conflict of interest. All decisions have been open and transparent and made to ensure the value for money for Canadians.

CSC works to support local farmers and local communities where the penitentiary agriculture program operates. All cattle are chosen specifically based on criteria such as their health, age, size and production capacity, as well as overall costs. At no point is a vendor selected based on who the seller is, and procurement costs are always determined based on fair market value.

CSC has a long history of supporting local farmers. For example, in 2011, following the closure of CORCAN farm operations at the Collins Bay and Joyceville institutions, CSC signed leave and licence agreements so local farmers could use the lands for agricultural purposes. Today, farmland is being maintained and utilized through the penitentiary farm program, which has included rebuilding land and crop production and incorporating environmental considerations and opportunities in planning and utilization.

I am proud to note that CSC is recognized as an international leader in the development and delivery of correctional interventions. The penitentiary agriculture program helps federal inmates gain employment skills to find meaningful employment in the community, which enhances reintegration and reduces recidivism.

Adjournment Proceedings

The farms at the Joyceville and Collins Bay institutions provide on-the-job and vocational training that relates to the agricultural industry, but is also transferable to other industries to help support offenders in their reintegration. Research dating back to earlier than 2014 has found that inmates who participate in the CORCAN employment programs while incarcerated are more likely to be granted parole and more likely to get a job in the community. As we know, offenders who find jobs in the community are three times less likely to reoffend. Programs such as those offered by the penitentiary agriculture program contribute to safer communities across the country.

I would like to thank members of the panel, who have helped contribute to the success of these farms.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, is the parliamentary secretary denying that members of the panel sold cattle to the prison farm program, which is an obvious conflict of interest?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, it should be noted that when the Conservatives decided to use non-evidence-based approaches to our criminal justice system, it was the community that came together and formed a co-op to preserve the lineage of these cows, knowing full well that a government that cared about safer communities would one day be re-elected and could hopefully reinstate the lineage of these cows back into the community. The community supported this work. It is only the Conservatives who stand in this place and tell the community that they know better. We know that when offenders receive vocational training, it reduces recidivism.

● (2025)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, today is the first anniversary of the horrible October 7 terrorist attack on Israel. One year later, we continue to grieve with the families who lost loved ones and with the survivors of sexual and other forms of violence who carry the scars of that terrible day. We continue to demand the release of the many hostages who remain captive. We need to bring them home.

My grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. Growing up and learning about the Holocaust, I was always haunted and perplexed by the images of Holocaust victims. It is with these images in mind that Jews today fight back against those who try to kill them. It is good, right and necessary that peoples and nations defend themselves. While self-defence can be morally complicated and necessarily involves the making of difficult distinctions, it remains absolutely necessary for a people with the will to survive.

At the root of this conflict is the aggression sponsored by the Iranian regime. This regime is pursuing a threefold strategy in the Middle East: to demonize Israel, to thwart regional peace efforts and to use the struggle with Israel as cover to colonize Arab states through terrorist proxies. This strategy responds to significant strides that have been made in the pursuit of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It is wrong to suppose some inevitable antagonism between Jews and Muslims or between Israel and Arab states. Israel has, in fact, normalized relations and is actively collaborating with a growing number of regional partners.

However, in response to this collaboration, Iran's regime seeks to unite Israel's remaining opponents and use them for colonial expansion against other regional rivals. While Israel is the primary rhetorical enemy, Iran and its proxies are also waging a campaign to destroy and subjugate other states in the region, starting with Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. These, along with the Gaza Strip, are now places where the regime ruthlessly suppresses its opponents and stages attacks against Israel that are aimed at undermining regional peace efforts and creating further opportunities for the Iranian regime's expansion.

We have good reason to believe that the Iranian regime specifically wanted the October 7 attacks and directed them in order to create the conditions in which the expansion of the Abraham Accords, particularly the expansion to include Saudi Arabia, would be much more difficult. Given this context, the Iranian regime will not accept a ceasefire as long as its strategy continues to advance its real objective, which is the subjugation of its Arab neighbours. The real path to peace, therefore, runs through the weakening of the capacity of the Iranian regime; the strengthening of popular movements against the regime, inside Iran and elsewhere; and the strengthening of engagement with regional players who have an interest and a capacity to make and enforce regional peace. These are things that we have long called for.

