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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 11, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1005)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 10 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons has been ground to a halt for over two weeks because the Liberal government refuses to comply with an order of the House to permit the distribution of the documents concerning a \$400-million corruption scandal. These are heights we have not seen in quite some time, with a scandal of epic proportions. The Liberals have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that the public, the RCMP and the House do not gain access to the critical documents that would show what really went on in this so-called green slush fund scandal, which I will get into momentarily.

It is really important to note that the Auditor General of Canada, which is a non-partisan auditor of the House and of government spending, found that there was almost \$400 million in misused taxpayer money, as well as, notably, 186 conflicts of interest for nine board members from this green slush fund. There were nine people who had 186 conflicts of interest, totalling about \$400 million. The House has been ground to a halt because the Liberals refuse to reveal the documents that you yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the House ordered them to distribute, and they failed to comply. They have used a whole magnitude of different excuses. In fact, they cannot quite seem to get their story straight in terms of why they do not want to give those documents to Parliament as it has ordered, and we will get into that as well.

All parliamentary business has been ground to a halt for two weeks because of the refusal to comply. I want to talk a bit about what exactly went down at this green slush fund. It is quite interesting, and the tendrils into Liberal insiders go quite deep.

What we have been calling the green slush fund refers to something now defunct, a foundation of government called Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC. It was a foundation set up by a previous Liberal government in 2001; in essence, its purpose was to provide taxpayer funds to green technology. It has since carried on for a number of decades, and it is now defunct. It is just another foundation, another group, another organization that is in the graveyard of Liberal corruption. It is another fatality of Liberal insider behaviour.

The government of the day appoints a number of the board members for this fund, as we will call it. Certainly, the Prime Minister would have signed off on a number of the board members from the cabinet discussion, and that is important to remember. The Prime Minister appointed many of the board members on this fund. After the Liberal government was elected in 2015, things really took a turn in this foundation.

The Auditor General of Canada found that the Liberal government turned this foundation into what is, in essence, a slush fund, where Liberal insiders appointed to the board funnelled hundreds of millions of dollars to their own companies, into their own pockets. This totalled \$400 million, with 186 conflicts of interest proven by the Auditor General. That is what we are talking about.

Just to get into a few more details, the Auditor General found that the fund gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that did not fall under the scope of what the fund was supposed to provide. They should not have received a penny, let alone almost \$60 million. Of course, there was \$334 million given to projects where board members had conflicts of interest. Notably, nine of the directors of the board had these 186 conflicts. They were very busy during the few years they were on that board.

Again, \$58 million went to projects without ensuring contribution agreements were made. Not only were there conflicts of interest, but the Liberals were not even doing their due diligence on the ones who were not enriching themselves. It is just an utter mess. It shows no respect for the hard-earned taxpayer dollars the Liberals were just throwing out the door, with no regard for what it would mean to the ethical behaviour of government.

Privilege

The Auditor General did quite interesting work here. Over a five-year period, there were 405 transactions approved by the board. The Auditor General sampled 226 transactions, so just over half, and found 186 conflicts, which ultimately works out to 82%. Therefore, 82% of the transactions she looked at were conflicts in which someone benefited from their own decision to sign over money. She made it very clear in her report that the blame for this scandal falls on the Liberal government's industry minister, who "did not sufficiently monitor" the contracts that were given to Liberal insiders.

Again, this fund was responsible for almost a billion dollars, but, according to the Liberals, they were not really paying attention. It is as if a billion dollars is the sort of change we would find in the bottom of a Liberal pocket and nothing to really be concerned about. Of course, now they have ground the House to a halt for two weeks because they are so concerned about it.

I want to talk a bit about some of the conflicts of interest that were found. They are quite interesting.

There was a board member named Andrée-Lise Méthot. She was appointed to the green slush fund in 2016. She runs a venture capital firm called Cycle Capital. We should remember that name. It is in the green technology field. I believe it is some sort of venture capital investment fund that gets investment dollars from government and elsewhere and then invests in other green technology companies and the like. Before and during Ms. Méthot's time on the board, her company received a quarter of a billion dollars in grants from the green slush fund to Cycle Capital. Some of that was before she was on the board, but while she was on the board, \$114 million went to green companies that she had herself invested in. She personally approved this, enriching herself. She was appointed by the Liberals. Interestingly, during her time on the board, the value of Cycle Capital tripled. Again, it certainly pays to be a Liberal insider. It is no wonder; with a stamp of approval from the federal government, a company has gravitas, showing that it is a trustworthy company in a certain sense. Others can invest in it because the federal government has. Therefore, with these investments from taxpayers through the green slush fund, her company tripled in value.

I want to talk about some of the lobbyists for Cycle Capital because members may be familiar with them. I am sure we know who the environment minister is for the Liberal government. He is quite a notable or notorious, whichever word we choose to describe him, member of the Liberal cabinet. Before he was elected, he lobbied the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Industry 25 times for Cycle Capital. At that time, Cycle Capital received \$111 million. To his full credit, the minister was a very successful lobbyist for this company. Of course, when he was part of the company, he received shares for Cycle Capital, which he still holds today. That is good for him because the shares of that company have tripled in value in that time. It sure pays to be a Liberal insider. Again, it is reasonable to assume that he has made quite a bit of money. However, I think that what is very odd for taxpayers is the idea that a person can lobby the government dozens of times, bring in millions of dollars to a company, get elected and be at the cabinet table where these appointments are approved. Then, the people they know and used to lobby for go into this green slush fund and funnel

more money to that company, and the shares in that company triple in value.

If any of the Canadians or Québécois watching are thinking about how they can get ahead in this economy, I do not know about other members, but I would say that all they have to do is start a tech company. As long as they are Liberal insiders, they can get hundreds of millions of dollars from the Liberal government. We are all in the wrong business if we want to get ahead in this country under the Liberals; they are doing a very good job lining their own pockets.

What is more interesting is that Ms. Méthot, the head of Cycle Capital, left the green slush fund in 2022 and went on to another Liberal board, the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which members will be very familiar with. It is ultimately a failed board that has taken in billions of dollars to build infrastructure. I do not believe it has completed one project in the almost 10 years that the government has been in power and has been talking about this Infrastructure Bank. It has had a whole host of problems, such as CEOs coming and going. However, Ms. Méthot went over to that one after she approved all that money for her own company and others that she had financial interests in. While she was at the Infrastructure Bank, she voted to give \$170 million to a company owned by the recent chair, Annette Verschuren, who was appointed to the green slush fund by the Prime Minister. They are all connected, these folks, all the Liberal insiders. It is a great little rich party of people taking a lot of taxpayer money. That is what I found when researching this topic.

Annette Verschuren was found guilty of giving her own company money when she was on that board. We had both the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner of Canada saying that this was not good. The Ethics Commissioner found Ms. Verschuren guilty of breaking ethics law; again, this is a running theme with the Liberal government. We know the Prime Minister himself was found guilty twice. Other Liberal ministers were also found guilty. Their friend, whom they appointed to the green slush fund, funnelled money from taxpayer dollars to her own company and, ultimately, was found guilty of doing so by the Ethics Commissioner. She broke the law. Her company also received \$12 million from other government funds and \$50 million from Natural Resources Canada.

Privilege

• (1010)

When people ask how the Conservatives are going to fix the budget, this is how: The gravy train will come to an end for Liberal insiders. We are talking about \$400 million. That is a good place to save taxpayers some money and look to balance the books. This happens time and time again. This is, by far, not the first time we are talking about a misuse of taxpayer dollars.

There really are a number of these very shady individuals, or maybe they are good individuals; they are certainly good at getting money for themselves when they get appointed to this board. There is another guy I will talk about just briefly because he is interesting. Guy Ouimet was on the board, and he admitted in committee testimony that \$17 million of green slush fund money went to companies in which he held financial interest.

What was really interesting about this is that these people are so rich they do not even understand what \$17 million is. He said that it was a small amount of money. Meanwhile, we have two million Canadians going to food banks, and Liberal insiders are saying, "Well, it's just a small amount of money. I don't know what the big deal is." It is quite embarrassing. The value of that company, since it got government funds, went up 1,000%. It sure pays to be a Liberal insider.

How about the green slush fund director, Stephen Kukucha? He is from British Columbia. He was a political staffer to a former Liberal environment minister. He was also an organizer for the Liberal Party for the Prime Minister in British Columbia. As a reward, he got a board appointment to this green slush fund. During his time on the board, companies he held financial interest in received \$5 million. Again, at committee, he also said, "That's just a small amount of money, not a big deal." I am laughing because it is just so outrageous that millions of dollars would be seen as not a big deal. Again, it pays to be a Liberal insider.

We know Liberals are using a lot of different excuses for why they should not have to obey an order from Parliament. I wanted to get into a few of them. They talk about how the idea that Parliament will compel documents that may have the names of all the other people who have received money, which may really bring to light the magnitude of this beyond even what we know from the Auditor General, is a violation of their charter rights. Demanding the documents might hold people accountable for possibly defrauding the government or bringing corruption into the government, but there is the idea that Canadians have no right to know how taxpayer dollars were funnelled into these people's pockets.

If their names are on those papers and they are found to have defrauded the government, then they should be held accountable. That is really what this whole place is about. The reason we are not a dictatorship is not just that we go to the ballot box every few years and get to freely choose our governments, but it is also that we have a system of democratic principles, rules and procedures that hold power accountable. Ultimately, Parliament is supreme, and Parliament has ruled, demanded and ordered the production of these documents.

Again, what we are debating is that the privilege of the House was violated because the Liberal government refuses to hand over all the documents. Of those that they did hand over, many were

blacked out, or redacted. Ultimately, the rules that govern parliamentary privilege are constitutionally on par with the charter. If Parliament rules that we need to see those documents, the Liberal government has to comply.

I found that argument interesting. It almost seems as if the Liberals sort of default to saying "the charter" whenever they are in trouble, as if the charter is supposed to protect Liberals from their own corruption. I do not think so. The debate will go on and on in this place until they obey the ruling of the House and, ultimately, of the Speaker.

Andrew Coyne actually said this really well today in *The Globe and Mail*. He said, "The right of Parliament to send for 'persons, paper and things' is one of the most ancient...parliamentary privileges. It is crucial to the Commons' ability to act as a check on the executive." Again, the thing that is keeping us from a dictatorship is the fact that we have checks and balances on power.

I would ask that the Liberals be reminded that they have a constitutional responsibility to the checks on power that we apply to them. That is the reason we are all here. If they do not have to obey an order of Parliament, we might as well all just pack up and go home. We might as well let the Liberals be a dictatorship in which they can decide whatever they want.

• (1015)

The opposition parties in the House, collectively, are demanding these documents. The Liberals have a minority government, so they have to comply. The Speaker has ruled this. I do find that that argument is quite a dangerous territory for the Liberals. What are they suggesting? Are they suggesting that we have no rights as parliamentarians? Then what are we doing here?

They go on and on. They are using tons of different excuses. One of the ones I found funny is when they say that this fund existed under former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, so how could we be criticizing it? The Auditor General herself looked at the green slush fund back in 2017, before it was a slush fund, and gave it a clean bill of health. Under Harper, it was well managed, but as soon as the Liberals started to appoint the board members, that is when it went downhill. That is when Ms. Verschuren came into the picture and funnelled money to herself. She was found guilty of violating ethics laws, which is a running theme.

Before I conclude, I want to talk a bit about how the Liberals really do not have a leg to stand on. Even if this were the first time, it is unbelievable that we are talking about \$400 million and the Liberals somehow do not have to give up the documents that Parliament has ordered. However, it is not the first time. This is a running pattern in the last nine years. I would like to talk about a few of those other instances.

Privilege

Right when I was first elected, it was the WE Charity scandal. Do members remember that? It feels like a very long time ago, but that was a \$1-billion scandal, where Liberals looked to give one billion taxpayer dollars to what was found to be quite a slimy organization that, prior to getting that \$1 billion, promoted the Liberals at length, particularly the Trudeau family. The organization paid them money for various appearances. The former finance minister, Bill Morneau, was given a free trip, and I think his daughter received some sort of benefit. Therefore, a very tight-knit, almost fangirl-level organization to the Trudeau family was given \$1 billion. That got so heated that summer that the Liberals prorogued Parliament just to avoid it, so maybe that is coming. Let us watch for that. If the Liberal government prorogues Parliament, then we know we have almost got them on something of true corruption because the same thing happened back in 2020.

Then, the following summer in 2021, we had the Winnipeg lab documents. For the first time in a century, an individual was called to the bar because Liberals were so desperate to avoid revealing the Winnipeg lab documents. There were two scientists from the Chinese Communist Party working in a high-ranking Winnipeg lab, who looked to be taking very secret information from Canada and who were marched out of that building. There were all these documents about it. The Liberals were so desperate to stop the public from finding out, they called a snap election. Therefore, they do not have a leg to stand on when they say, “We did nothing wrong. There is nothing to see here,” because we have seen this before. In fact, I could probably go on another 20 minutes about all the ethics violations of the government.

We, of course, remember the Aga Khan's billionaire island. Our Prime Minister loves his tropical vacations, and in December 2017, the Ethics Commissioner found he had violated ethics laws by taking a very hoity-toity fancy trip to a billionaire's tropical island with his family. That was just the first time.

Members will remember as well the second time, which was SNC-Lavalin. It was quite the scandal. The brave Jody Wilson-Raybould spoke out against the corruption she saw going on with the Prime Minister. He was found guilty of breaking an ethics law at that time. He was inappropriately pressuring the Attorney General. It was a very serious matter. In fact, the election that came a few months later was when the Prime Minister lost his majority and never recovered. The public has been really starting to see what is going on here.

We talk about \$1 billion, \$400 million and all these big numbers. What does that really mean to an individual person? I have a difficult time understanding how much \$1 billion is. It is just such a shockingly high number. If we look at it, the average Canadian earns about \$58,000 a year. Some earn more, and some earn less, but the average is about \$58,000. In a two-parent household with two average incomes, that family pays, on average, about \$18,000 in federal income tax. They work months of the year away from their families. They have to deal with office politics and all kinds of things to go to work. They have to pay their bills and support the public services, so they pay about \$18,000 in federal taxes. Do members know how many families have to work an entire year to pay federal income tax so that Liberal insiders can enrich themselves with \$390 million? Twenty-two thousand Canadian families

had to work their butts off so Liberals could line their own pockets. That is unacceptable, and we are going to hold them accountable for it.

• (1020)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what I guess we could call a speech from my colleague opposite, and for those in the gallery, please be aware of what is going on here. This is mudslinging. This is a member trying to poison our parliamentary environment with a litany of I do not know what. The partisan jabs, we can take, but when a member of the House goes after institutions like the Auditor General and the RCMP federal investigative forces, that is beyond the pale.

They go after individuals. By the way, because it is not something that I do, I really do feel sorry for the member because she seems to be a talented person, yet she has been reduced to that. Annette Verschuren was actually a former adviser to Stephen Harper and, I believe, to Jim Flaherty—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I am sorry, but I have to interrupt the member. I would ask members to keep their questions and comments to about one minute.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I seem to have touched a nerve with that member of Parliament, and I am sorry that she has to be part of a government that is so corrupt. I can understand why that is so upsetting. Faced with the facts, it would be hard to have any association with the Liberal government. I understand her angst.

• (1025)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem to be using the idea of handing documents over to the RCMP as a reason not to turn them over to the House, when the RCMP could simply choose not to look at the documents.

Our role here in the House differs from that of the RCMP. The RCMP has a criterion that focuses on the criminality of the acts done, whereas ours focuses on legitimacy. Our role is to hold the government accountable for its actions.

By hiding behind the RCMP, the government is preventing parliamentarians from doing their job. I would like my colleague to talk to us about this aspect.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is right. Our job in the House of Commons, as opposition parties, is to ensure that the government is held accountable.

Privilege

[English]

The government should spend the money that hard-working taxpayers provide to government while ensuring that it is ethically used. As the member said, we have a role to hold the government accountable.

As I mentioned in my speech, this is what is so strange about the Liberals' response of wondering why the Conservatives are asking all these tough questions. They think we should not be doing this, but this is our very role. This entire place is built on the rules to hold power accountable. That is the entire point of parliamentary democracy. Without these powers to hold the executive accountable, we would be a dictatorship, so I am not sure if that is what they are advocating for, but we are fulfilling our duty here, and they should remember that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have a good working relationship on the public safety committee, and I will say that it is certainly nice to see her back. We have a very productive working relationship on that committee.

I have been listening to several days' worth of debate on this issue, and I suppose for me, and I say this with the greatest respect, I am at a point now where I am not hearing any new arguments being advanced from successive speakers. We are seeing a litany of the same talking points. What I am curious about is this: I am interested in getting to the action phase.

This, after all, is a Conservative motion. It has an amendment and a subamendment. I want to get to the point when we can execute that motion and get to the action part of this, rather than continuously talk it through. Maybe my colleague can illuminate the House as to when we will get to execute the terms of the motion, which was authored by the Conservatives.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to see and work with the member on the public safety committee. I do find him to be a respectable individual and highly intelligent.

It seems that NDP members are starting to drop little markers that they will be helping the Liberals bring this to an end. I do find that quite regrettable. Considering the powers of this place, and the Speaker's ruling, the Liberals have failed to supply the documents as they have been ordered to do. However, as soon as they get another party to support them, this can come to an end, and our ability to hold them accountable on this, on principle, will come to an end in that regard. It is important, and I would ask the NDP to stay firm on this. They are an opposition party. We have to ensure that we are continuing to bring this to light.

The Liberals should not be able to just do whatever they want to do without accountability. If they are able to kick this to some committee, they will try to bury it with procedure, and we will not hear about it anymore. I think that we stand firm, and we do whatever we can in the House, in this chamber, to hold them accountable. We will be here seven days a week to do that.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was really interested in the hon. member's speech. She referred to an article that was posted in *The Globe and Mail* by Andrew Coyne today. Some of the things that Andrew Coyne talked about were the

supremacy of Parliament, the history of compelling documents to be produced and the supremacy of Parliament being paramount. He also talked about a decline in democracy, which is something we have been talking about over the last nine years, including a lack of respect for institutions, such as Parliament, the judiciary and other things.

I am wondering if the hon. colleague could cite some examples of the decline in democracy we have seen after nine years of the Liberal-NDP coalition.

• (1030)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I read that article as well, and I worry that Mr. Coyne is correct in that we are seeing what really amounts to a lack of respect for Parliament, for what we have been in power to do and for the privileges and power that we have as an opposition to hold the executive branch accountable.

Our House leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, did an excellent speech on the ancient parliamentary tradition that we have, which is what really provides the power of the opposition to hold the government accountable. He quoted quite an interesting book, *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to Send for Persons, Papers and Records*, and he really summed it up quite nicely. It reads, "Based on principles firmly established in constitutional parliamentary law...a House of parliament has the full authority to summon and compel the production of any document."

However, the Liberal government is acting like it does not have to. We saw this with the WE Charity scandal, and we saw it with the Winnipeg lab document scandal. It is a running theme for the Liberals not respecting the will of Parliament, and it is shocking to see the demise of respect for parliamentary traditions.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my friend for Kildonan—St. Paul, the first time that Canadians experienced a government refusing to send documents and creating a crisis was on the issue of the Afghan detainee documents and the refusal to provide documents, which then, of course, led to an election because the prime minister of the day did not send documents. Instead, he organized the fall of his own government, and that happened under Stephen Harper.