More than six years ago, the House passed my motion calling for the listing of the IRGC as a terrorist organization. While this has now finally happened, the failure to act for so long gave the regime extensive runway to continue to operate, recruit and fundraise here on Canadian soil. Much damage has already been done as a result of this senseless delay. In government, Conservatives would take swift action against the Iranian regime and its proxies. That action would be in support of the people of Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Afghanistan and Iran itself, all of which have been victims of this terrorist regime. We reject doctrines that demonize whole peoples, and we call for the liberation of all peoples from Iranian domination. The Iranian regime is the greatest threat to the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples in the region.

Here in Canada, the principal concern that I hear from many Jewish and Muslim leaders is about security. For everyone, Canada feels less safe than it once did. Foreign interference, attacks on different communities, the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism and an increase in crime in general leave many people feeling that they are a long way from home. While working for peace and justice everywhere, we must place the highest priority on the security of all people here in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, before beginning my remarks, I would like to acknowledge that today is the one-year anniversary of the terrorist organization Hamas's launching a horrifying attack against Israel. Our government stands with Jewish people and Israelis on this painful anniversary, and we will not relent until every last hostage is returned home.

As the member opposite knows, on June 19, our government listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code. The Iranian regime has consistently displayed a complete disregard for human rights both inside and outside Iran, as well as a willingness to destabilize the international rules-based order.

Listing the IRGC builds on the Government of Canada's broader efforts to ensure that there is no impunity for Iran's unlawful actions and its support of terrorism. The decision to list IRGC through the Criminal Code listing regime sends a strong message that Canada will use all tools at its disposal to combat the terrorist activity of the IRGC conducted both unilaterally and in knowing association with listed terrorist entities such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

As a now-listed entity, the IRGC meets the definition of a terrorist group under Canada's Criminal Code. As an immediate consequence of this listing, Canadian financial institutions, such as banks and brokerages, are required to immediately freeze the property of the listed entity. It is a criminal offence for anyone in Canada and Canadians abroad to knowingly deal with property owned or controlled by a terrorist group. As my hon. colleague knows, listing the IRGC is one of the tools the government has used to limit the threat posed by the Iranian regime and to call out its undermining of peace and stability in the region.

We have been and remain resolute in our determination to hold the Iranian regime accountable for its support of terrorism and systemic human rights abuses. The government holds Iran accountable for its actions with a wide suite of additional tools, including listing key entities and proxy actors in Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance" under the Criminal Code terrorist-listing regime.

Since 2012, Canada has continuously upheld the listing of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps force as a terrorist entity. The force is Iran's primary tool for terrorist operations in providing arms, funding and paramilitary training to other terrorist groups, including the Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad, as well as other destabilizing forces, like the Houthis, which continues to attack civilian ships in the Red Sea.

Again, Canada imposes various measures against Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It has been and continues to be

sanctioned under the Special Economic Measures Act, SEMA, which explicitly targets IRGC, its leadership, and several suborganizations, including the IRGC air force and air force missile command.

Since October 2022, Canada has imposed 17 rounds of SEMA sanctions targeting 155 individuals and 89 entities at all levels of Iran's security, intelligence and economic apparatus, including on April 24 listing Iran's minister of defence. All told, 446 Iranian individuals and entities have had their Canadian assets frozen under SEMA.

● (2030)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would also like to comment on the Iranian regime's role in fomenting violence in Sudan. Sudan is in the midst of the worst humanitarian crisis in a generation, and the Iranian regime's support for one of the belligerents fighting in that terrible civil war is contributing to the crisis. Estimates are that over 2.5 million people will die in Sudan this year. To put that in perspective, that is more than the entire population of the Gaza Strip.