However, I am really worried because I agree with the essence of what the member for Kildonan—St. Paul said. I agree with the essence of the motion before us. The documents must be delivered, and we should be moving this to a study in committee.

The hon. member said that she has done all this research. I am looking for research, too. I urge my colleagues across the floor not to exaggerate because I agree with everything they are saying, except that I cannot find any evidence, even with the worst offences of conflict of interest under Annette Verschuren, to suggest that she is part of a Liberal insider clique. If there is such evidence, I would really like to hear it.

Privilege

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, what we have to look at is all the members who were appointed to this board, and Annette Verschuren is one of them. She got very wealthy off of her own appointment, which cannot be ignored. If the Prime Minister approved her appointment, to me, that is someone who is in great favour. Being the chair of this was not nothing, and when she was there, that is when we saw a great decline of other Liberal insiders, some of whom I talked about, who she worked with on that board. She approved all of the money that went into their pockets as well as her own. I think the Liberal roots run very deep here and, ultimately, we will continue to hold the government accountable for the \$390 million that went to Liberal insiders.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in debate to speak for the first time to the very important motion and question of parliamentary privilege before us.

Just as a bit of background, why are we here today? What are we debating? Basically, due to whistle-blower testimony from public servants, the Auditor General found that there were irregularities in the awarding of government grants with Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC. Specifically, Liberal-appointed members of the board were awarded at least \$330 million in 186 cases of conflict of interest and paid out another \$59 million to companies without authorization, totalling approximately \$389 million.

The Auditor General made it very clear that the issue falls under the Liberal minister of industry, who “did not sufficiently...monitor” the contracts that were given to insiders. The House of Commons supported the Conservative motion that called on the government, the SDTC and the Auditor General to hand over all the documents related to the scandal to the RCMP within 14 days.

The Liberal government refused to adhere to the will of Parliament and of Canadians. It has yet to hand over the documents to the RCMP. We can only assume that this is presumably to cover up the scandal. You ruled, Mr. Speaker, that this failure to adhere to the will of Parliament has constituted a breach of privilege, and therefore all business in the House is stalled until the Liberal government complies with your order.

I will give a little bit more background for viewers and listeners back home. The key mandate of SDTC was to federally fund non-profits, to approve and disperse over \$100 million in funds annually to clean-technology companies. That was a very important role, something that had been ongoing for almost decades, I believe. It had a clean bill of health up until, I believe, the 2017-2018 time frame. It was an arm's-length body, not for profit, and was supposed to create and support projects that develop and demonstrate new technologies that address issues related to climate change, air quality, clean water and clean soil.

However, there were problems, some of which I have already highlighted. The executive appointees were awarded projects that had conflicts of interest. They all started around 2019 under the then Liberal industry minister, Navdeep Bains. He began appointing conflicted executives to the board, and then those board members began voting for companies in which the executives themselves had active conflicts of interest.

The Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner initiated and conducted separate investigations. This is when a number of whistle-blowers came forward and the Auditor General found a severe lack in governance standards and uncovered the scandal.

I will get to the crux of the matter. Mr. Speaker, you ordered that the documents be turned over. The power of the House is greater than any one act, yet unfortunately the PCO decided to tell the departments to redact the documents. As a result, in our view and in your own view, there was a breach of our privileges. That is why we are debating today. That is the background.

I want to take a slightly different approach for the remainder of my speech. I thought that if I were going to give a speech on this, I should ask my constituents for their feedback. I am here at the behest of 115,000 constituents in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I decided that I would send an email out to them and hopefully get back some interesting feedback. I sent that out just Wednesday afternoon.

As of nine o'clock this morning, I had received 436 email responses back giving feedback on the issue, 210 in the first four hours alone, 357 within the first 12 hours and the remainder since. I asked just two simple questions. Those who follow me on social media know that I am not the biggest social media person. I do not have a massive following, but about 5,000 constituents in my riding subscribe to a monthly e-newsletter that I put out, and those were the people to whom the questions were sent out.

• (1035)

I asked two simple questions. The first was whether the Liberal government should turn over the SDTC documents to the House and to the RCMP and comply with your will, Mr. Speaker. The second was whether any of the Liberal insiders who are found guilty of illegitimately receiving the funds should have to pay the money back to the taxpayers?

I am going to read some of the responses into the record. There are dozens I could not use because the language did not meet the parliamentary language standard. Hopefully the ones I have put in my speech do, but I will do my best. I may have to think on my feet and paraphrase some of the comments.

Brian from Meaford said, “The Liberal government must turn over the SDTC documents to the RCMP for their criminal investigation and comply with Parliament's will. The Liberal insiders who were awarded contracts through the SDTC by illegitimate means must repay the grant money they received to taxpayers.”

Carol in Owen Sound said, “Yes, I feel that the Liberal government should hand over the documents. Not doing so in a timely manner only leads us to assume their guilt. Yes, insiders awarded contracts illegitimately should have to pay back any monies received.”

Privilege

Hillary from Owen Sound said, “Yes...and this isn't the first time this government has been caught in a scandal and giving our tax dollars to insiders and friends; i.e. the WE scandal comes to mind but I know there were more.”

Janet said, “I do believe they should have to turn over documents and be treated like anyone else in the country. If they broke the law they need to be punished just like anyone else. Yes, I think they should have to pay back all the money. All Liberals know how to do is take our tax dollars and line their own pockets while people drown and lose everything they have.”

Bob said, “I have watched all the committee videos where these fraud-related matters were discussed including that with the very credible whistle-blower. I look forward to your pressing Parliament to take action on the points raised. House of Commons debates are very interesting currently as the government tries various smear tactics.”

Gladys said, “Yes to both questions. I am tired of Governments never considering whose money they are using. They were voted in by the taxpayers, but feel they can spend that money without giving careful consideration to how that money is being spent. We the taxpayers are the employers, if you will, and the government the employees. Therefore, your ‘bosses’ are telling you to have more consideration concerning the spending of our money. It is not yours to be careless with.

“I am almost 75 years old and I am tired of always having to watch my spending while governments just seem to throw it away. Why bother voting these people in, [just to] have the taxpayers' and citizens' best interest [ignored].”

That is really important, and one of my points when I conclude will be that the risk we have when the government is not complying with the will of Parliament and the Speaker's ruling is that it is undermining the trust Canadians have in our democratic institutions.

I will continue with the quotes. Bryan said, “In my opinion, all political parties in our Canadian government, whether they are the governing party or parties in opposition, must be transparent in their dealings with Parliament, with the other political parties and most importantly in their dealings with third parties whether at arm's length or not, especially when dealing with government...monies. Therefore the SDTC documents must be turned over to the RCMP immediately.

“Any illegitimate contracts must be returned to the Canadian people immediately as well. You can remind everyone just how quickly all the hard-working people were threatened if they did not return any CERB overpayments they received during the COVID crisis.”

Warren said, “I have been a purchasing agent for 30 years and I have never seen such blatant corruption in our government.

“No one, and I mean no one, would be able to get away with this in the private sector.”

Stephen said, “First of all, all documents need to be turned over immediately. I am very familiar with working in these environments and with process and procedures. I have been personally certified for government contracts within the secrecy act and under-

stand completely the mess that has been created here, and in many respects, how basic it is to follow common sense guidelines, rules, regulations, etcetera. You may not like the more stringent requirements, but they are there for a reason.

“One only has to look at ArriveCAN. How much more of a mess do we need to see? How do we get from an \$80-thousand app to \$64 million spent? All funding granted to Liberal insiders needs to be returned to the government coffers and used for good and proper actions to benefit all taxpayers.”

● (1040)

Don said, “The judicial system in [government] is slowly and continuously being eroded and these types of situations do not look good.”

Randy, and I do not know whether it is the “other Randy” or which Randy it is, said, “I do believe the government should hand over all material related to this matter, and also the members of the party that had knowledge of the illegal activities should be held accountable in so far as to say they should lose their jobs and pension. The Liberal insiders who received the money should be made to pay back every cent plus interest.”

Meghan said, “I would say yes to both of your questions. If the Liberal government did nothing wrong, they should have no issues in handing over documentation that is being asked for. We should be able to trust the government that is running our country and they should be held accountable if there is wrongdoing. Any grants should be paid back in full if there was insider information involved.”

Greg said, “The fact that they are not turning over any and all related documentation as requested, and their transparent ploy to issue the documents in a redacted state, leaves every citizen with half a clue as to what is currently going on in our country with the distinct impression they are trying to hide a long-standing misuse if not outright theft of taxpayer money.

“As my representative in Parliament, [talking about me.] I would fully expect you to use what ever pull you have within the party to hold them to account.”

This is from Richard: “Yes, absolutely, documents should be turned over. [The Prime Minister] promised in 2015 that his government would be fully transparent with Canadians, and to date I have not seen any transparency from this government, only scandal after scandal. It seems [the Prime Minister] and his government think they are above the law and somehow believe Canadians are happy with his performance This is unacceptable. What are they hiding?”

Privilege

Peter said, "I have been following this scandal in the committee meetings and I am greatly concerned about the Liberals' actions, or in this case, lack thereof, with regard to handing over the documents. What are they hiding? This situation needs to be investigated thoroughly and those responsible should be held to account, and if criminality is evident they should be charged. They are not above the law."

This is from Les: "Certainly as a private business, if the government requests additional information for my personal tax audit, I have no option but to comply. They should be under that same requirement. If they're not trying to hide something, turning over that information shouldn't be a big deal!"

Paul said, "This Liberal government does what it wants. Breaking laws, violating the Constitution, or, this time, breaching privilege, is business as usual for them. And they get away with it virtually every time with simply a slap on the wrist."

Todd said, "The Liberal government that ran on being open and honest should be held accountable for their actions. The money that was given out should be returned and an investigation done by the RCMP."

"This is probably just the tip of the iceberg."

Ryan said, "Over the past several years as more and more corruption has been discovered within our current government, it seems as though our parliamentary system is broken as no sitting members of this government have been held to account for their various breaches of trust."

This is from Kevin: "I'd have to say that I am not at all surprised by this type of conduct. It seems to be a regular occurrence with this government, whether it be single-source contracts or contracts to companies or individuals with whom there is ownership or family members involved."

"Like the Auditor General stated, there are numerous conflicts of interest. Our current Prime Minister seems to think rules only apply to others and not himself or his circle of friends and caucus members."

This is from Stephen: "My response is common sense and would be an absolute yes to both of your questions. I can't believe we (Canadians) are dealing with items of this nature; it's a huge conflict of interest. Actually, it's potentially criminal."

"These ministers are acting like they were appointed weeks ago, and we both know this isn't correct. They know it's wrong, and if proven guilty they should be removed from their position."

"When you [he is referring to me] were CO 2 RCR, if you were responsible for this, you would have been removed from your position."

● (1045)

Kameron from Georgian Bluffs said, "The Liberal government absolutely needs to be compelled to turn over unredacted documents for an RCMP investigation. Their conduct has been disturbing in how they've responded to this, alleging that somehow the majority of the House is infringing on Canadians' charter rights by demanding they be accountable for how millions of our tax dollars

have been misappropriated to enrich corporations that were never meant to receive them."

"All ineligible recipients of government grants and contracts should be made to repay those funds. Especially at a time when so many Canadians are suffering under ever-growing inflation, pushed even further by the growing carbon tax, it is of the utmost importance that taxpayer dollars be spent appropriately and recovered when we learn that they've been misused."

"The misconduct we've witnessed between the various SDTC misuses of money, the ArriveCAN scandal and the laundry list of fiscal irresponsibility and culture of lacking accountability in this Liberal government has permeated and metastasized within the bureaucracy of the federal public service. The negative examples at the top have done so much damage that there is an incredible amount of work to be done to rebuild public trust in our government infrastructure. Your motion is, at the very least, one step in the right direction."

Mary from Meaford said, "The Liberal government should turn over the SDTC documents to the RCMP...and comply with the will of Parliament. The Liberal insiders who are awarded contracts through the SDTC by illegitimate means should be ordered to repay the grant money they received to taxpayers."

This is from Dave: "Both answers are yes. Accountability needs to be mandated, as the Liberals do not do it on their own. Repay the grants and, if there is availability, a penalty, either monetary or not being able to submit for contracts for a time specified or both."

Keith and Lisa from Owen Sound said, "Absolutely, yes to this question. If the Liberal government had nothing to hide, they would turn the documents over. As taxpayers, we have the right to know how and where our money is being spent. I would also agree that the Liberal insiders who received this money should pay it back. The current Liberal government has lacked transparency for quite some time on a number of issues. I appreciate the opportunity to share my voice in this matter."

Dave said, "Yes, all papers must be handed over unredacted and all money must be returned. This corruption must stop."

Vicky from Barrow Bay said, "In a nutshell, I will keep it simple: In this household, we are tired of the corruption. We're tired of the Liberals playing silly games for their benefit. We need to find the truth. We want accountability and if there are criminal charges involved, people should be charged. I will leave you to articulate in a manner you need to, but enough is enough."

"I have been following this situation in the independent media fairly closely. Thank you for the extensive transcripts."

Lorraine from West Grey said, “Yes. I am, though, disappointed the word ‘redacted’ did not appear in the motion. I am also disappointed this measure has not been implemented by the people via our representatives in the House of Commons concerning other scandals we have seen in which the government failed to produce or only produced heavily redacted documents. My position is that we should turn over the documents to the law clerk then the RCMP. It is every citizen's duty, if they are aware of possible illegal activity, to report it with or without documentation to the police. The House of Commons is acting on behalf of the Canadian citizens and is engaged in the same process we are all to consider doing.”

“Yes, I am a firm believer in restitution in the application of justice, where possible. Money can be requested in this situation, I believe. It would be part of a just decision. It would also help Canadians regain some trust in the justice system and in government.”

This is from Ingrid: “Should the Liberal government turn over the SDTC documents to the RCMP for their criminal investigation and comply with the will of Parliament? Absolutely and immediately. In what other business can an employee refuse to comply with the management's orders?”

“If the Liberal government refuses to immediately hand over the requested information, this information should be seized by whatever force necessary by the RCMP or other appropriate agency. Those refusing to co-operate should be immediately released from their positions due to ethical, if not criminal, breaches.”

“Why are we tolerating such corruption and insolence on the part of officials who are elected by the people and for the people?”

Mel from Owen Sound said, “Absolutely, the Liberals need to hand over the documents and any wrongdoers need to be held accountable and to repay the money.”

This is from Paul in Grey County: “Liberals are working against Canadian citizens, and the RCMP has a duty to investigate all the crimes and charge them. They also have to repay all the illegitimate money back.”

This is from Garnet: “This government is corrupt...and the people of Canada must remove them from power before our country becomes a totalitarian entity and democracy is dead. Please continue to bring attention to this kind of corruption and waste of our tax dollars.”

“I'm not very proud of our country under the [Liberal] regime. We are in danger of becoming a banana republic, and it's too cold to even grow bananas here in Canada.”

● (1050)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I do thank my hon. colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for the banana republic without benefit of fruit; it is a good one.

The hon. member and I do not usually get a chance to exchange with each other in Hansard, and I want to thank him from the bottom of my heart for the work that we and a number of other MPs have been doing together to try to do the right thing by former members of the Afghan Parliament, who are women who are now, and have been, on the run for their lives. The hon. member for

Privilege

Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is one of the finest people I have ever had the privilege to work with.

I would ask the member if there is any way he can see that we could get this to committee faster. Yes, it would go faster if the government sent all the documents, but we surely have enough now, given the Auditor General's report and the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development auditor report, to drill down, call witnesses and get to work in committee.

Is there a way to compromise on this motion?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, my kudos back to the member and the other four members; we all work together to help these former Afghan women MPs. It is an important cause we all believe in, and there is power when we can come to a consensus on things going forward.

To get to the crux of her question, I am not aware of any other way to get this resolved quickly, unless the government turns over those documents.

The second aspect of this, and I know the member believes in this wholeheartedly too, is that this is only the first time I have gotten to speak to this motion. I have 450 constituents who provided me feedback in less than two days. I am sure that when I look around the chamber, there are lots of other colleagues who would like the opportunity to speak to this very important issue that their constituents care about. We need to end the corruption.

● (1055)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I came from my riding of Saint John—Rothesay to Ottawa to do work on behalf of Canadians. We have literally been tied up and not doing work on behalf of Canadians for the better part of two weeks now. People in my riding are asking me why we are not getting to work on behalf of all Canadians. I am also here to talk about dental care, pharmacare and other great initiatives that we are doing.

The member opposite talked about silly games. I am asking him when the Conservatives are going to stop the silly games and let us get back to work on behalf of all Canadians.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I sat on a committee with the other member briefly in the past. I actually think lots of work is getting done in the committees. I get lots of work done every day in Ottawa when I am here.

Statements by Members

The reason we are not getting any further debate or issues dealt with in government business is wholeheartedly that the government refuses to comply with the Speaker's order. This could all be over tomorrow if the government would just turn over the documents. If the member had listened to my response to the previous question, he would know it is our right and privilege to answer questions or to speak on behalf of our constituents and contribute to the debate. This is the first time I have had a chance to give a speech on this very important matter of privilege.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “I remember” is the motto of Quebeckers. This morning, I would like my colleague to remember certain events. He talked about Liberal government corruption and lack of transparency. I want to go back in history because it is important to remember what happened.

The Conservative Party claims to be the party of common sense, transparency, of fighting corruption in this world. However, when the Conservatives were in power, they diverted funds. I would remind my colleague that former Conservative minister Tony Clement, diverted not \$10 million, not \$20 million, not \$30 million, not \$40 million, but \$50 million to his riding during the G8 summit.

He does not remember, this morning. I would also like to remind him of the questions of privilege that his government did not comply with at the time. The Conservative government did not produce the documents during the Afghan detainee transfer scandal. There was also the Senate expenses scandal, the robocall affair, and omnibus Bill C-38 to implement budget 2012.

I have a simple question for my colleague. How are Quebeckers supposed to have confidence in a potential future Conservative government when the Conservatives have such a poor record?

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I do not support or stand for corruption, ever. I was not part of a former Conservative government. I will not speak to and cannot speak to any corruption. I do not have the background knowledge to speak to every single case. The Afghan detainee file is one, though, that I will speak to. That was not a case of corruption. There were allegations. There was parliamentary debate. An ad hoc committee was formed. In the end, tens of thousands of pages were reviewed by members across different parties, and they found nothing.

That is not the case here. This, right now, is a case of \$390 million of taxpayers' money that has been spent improperly. There are 186 conflicts—

• (1100)

The Speaker: I hate to interrupt the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, but he will have three minutes and about 30 seconds left in questions and comments when this question of privilege debate resumes.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the attacks on journalists who report on Khalistani extremism in Canada.

A few days back, Rishi Nagarin of Red FM Calgary was severely attacked. In March 2023, Sameer Kaushal of Radio AM600 in Richmond, B.C., was assaulted for covering a Khalistani protest. In February 2022, Brampton radio host Deepak Punj was attacked in his studio for criticizing Khalistani-related violence. Anti-terrorism investigative journalist Mocha Bezirgan has received death threats for his fearless reporting on Khalistani extremism.