The horrors in Sudan and how other actors are fuelling that conflict desperately need more attention from the House, from the government and from governments throughout the world. This is another example of the Iranian regime's sowing violence and discord around the world. The member mentioned that six years after the House voted to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, the Liberals finally did it. My question is simple: Why did it take so long?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, the listing of the IRGC organization was just one of the tools in the tool box, and in fact, Canada had already initiated a number of measures.

The member opposite is correct: The situation in Sudan is truly tragic. It is precisely why the government continues to take all of the necessary actions to destabilize terrorist entities here at home and abroad. We will continue to do this work and list additional individuals where needed. We have various tools, as I have laid out: not only listing but using our SEMA sanctions and our special economic measures through that act.

● (2035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now 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 8:35 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, October 7, 2024

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	26293
Mr. Seeback	26293
Mr. Lamoureux	26295
Mr. Perron	26296
Mr. MacGregor	26296
Mr. Genuis	26296
Mr. Julian	26297
Mr. Caputo	26297
Mr. Lamoureux	26299
Mr. Desilets	26300
Mr. MacGregor	26300
Mr. Masse	26300

Business of the House

Mr. Lamoureux	26301
Motion	26301
(Motion agreed to)	26301

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	26301
Mrs. Block	26301
Mr. Lamoureux	26303
Mr. Beaulieu	26304
Mr. Bachrach	26304
Mr. Perron	26304
Mr. Redekopp	26304
Mr. Vis	26305
Mr. Lamoureux	26307
Mr. Desilets	26307
Mr. Masse	26308
Mr. Lawrence	26308
Mr. Bachrach	26308
Mr. Lawrence	26308
Mr. Lamoureux	26311
Mr. Trudel	26311
Mr. Bachrach	26311
Mr. Steinley	26311
Ms. Michaud	26312
Mrs. Shanahan	26313
Mrs. Roberts	26314
Mr. MacGregor	26314
Mr. Desilets	26314
Mr. Shipley	26314
Mr. Angus	26315
Mr. Shipley	26315

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Global Polio Eradication Initiative

Ms. Fry	26317
---------------	-------

Fruit and Vegetable Industry

Mr. Davidson	26317
--------------------	-------

Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest

Mr. Louis	26318
-----------------	-------

Nathan's Ribbon

Mr. Lemire	26318
------------------	-------

Inherited Blood Disorders

Ms. Sgro	26318
----------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Dancho	26318
------------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Dabrusin	26318
--------------------	-------

Arthritis

Mr. Sorbara	26319
-------------------	-------

Bloc Québécois

Mr. Godin	26319
-----------------	-------

Latin American Heritage Month

Ms. Chagger	26319
-------------------	-------

Government Accountability

Mr. Shipley	26319
-------------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Rempel Garner	26320
-------------------------	-------

NATO

Mrs. Lalonde	26320
--------------------	-------

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

Mrs. Hughes	26320
-------------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Mrs. DeBellefeuille	26320
---------------------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Lantsman	26320
--------------------	-------

Foreign Affairs

Ms. Khalid	26321
------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Innovation, Science and Industry

Mr. Poilievre	26321
Ms. Gould	26321
Mr. Poilievre	26321
Ms. Gould	26321
Mr. Poilievre	26321