There are many more attacks in the greater Toronto area and across Canada by Khalistani extremists. I call on law enforcement agencies to take notice of Khalistani extremism with all the seriousness it deserves. It has to be dealt with with an iron hand before it is too late.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shed a public spotlight on what Canadians are already feeling in their wallets. The “food professor”, Sylvain Charlebois of Dalhousie University, has forecast that inflationary pressures, including the carbon tax, on the growing, processing and transporting of food will increase the cost of wholesale food for Canadians by 34% by 2025.

Food affordability is becoming out of reach for many Canadians, while our U.S. counterparts are paying 36.8% less for wholesale food. Why? Well, here could be the reason. This week, Canada's budget watchdog confirmed that the carbon tax will cost Ontario families another \$903, in part due to the rising carbon tax on food.

Canadian parents should not have to choose between feeding their kids a bag of chips and a veggie tray. When costs go up, time is up. When will the government axe the tax and restore Canada to a nation where healthy food is not a luxury?

* * *

ANNIVERSARY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of three unique international development organizations: the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation and the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation.

[Translation]

For 50 years, these councils have been more than just partners in international development. They have been the architects of change by engaging youth, training educators and strengthening civil society to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges.

[English]

I have met some of the people who have benefited from their work. Whether it is using music therapy for healing, solar-powered breast pumps or digital education, their innovative programs are changing lives. Through their work, so many Canadians have been informed, inspired and involved in creating a more just and equitable world.

I wish them a happy 50th anniversary.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Liberals promised people a major employment insurance reform. They promised to give everyone better access to EI, to take into account seasonal industries, to protect self-employed workers and to put an end to discrimination against women.

Nine years later, it is clear that nothing has been done. The Liberals once again dragged their feet and failed workers. That is why a historic coalition among the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, the Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi and the major unions in Quebec is standing up and calling on the government to make these long-awaited changes in the very near future.

One of those changes involves putting an end to the discrimination that disproportionately affects women. If a person's job is eliminated while they are on parental leave or soon after, that person no longer has access to regular benefits. That means that some 3,000 women are denied employment insurance benefits every year.

Will the Liberals take action to defend the rights of these working women?

* * *

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mental Illness Awareness Week reminds us that each person living with a mental illness has a unique experience.

This morning, we launched the call for proposals for the emergency treatment fund. This fund will provide \$150 million to help municipalities as well as first nations, Inuit and Métis communities respond quickly to their urgent needs, as they tackle the toxic drug and overdose crisis.

This funding, along with the dedicated work of those on the front lines, will make a real difference in communities across the country. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to solving this crisis, and

Statements by Members

no community can solve it on their own. We are determined to do everything we can with all partners and communities to save lives.

* * *

● (1105)

[English]

THANKSGIVING MESSAGE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Thanksgiving, a time to count our blessings. As Canadians, we are blessed every day by the hard-working people our country relies on, like the men and women of our Canadian Forces, police, paramedics and firefighters, who protect us. There are those who build our country, like power linemen, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, oil field workers, loggers, truckers and plant and factory workers. Then there is the quiet but vital work of restaurant servers and checkout clerks, and of course our farmers, who grow our food and feed millions around the world.

We promise these extraordinary Canadians that a common-sense Conservative government will restore the promise of Canada. It will be a Canada where they can afford to eat, have a decent home, live in a safe neighbourhood and retire comfortably.

This Thanksgiving, we continue our fight to give Canadians a carbon tax election, which will bring relief from high taxes, high costs, high crime and a corrupt Liberal government. Let us bring it home.

* * *

RECOGNITION OF PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all privileged to be here in this House, to have a seat and to be representing our constituents by doing what they elected us to do.

As we all know, but perhaps the public does not, we could not do our jobs well without having the backing and support of our amazing teams, like the people who help answer the thousands of emails we get and the ones who answer our many calls and sometimes have to deliver hard news and have hard conversations. They are on the front lines and are working hard for us and Canadians every day.

I have been extremely fortunate to have amazing people with me throughout my journey. I want to give my thanks and respect to my current team: Jim Hennessy, Ashley Lloyd and Jeannette McLaughlin, who has been with me since 2015.

I thank them for all they do. I could not do this job without them. I want to thank all members of this House and encourage them all to thank their wonderful staff for the important work we do.

*Statements by Members***LUPUS**

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, I had the pleasure of meeting with Lupus Canada and its team of doctors and patient advocates to speak about the ongoing challenges faced by the one in 1,000 Canadians living with lupus.

Often referred to as a disease with a thousand faces, the complexity of this autoimmune condition and its various symptoms make diagnosing it a lengthy and challenging process, currently taking seven years on average. Canadians living with lupus face many challenges with navigating the disease due to its episodic nature. While advancements have been made in the treatment and management of lupus, there is still much work to do.

I want to thank Lupus Canada and its team for their dedication and advocacy in supporting all Canadians, especially those living with lupus.

* * *

BREAST CANCER

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one in eight Canadian women will develop breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. There are many factors that can increase a woman's risk for breast cancer, including family history, genetics and breast density. Racialized women are more likely to develop cancer at a younger age, and Black women are 40% more likely to die from it.

The Canadian Cancer Society, Dense Breasts Canada, Breast Cancer Canada and the Canadian Association of Radiologists are all calling for the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care to revise its guidelines so that breast cancer screening can start before age 50. They want screening to start at age 40 and extend beyond 75, yet the Liberal Minister of Health refuses to overturn the out-of-date federal guidelines, putting women's lives at risk.

We know early detection and treatment saves lives. My mom was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer at 48 years old and died less than a year later.

Any women who have been putting it off should talk to their doctor or book a mammogram today. Everyone out there in a battle with cancer should know that we are all cheering them on.

* * *

OVARIAN CANCER

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September marked Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, and each year over 3,000 women in Canada are diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Whereas the five-year survival rate for breast cancer in Canada is now up to 88%, ovarian cancer is still as low as 44%.

Belles with Balls NL and Ovarian Cancer Canada held the first Lady Ball in Newfoundland and Labrador, engaging survivors and thrivers and many female role models from across our province to support ovarian cancer research and awareness. Raising over \$100,000, the event was coordinated by the incredible co-chairs Bonnie Morgan and Alana Walsh-Giovannini. I want to thank all of the generous sponsors and attendees who came out and made it an exciting evening.

Together, we are making a real difference in the fight against ovarian cancer, turning hope into action for a brighter future for all women and their families.

* * *

● (1110)

WILDFIRE RESPONSE IN JASPER

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the investigation into the Jasper wildfire has exposed shocking negligence by the radical environment minister.

Since 2017, forester Ken Hodges had warned that if deadwood was not removed, Jasper would burn. His warnings were ignored. He testified that what little was done was “insignificant and poorly thought out”.

We have also learned that senior officials discussed cancelling prescribed burns for political optics. It was reported that firefighters and fire trucks were turned away at the gates while Jasper Park burned. Also, fire hydrants did not match those used anywhere else in Alberta, making firefighting even harder.

The Alberta government's response was delayed by federal bureaucracy when every minute counted. With a third of the town destroyed, 2,000 people left homeless and nearly a billion dollars in damage, this devastation is a direct result of the minister's failure to protect the people and the town of Jasper.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after another week of a paralyzed Parliament, a \$400-million Liberal scandal is proof that the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost, crime and corruption.

You have ruled that the NDP-Liberal government has violated a House of Commons order to turn over evidence to the RCMP for a criminal investigation into this scandal. The government's refusal to respect your ruling has paralyzed Parliament, casting aside the issues that Canadians sent us here to address, such as the doubling of housing costs, food inflation, crime and chaos.

At issue is the Auditor General's investigation, which uncovered more than 186 conflicts of interest at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Liberal appointees directed over \$400 million in taxpayer funds to their own companies. This occurred while many Canadians struggled to afford basic necessities like food, heating and housing.

What is in these documents that the government is so desperate to hide? What is so egregious that it is willing to paralyze this House for weeks? We need accountability. We will keep demanding it.

* * *

[Translation]

HUBERT PILON

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to pay tribute to Hubert Pilon, a resident of Lachute, in my riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation. Last spring, Mr. Pilon received the Quebec Lieutenant Governor's Medal in recognition of his involvement in numerous causes as well as his many achievements.

An engineer by trade, Mr. Pilon has been involved in his community at all levels, both at the municipal level and in community organizations, including the Argenteuil Hospital Foundation. He is an example of community dedication, having been involved with the Lachute Lions Club for over 50 years.

In fact, he was awarded the Centennial Medal in 2023, in recognition of his many years of service. I would like to thank Hubert for all he does for the community. He is an example to follow, and we are proud of all he has accomplished.

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[English]

RECOGNITION OF BIAS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP finance critic, I know that small and medium-sized businesses are the real engine of our economy. From coast to coast, these enterprises employ millions of Canadians and contribute essential goods, services and benefits to every community in our nation. They are responsible for 50% of Canada's GDP, employ 65% of all workers and create the majority of new jobs every year. However, we know that many businesses are struggling with high rents, rising costs and difficulty retaining employees. When individuals and families have to tighten their belts, local businesses suffer as well.

This week, I met with representatives of Canada's business improvement associations. These wonderful organizations promote local businesses and play active roles in all kinds of community activities.

I want to acknowledge two superb BIAs in Vancouver Kingsway: the Collingwood BIA, led by Angela Evans, and the Victoria Drive BIA, chaired by Christopher Chung. Their hard work not only creates prosperity, but brings us all closer together.

Statements by Members

• (1115)

[Translation]

THOMAS GAGNON

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of a community builder and proud resident of the Lower St. Lawrence, Thomas Gagnon, who passed away on September 14 at the age of 72.

A successful entrepreneur, he founded PG Solutions in Rimouski in 1980. This is a leading Quebec company specializing in management software applications for the corporate, forestry and municipal sectors.