Ms. Gould	26321	Housing	
Foreign Affairs		Ms. Bradford	26326
Mr. Poilievre	26322	Ms. Freeland	26326
Ms. Joly	26322	Ethics	
Mr. Poilievre	26322	Mr. Cooper	26327
Mr. Virani	26322	Ms. Gould	26327
Seniors		Mr. Cooper	26327
Mr. Therrien	26322	Ms. Gould	26327
Mr. MacKinnon	26322	Mr. Lloyd	26327
Government Priorities		Ms. Gould	26327
Mr. Therrien	26322	Mr. Lloyd	26327
Mr. MacAulay	26322	Ms. Gould	26327
Housing		Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Julian	26322	Mr. Garon	26327
Mr. Duclos	26323	Ms. Anand	26327
Mr. Desjarlais	26323	Mr. Garon	26327
Mr. Duclos	26323	Ms. Anand	26327
Foreign Affairs		Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Poilievre	26323	Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	26328
Ms. Joly	26323	Mr. Holland	26328
Mr. Poilievre	26323	Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	26328
Mr. Virani	26323	Mr. Holland	26328
Innovation, Science and Industry		The Economy	
Mr. Barrett	26323	Mr. Lehoux	26328
Ms. Gould	26324	Mr. Duclos	26328
Mr. Barrett	26324	Innovation, Science and Industry	
Mr. Virani	26324	Mr. Arseneault	26328
Mr. Deltell	26324	Mr. Champagne	26329
Mr. Champagne	26324	The Economy	
Mr. Deltell	26324	Ms. Rood	26329
Mr. Champagne	26324	Ms. Sudds	26329
International Trade		Ms. Rood	26329
Mr. Perron	26324	Ms. Sudds	26329
Ms. Bibeau	26325	Mr. Généreux	26329
Mr. Perron	26325	Mr. Duclos	26329
Mr. Duclos	26325	Seniors	
Mr. Perron	26325	Ms. Thompson	26329
Ms. Bibeau	26325	Mr. MacKinnon	26330
Innovation, Science and Industry		Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Caputo	26325	Mr. Johns	26330
Mr. Virani	26325	Mr. Kelloway	26330
Mr. Caputo	26325	Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Virani	26325	Mr. Vuong	26330
Mrs. Block	26326	Mr. Virani	26330
Mr. Champagne	26326	Attack in Israel	
Climate Change		The Speaker	26330
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	26326	Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Guilbeault	26326	Ms. Lantsman	26331
Health		Motion	26331
Ms. Gazan	26326	(Motion agreed to)	26331
Mr. Holland	26326		

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Motion for concurrence	26331
Motion agreed to	26332

Privilege

Access to Parliament Hill

Ms. Lantsman	26332
--------------------	-------

Chief Electoral Officer

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes)	26334
--	-------

Committees of the House

Foreign Affairs and International Development

Mr. Ehsassi	26334
-------------------	-------

Declaration of Emergency

Mr. Fortin	26334
Mr. Motz	26334

Admissibility of Routine Motion

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes)	26335
(Motion withdrawn)	26335

Petitions

Rail Transportation

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	26335
--------------------------------------	-------

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Cooper	26336
------------------	-------

Public Safety

Mr. Dalton	26336
------------------	-------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	26336
---------------------	-------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	26336
Mr. Shiple	26336
Mr. Lamoureux	26337
Ms. Larouche	26338
Mr. Angus	26338
Mr. Caputo	26338
Mrs. Gray	26339
Mr. Lamoureux	26342
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	26342
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	26342
Mrs. Gallant	26342
Mr. Deltell	26343

Ms. Chagger	26346
Mr. Thériault	26346
Mr. Angus	26346
Mrs. Roberts	26347
Mr. Green	26347
Mr. Warkentin	26347
Ms. Chagger	26350
Ms. Larouche	26350
Mr. Julian	26351
Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	26351

Sitting Suspended

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5:48 p.m.)	26352
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Sitting Resumed

(The House resumed at 5:49 p.m.)	26352
Mr. Lamoureux	26356
Mr. Angus	26356
Mrs. Gallant	26357
Mr. McKinnon	26357
Mr. Julian	26357
Mrs. Gallant	26357

CONCURRENCE IN COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committees of the House

Public Accounts

Motion for concurrence	26360
Mr. Desjarlais	26360
Mr. McKinnon	26362
Mr. Genuis	26363
Mr. Julian	26363
Mr. Vis	26364
Mr. Vis	26364
Mr. McKinnon	26367
Mr. Desjarlais	26367
Mr. Genuis	26368
Mr. Genuis	26368
Mr. Reid	26371
Division on motion deferred	26372

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Financial Institutions

Ms. Collins (Victoria)	26372
Mr. van Koeverden	26372

Correctional Service of Canada

Mr. Reid	26373
Ms. O'Connell	26374

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Genuis	26375
Ms. O'Connell	26376

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