Then, in 2012, he co-founded the Lower St. Lawrence KOA campground with his son. Located in a magnificent setting near Lake Saint-Mathieu, over the years it has won two "campground of the year" awards in Quebec, has been ranked the third best camping destination in Canada, and has received numerous North American awards, raising the profile of Saint-Mathieu-de-Rioux as a popular vacation destination.

He will be remembered as a visionary, a father, a friend and a great man. His endeavours will continue to shine a bright light all around us. Goodbye, Thomas, and thank you for everything.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed yet again that the carbon tax costs Canadians more than they get back in rebates. When the NDP-Liberals quadruple the carbon tax, families in Alberta will pay nearly \$2,000. It is not just Albertans who are fed up. All 10 provinces are now opposed to the costly coalition's carbon tax. The government will point to this very same report and talk about how great its rebate is, but ignore the report's findings that show the average Canadian household will see a net loss.

When it comes to this government's narrative on its economy-crippling carbon tax, the jig is up too. The carbon tax is driving up the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. Neither this NDP-Liberal government nor their carbon tax is worth the cost.

Canadians from coast to coast are ready for this Prime Minister to call a carbon tax election.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN AIRPORTS**

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, day in and day out, airports across Canada go above and beyond to ensure the safe and secure travel of passengers. Our airports not only help Canadians reunite with loved ones, visit family and go on vacation, but also support our economy in vital ways. With over 200,000 direct airport employees across the country, airports play a critical role in strengthening our supply chains and fostering national growth.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the airport authorities who were with us in Ottawa this past week for their hard work as well as their dedication. We continue to recognize and appreciate the significant impact that airports and their workers have on our communities, from coast to coast to coast.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up on the Prime Minister's costly carbon tax. Yesterday, once again, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reaffirmed that Canadians are out when it comes to the tax. If we add up the two carbon taxes, and of course the tax is taxed again with the GST, it will cost households anywhere between \$900 and \$2,000 per year.

If the government is so sure of its plan to quadruple the carbon tax, why not let Canadians decide in a carbon tax election?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was indeed a momentous day for Canada because yesterday the pharmacare bill became law in this country. This means hope for 12 million Canadians. For those affected by diabetes and for women struggling with the cost of contraception, help is now on the way. For the first time ever in Canadian history, the Government of Canada will be helping to bring down the cost of medication and helping Canadians with affordability.

It is a historic day that we should all celebrate in this place.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is happening in this country is nothing to celebrate. For the first time in this country, there are two million visits to food banks per month. That is 24 million visits, which is record-shattering in this country. We have thousands of encampments that have popped up in every part of the country. There are children struggling to get meals. One in four are skipping meals because of the carbon tax and the government's plan to quadruple it. At the end of the day, this is no coincidence. It is because the government keeps driving up the carbon tax.

When can we just have a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide in the future to axe the tax?

• (1120)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days before Thanksgiving, I think that all of us have tremendous compassion for all Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet.

On this side of the House, we know that the best guarantee of a good life for a family is a good job. That is why we want to celebrate the fact that we learned this morning that in September, Canada added 47,000 new jobs. Unemployment fell and every single one of those new jobs was in the private sector.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's report from Stats Canada was nothing to celebrate. It confirmed that income inequality after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government has never been higher. The gap increased by 50% between the richest and poorest Canadians, the highest it has ever been on record.

It has been nine years since the Prime Minister first promised to help the middle class and those working hard to join it. There are now millions of Canadians who will never be able to join the middle class because of their ever-increasing taxes, like the carbon tax.

Why can we not have a carbon tax election where Canadians can decide if they want to quadruple the carbon tax or axe it entirely?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only party in this House that voted against tax fairness has a lot of gall getting up and talking about income inequality.

We are the party that fights every single day for the middle class. That is why I am happy to say that part of the jobs news we had today was about wages. Wages have now outpaced inflation for 20 months in a row. A good job and a good wage is a recipe for middle-class success in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly 200 times now, the Bloc Québécois has supported Liberal inflationary spending sprees.

Quebeckers are resorting to food banks. Homelessness now affects ordinary Canadians, from grandparents unable to pay the rent to students who have to go to shelters. It costs \$1,743 to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Montreal. A one-bedroom apartment.

The country needs more skills, and the Conservatives are ready to get things back on track.

Can the government give Canadians a choice and call an election?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are delighted by the excellent news my colleagues have just shared with us this morning.

Pharmacare is now the law in Canada. Unemployment is now firmly on the decline and wages are on the rise. The only thing in danger of going down is the number of public servants in this country. Every week, this member hints that drastic cuts are coming to our federal public service.

Some transparency would be nice.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois does not like to brag about having supported the Liberal government nearly 200 times. We can never say it enough: This is the most centralizing government ever.

This government has spent indiscriminately, with its reckless inflationary spending. In Montreal, a person has to earn about \$60,000 to afford a one-bedroom apartment. This Thanksgiving, many Canadians will not be able to make a traditional meal. This government's incompetence is intolerable.

Will the government give Canadians a gift and call an election?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, whom I hold in high esteem, mentioned the word “intolerable”. What is really intolerable is hearing the Conservative leader talk about the difficulties Quebecers are facing and then announce that he is going to hurt them, punish them, by cutting the services and benefits they need, including the school food program.

Would my colleague be willing to invite her Conservative leader to meet with educators and teachers in the schools in her riding so he can tell them that he thinks feeding children is just feeding bureaucracy?

* * *

● (1125)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, farmers from across the country came to Ottawa yesterday to support the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-282 on supply management, which is currently stuck in the Senate. All the parties turned out as well to ask two senators, Peter Boehm and Peter Harder, to stop flouting the will of elected members.

Everyone was there except for one person who still has not spoken on the issue. That person is the Prime Minister, the very person who personally appointed the two lords almighty who are blocking everything.

When will the Prime Minister finally ask his two appointees to stop standing in the way of democracy?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois agree on, it is protecting the supply management system.

As we have explained it many times, we have chosen to appoint independent senators since 2015. Senators who were previously ap-

pointed by the Conservatives are not independent. They show up on Wednesday mornings at the Conservative caucus.

Is the leader of the Conservative Party going to ask the Conservative senators to vote in favour of supply management?

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only did the Prime Minister appoint the two senators who are blocking the bill, but he also has a close relationship with Peter Harder.

The senator even brags about it on his website. He used to advise the Prime Minister when he was in opposition in 2015. The Prime Minister himself would pick up the phone and call him. The Prime Minister even tasked Mr. Harder with planning the transition to a Liberal government six months before appointing him as a senator.

Since the Prime Minister has Mr. Harder's number so that he can call and ask for advice, could the Prime Minister use that number to ask Mr. Harder to respect democracy?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the Bloc Québécois members no longer seem interested in this file, I would like to remind them that, yesterday evening, I went to Domaine de la Gappe in the beautiful riding of Gatineau to wish residents there a happy Thanksgiving. Incidentally, I also want to wish all members of the House a happy Thanksgiving.

These people reassured me. They said, “Mr. MacKinnon, we registered for the Canadian dental care plan”. However, they wondered why the Bloc Québécois opposed the hundreds of dollars they are benefiting from today.

The Speaker: I would remind members that it is important not to use members' names, even if it is in reference to oneself.

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

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a new report, living costs are rising faster than incomes for the bottom 40% of families. Roughly speaking, almost half of Canadians are getting poorer and poorer. Ordinary folks are struggling while the rich line their pockets.

On top of that, the Conservatives are announcing that they would cut programs that help people, like dental care and pharmacare, programs that were launched thanks to the NDP.

Those other two parties are letting people down. What will it take for the Liberals to stop pandering to the needs of rich CEOs at the expense of Quebecers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that dental care is a big help to Canadians and Quebecers. Another thing that helps them is a good job with a good salary.

Oral Questions

That is why we are very pleased to say that the Canadian economy added 47,000 jobs in September and that wages have outpaced inflation for the past 20 months. That is good news for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new report paints a disturbing picture of economic injustice in Canada. Income inequality has hit the highest level ever recorded, and the bottom 40% of Canadians hold less than 3% of Canada's wealth. The Liberals let this happen, caving to wealthy CEOs jacking up grocery prices and rent, while the Conservatives want to cut programs like the NDP's pharmacare and dental care that will put more money in people's pockets.

Why are the Liberals, like Conservatives, catering to the ultrarich while working families in Canada are falling behind?

• (1130)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect for the member for Vancouver Kingsway, whom I have known and worked with constructively for many years.

I share his concern about income inequality, and that is why I know that he shares my happiness at the jobs numbers we got this morning. The fact is that 47,000 more jobs have been added to the Canadian economy in September, wages have outpaced inflation for 20 months in a row and, as an added bonus, rents have been going down in Vancouver.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament's budget watchdog has confirmed yet again that Canadians pay more in carbon tax than they get back in so-called rebates. In Ontario, for example, a family will pay \$1,400 more than they get back, but they already knew that because everything costs more after nine years of these NDP-Liberals. Taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up for the economic vandalism that they are perpetrating on Canadians.

Why will the Prime Minister not just put Canadians in the place where they need to be with a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member did not read the report. It is obvious, because, on page 1 of the report, it says Canadians "will see a net gain, receiving more from the Canada Carbon Rebate than the total amount they pay in the federal fuel charge". Let us flip to page 7. It is a bit long, I know, and the member of Parliament might have a bit of a difficult time with a document like this. The meaningless slogans do not matter. What does matter is, "Broadly speaking, our updated estimates...show larger net gains...for average households across income quintiles in backstop provinces compared to our [previous] distributional analysis."

If the member is going to quote the report, he ought to read it. I can bring it over if he would like.

The Speaker: I would like to ensure we treat all members with the respect and dignity they deserve.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only did I read the report, I actually paid some attention when I dressed myself this morning, unlike that scene over there.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I have mentioned before in question period that it is inappropriate to comment on the looks of any member, and I again point that out.

I will invite the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to start his question again without the comments that caused the Speaker to rise.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, not only did I read the report, but I was able to make it past the first page, all the way to page 18 of the PBO's report, that shows the true cost of the carbon tax for Ontario families is that it is going to be \$1,400 more than they are getting back in their phony rebates.

Statistics Canada today revealed the full effect of the economic vandalism. All of these high taxes and economic wealth redistribution were supposed to make Canadians better off, Liberals claimed, but, instead, we have seen the largest gap between the rich and poor that has ever existed in this country.

It is time for a carbon tax election. Why will the Liberals not just give us one?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that this is Friday and that Conservatives just cannot resist every day seeking to plumb new depths of degraded nursery playground insults.

However, I have some advice for the member opposite. If he wants to insult a colleague for his appearance, which is never a good idea, maybe he should not pick a gold medal-winning Olympic athlete.

Oral Questions

• (1135)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. This week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer once again reported that the carbon tax costs more per family than families get back in rebates. In Alberta, the carbon tax will cost nearly \$2,000 by driving up the cost of gas, home heating, groceries and nearly everything else. All 10 provinces do not like it and Canadians do not like it. Therefore, when will the government call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know how we can tell that the Conservatives know they are losing the argument? It is when they resort to useless, meaningless, ad hominem attacks on people's appearance. That is unnecessary, unparliamentary and childish. It is childish, just like their slogans.

The Conservatives do not want to cheer on Canada's economy. They do not want to acknowledge that 47,000 jobs were added in September. They do not want to acknowledge that interest rates are down because inflation is down and gas prices are down and unemployment is down. The best part is that our emissions are down too because our plan is working. Canadians are working hard and our economy is working for them.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the parliamentary secretary a polite question and he did not answer it, so I am not sure what that response was about. I will ask again and point out, though, that the PBO report could not have been more clear. It is right there on page 18, table 3. That is where the PBO said that Canadians pay more in the carbon tax and GST on the carbon tax than they get in rebates.

The carbon tax drives up the cost of gas, heating and groceries. It kills jobs. It suppresses wages by chasing investment out of Canada. The parliamentary secretary does not have to agree with me. His government can call a carbon tax election and we will see what Canadians have to say. When will the Liberals do it?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the carbon price is this simple: It brings down pollution and it puts more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians. It is the single best mechanism known to the market to reduce carbon footprints. In fact, it was a Conservative invention. However, the Conservatives' opposition to it is unsurprising. What is surprising is the complete flip-flop on this position that we have seen from the NDP. When they flip on their principles and abandon supporting carbon pricing, they breed voter cynicism and they send one message to progressive voters, which is that if they want somebody to defend climate action and support attacking pollution, their only option is the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and the government's time is up. Once again, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that the carbon tax costs Canadians more than they get back. Saskatchewan families will pay more than \$2,000 when the costly coalition quadruples the carbon tax. The Prime Minister knows that Canadians have had enough of his taxing them to death while robbing them blind. When will he call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only place in the world where it seems like it is okay to never talk about climate change, commit to doing nothing about climate change and commit to actually increasing our carbon emissions seems to be the Conservative campaign room because the world knows that climate change is real. We just had a horrific hurricane sweep across Florida, one of the most powerful ever. Wildfires are forcing Canadians out of their homes and, yes, the Conservatives want to ask, how is the carbon price going to reduce hurricanes and forest fires? It is science. The Conservatives need to go back to, literally, grade 9 science. Greenhouse gases cause extreme weather.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how terrible that the member is willing to use a narrative that is false when it comes to Jasper, just to make his point that is not accurate.

The PBO has confirmed again what Canadians from all 10 provinces know: The carbon tax continues to drive up the cost of gas, groceries and heating and that is only the thin edge of the wedge. Middle-class Canadians are losing ground. Those wishing to join the middle class have no confidence in the NDP-Liberal costly coalition. The Prime Minister knows he is taxing Canadians to death and robbing them blind. When will he call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the blatant climate denial from the other side is absurd and childish. It is literally in grade 3 when kids learn about greenhouse gases. The more you put into the environment, the hotter our planet gets. The hotter our planet gets, the hotter the oceans become and that causes more extreme weather, and it also dries out our forests, which makes our forests more susceptible and vulnerable to wildfires.

Over 40% of the people around the world who were forced out of their homes because of wildfires last year were Canadian. We are a small country, 0.5% of the world's population. Climate change is real. When will the Conservatives get it?

Oral Questions

• (1140)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Peter Boehm and Peter Harder are two senators who want to undo the elected members' vote on Bill C-282, which would protect supply management in trade agreements.

These two Liberal appointees say they fear that this will take power away from negotiators. News flash: that is the point. That is the whole point of Bill C-282. It stops negotiators from sacrificing supply management again, after trading it away in three agreements, including two negotiated under the Liberals, with Europe, Asia and the United States.

The members on this side of the aisle are protecting farmers. The ones on that side are protecting the right to sacrifice them.

Will the Liberals tell their rich little friends to get their priorities straight?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, enough is enough.

It has been explained several times that we appointed independent senators. They are independent. I know that the Bloc Québécois understands that concept.

Seriously, we have been telling these senators loud and clear that Bill C-282 was supported by the vast majority of members in the House. We are asking them to move swiftly and send the bill back to us as soon as possible.

The message seems clear to me.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our two Peters were once negotiators themselves. That is why, instead of protecting farmers, they are protecting negotiators. Our kinglets are putting the privileges of people like them ahead of the common good, ahead of democracy and ahead of farmers. That is what the Senate is all about. It is an archaic, monarchist and arrogant institution.

This is what happens when unelected officials with fat salaries and guaranteed positions, who are not accountable to the public, come to believe that they are more important than everyone else.

Will the Liberals ask their majesties to come back down to earth and do something for our farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all senators appointed since 2015 are independent. However, the senators who were appointed before that by the Harper government are not independent. They show up on Wednesday mornings to be told what to do, what to say and how to vote.

My question, especially for my Conservative colleagues from Quebec, is whether they are doing their job and encouraging Conservative senators to vote in favour of this bill.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up for this Liberal carbon tax grab.

New data confirms that Alberta families will be worse off by nearly \$2,000 after the carbon tax is quadrupled. That is money coming out of Alberta and into government pockets to pay off Liberal insiders.

Will the Prime Minister apologize for the public smearing of the independent budget officer for telling the truth, and finally call the carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is on page 1. The Conservatives clearly did not get past the table of contents.

It says clearly that the PBO estimates the average household in each backstopped province will see a net gain, receiving more from the Canada carbon rebate than the total amount they pay in the federal carbon charge. October 15 is next week, and that is when Canadians will receive their next installment of the Canada carbon rebate, and that is good news because it is supporting affordability.

Interest rates are down, inflation is down and emissions are down. This plan is working. When will the Conservatives get it?

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of these NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and the carbon tax is way up.

Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released an updated carbon tax report that shows that once the NDP-Liberals quadruple the carbon tax, Saskatchewan families will be paying \$2,000 per year.

When will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election so Canadians can decide if they want to continue to pay his carbon tax?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a reminder to the constituents in my colleague's riding in Saskatchewan, they will be receiving \$376 on October 15 for a family of four. That is good news for affordability, and eight out of 10 families across Canada get more back from the Canada carbon rebate than they pay.

It seems like the Conservatives do not want to talk about the economy anymore, and it is probably because Canada's economy is doing really well. We added 47,000 jobs in September alone. Interest rates are down because inflation is down. Gas prices are down and emissions are down.

The Conservatives do not want good news. They do not want to cheer for Canadians. They just want bad-news stories.

* * *

• (1145)

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, it is not worth the corporate crime and corruption.

TD Bank has been ordered to pay over \$3 billion by U.S. regulators because it was found to be in a conspiracy to violate the Bank Secrecy Act and commit money laundering for criminals who traffic in drugs that end up on our streets.

I have a simple question for the government: When will it take money laundering seriously?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish the member opposite and his beautiful family a wonderful Thanksgiving.

We take money laundering very seriously. That is why we have acted to give the Superintendent of Financial Institutions more powers to oversee Canada's financial institutions. I would urge all members interested in this important issue to look to the statement he has made on it. We have also been investing in FINTRAC and increasing its resources and authorities.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Liberals are not taking it seriously.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said of TD Bank, "By making its services convenient for criminals, it became one." Why do the Americans have to catch chartered Canadian banks and charge them with money laundering linked to fentanyl, terrorism and human trafficking?

Could the minister stand up and tell us what charges and what sanctions TD Bank will face in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is entirely reasonable for Americans to police activity that happens in America. That is how sovereignty and jurisdiction work. It is also the case that in May, FINTRAC levied a significant penalty against TD for non-compliance with money laundering measures.

I have a question for the member opposite. The Conservatives in this House voted against measures to protect Canada's financial systems. Why?

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Red Fish Arts Studio diverts youth out of the criminal justice system by teaching them skills. The government promised Red Fish funding last April, but when the Prime Minister shuffled his cabinet, the new minister cancelled not only its funding but the much-needed funding for indigenous languages.

Indigenous peoples deserve better than broken promises. Will the minister reverse his decision and fund both the Red Fish Arts Studio and the indigenous languages program?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indigenous skills training is absolutely vital; it is absolutely critical. We have made record historic investments through the indigenous skills and employment training program. We will continue to support young people and indigenous people and their education, training and skills training.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Jon Wells was known by his family and fellow Blood Tribe members as a cowboy, kind and respectful, but that did not stop Calgary police from assaulting, tasing, pepper-spraying and sedating him while he was lying face down. He died before he ever made it to a hospital.

Racism, colonialism and systemic violence continue to murder indigenous people today. When will the minister act to bring justice and accountability to policing that kills?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the circumstances that my colleague from the NDP just described are deplorable and reprehensible. We all need to do better as a nation, including all law enforcement members at every level in this country, in addressing anti-indigenous racism and addressing the harms that are caused in interactions between law enforcement and indigenous people on this land. That is work we are committed to doing, in conjunction with the member and all members in this place who see a better vision for a future where reconciliation includes the fight against anti-indigenous discrimination.

* * *

• (1150)

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week at the United Nations, we heard the Minister of Foreign Affairs say:

Oral Questions

Often, the people who claim to speak for freedom are the same people who want the government to decide who people can love, who they are or even what they can wear.

We see it in our country. We see it around the world....

In Afghanistan, we see it taken to its extreme as the Taliban continue to impose inhumane rules against women and girls....

Today, on the International Day of the Girl, I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs if she can reaffirm our government's commitment to girls.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a country that values freedom from oppression, not freedom to oppress others. The rights of women and girls, including the right to choose, is put in danger by the far right, including some members of the Conservative opposition. A Liberal government will always support and protect women's and girls' rights here at home and around the world.

Along with Germany, Australia and the Netherlands, we will hold the Taliban regime accountable for its violations of women's and girl's rights in Afghanistan. We will always be there for women at home and around the world.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for seven years, the Liberals knew Jasper was a tinderbox. Damning testimony has proved the Minister of Environment's negligence. He failed to do everything he could to protect homes, businesses and this beloved national park.

To stop a raging wildfire, we need to do two things: remove the heat and apply water. We know beyond a doubt that the minister did neither. A tiny fraction of the dead trees were removed, and shockingly, firefighters were even turned away.

How much incompetence does it take to get fired from Liberal cabinet?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his collaboration on the environment committee, where we have been hearing about the circumstances that led to the Jasper wildfire situation.

I would like to point out that the overpoliticization of this issue, the tabloidization of it, and what the Conservatives are saying on social media have been absolutely unacceptable. As a result of some of their tweets, public servants have received death threats from people who are enraged by the Conservatives and their attempts to politicize this issue.

A natural disaster is not a political issue, and our government did everything it could to prevent the wildfire.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Liberals are good at is trying to deflect and distract from their own failures, so let me tell members the facts about the Jasper fire investigation. They knew about the risk for seven years and failed to do everything they could to mitigate it. Twenty fire

trucks and 50 firefighters were turned away. Parks Canada bought hydrants that did not even have the proper hookups.

It is clear that this fire was a result of negligence or incompetence. When will the Minister of Environment be shown the door so that other at-risk communities do not face the same fate as Jasper has?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Jasper wildfire was started by lightning, and the people who live in Jasper underwent an incredibly difficult summer. To politicize this issue is unacceptable.

Arctic Fire, the organization that my colleague mentioned, is a private for-profit company under direct contract with Alberta Wildfire. It had no direct relationship with Parks Canada, but it did supply Alberta Wildfire with two trucks for four days, not 20 trucks and not 50 firefighters, as my colleague pointed out. Under the advisement of the Government of Alberta, they were released by unified command, not the federal government.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence, who was then the minister of public safety, slow-walked the issuance of a CSIS warrant to investigate a former Ontario Liberal cabinet minister. The minister stalled the issuance of a warrant for 54 days, a warrant that national security officials say should have been issued within four to 10 days. What is the minister's explanation for this highly suspicious delay?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching, I will say quite clearly that we take foreign interference extremely seriously on this side of the House. That is why we have a foreign interference inquiry unfolding before Canadians' eyes as we speak. That is why ministers have been attending it and providing answers and clarity for Canadians.

We will not take lessons from that side of the House about how to conquer and address foreign interference, because this is a priority for our government.

● (1155)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talk about a non-answer from the minister. It was 54 days of delay to issue a CSIS warrant to investigate a former Ontario Liberal cabinet minister, and this is at the time when the minister was issuing other warrants within a matter of days. Is it just a coincidence? Come on.

Again, what is the explanation for this highly suspicious delay?

Oral Questions

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the foreign interference inquiry unfolding. It is a commission that we established on this side of the House. We had the minister testify as to this very issue at the foreign interference commission. He indicated that when he was presented with the warrant, he addressed it promptly.

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[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, time is running out for the Liberals. October 29 is almost here. They will have to stop dodging the issue of raising OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74. Seventy-nine percent of Canadians support the pension increase. The House supports the pension increase. Seniors' groups support the pension increase. Every time we ask the Liberals about it, however, they sidestep the issue by making partisan attacks.

Are they going to increase OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74, yes or no?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has had many opportunities to support seniors. It is somewhat ironic to hear what my colleague opposite is saying. She supported raising the age of pension eligibility to 67, yet now she is advocating for seniors aged 65 and over to get an increase. The Bloc voted against increasing the GIS supplement. They voted against the dental plan. The Liberals are the ones who put all these measures in place, and the Bloc Québécois voted against them.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals are dodging the issue with their partisan attacks. They seem to think that seniors cannot see through their act, but it is clear to all seniors that the Liberals are unwilling to talk about OAS. Let me remind the Liberals that they will no longer be able to hide as of October 29. They will have to choose.

Will they increase pensions, or would they rather explain on the campaign trail why they are withholding income from one million Quebecers?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are not partisan attacks.

I would remind the Bloc Québécois that the results of votes in the House are public. Everyone can see what the parties voted on and whether they voted yes or no. In the case of the Bloc Québécois, it voted against increasing the guaranteed income supplement. It voted against pharmacare, which is in effect today and will help diabetics in Quebec with their care. Hundreds of thousands of Quebecers support dental care. The Bloc Québécois voted against it. These are not partisan attacks. These are facts.

[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

The Speaker ruled that the government violated a House order to turn over evidence about the latest \$400-million Liberal scandal, effectively obstructing justice. We have heard new excuses for weeks about why the ruling should not be respected.

What smoking gun is in those documents that the Liberals do not want Canadians to see? Is it malfeasance, complete incompetence or obvious corruption?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really important to recognize that literally thousands and thousands of pages have been provided on this issue. We need to appreciate that we have the RCMP, the Auditor General and a former law clerk all expressing concerns in regard to this Conservative political game, where they are handing documents directly from here to the RCMP.

We have a choice: Do we listen to the political games of the Conservatives or do we listen to institutions like the RCMP and our Auditor General? I am picking the RCMP.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a load of Stove Top stuffing. This is the latest in a series of scandals involving Liberal insiders riding the gravy train, mashing the truth, stuffing their pockets with taxpayer money and treating Canadians like turkeys.

Parliament has demanded these documents. The Speaker ordered that they be provided. The Liberal government believes that it is above the rules. Canadians are not gobbling up these excuses.

When will the Liberals turn over the documents and let Parliament get back to work?

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that this government does not treat the matter as a joke.

The Conservatives continue to play a political game at a great cost. We will continue to be focused on Canadians as they continue to be focused on the Conservatives. They should listen to what the RCMP had to say: "There is significant risk that the Motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes" and, to underline the words, "Charter protections".

Why will the Conservative Party not listen to what the RCMP and others are saying?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. There is more proof the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, crime and corruption: The Auditor General found that nearly 400 million tax dollars were given to Liberal insiders through their green slush fund; there were also 186 conflicts of interest and 10 completely ineligible projects. However, the Liberals refuse to hand over these documents to the police, effectively obstructing justice and choosing to grind Parliament to a halt, all at a time when Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves.

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

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Monday is Thanksgiving. What do I give thanks for? I give thanks for living in a democracy in which we draw a firm line between the police and politicians. That is a line that the Conservatives are asking us to cross. That is a line that the RCMP has flagged as being crossed as we speak. The RCMP has said, “in a free and democratic society [police independence] ensures that the government cannot direct or influence the actions of law enforcement”. That is a direct quote from the chief commissioner of the RCMP, Mike Duheme. I never thought I would have to say this in the House of Commons, but I wish that, for once, the Conservatives would listen to the cops.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for nearly a year, workers at Videotron, Outaouais residents, have been locked out. The workers and their families have suffered a lot. However, on Friday, the parties finally reached an agreement and the workers went back to work.

Can the minister give us more details on this great news and tell us how he helped resolve the dispute?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of us in the Outaouais region and throughout Quebec and Canada are thrilled that this dispute has been settled after nearly a year. The workers and their families, some 210 families in our region, suffered during the lockout.

I obviously want to thank the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service for its very active involvement. This has been a top priority for me and my colleagues since the beginning of my mandate.

Today, we are relieved that this lockout and labour dispute has been settled.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want, and what we are asking for, is simply transparency and integrity.

The Liberal government continues to hide behind excuses to obstruct justice. Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. Meanwhile, \$400 million went up in smoke in Ottawa in another Liberal corruption scandal.

Will the Liberals end the cover-up, hand the evidence over to the police, and allow Parliament to get back to work for all Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the real scandal would be to give in to pressure from Conservative politicians to turn our country into a banana republic. They are trying to confuse the work of the RCMP, which is independent.

The RCMP commissioner told us and even wrote to us saying not to meddle in his affairs because it will make his investigations more difficult. However, Conservative politicians refuse to listen and want to turn us into a banana republic.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while millions of Canadians are being forced to choose between paying their rent or putting food on the table, the government is using their money to line the pockets of Liberal cronies. We are all waiting for an explanation regarding the misappropriation of \$400 million in taxpayers' money.

If this corruption was not bad enough, the government is making things worse by refusing to produce the requested documents.

When will the Liberal government finally co-operate with the investigation and show a little respect for Canadians?

● (1205)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that the Conservatives are not asking very many questions about the economy. Why? I think the answer is obvious. It is because we have good news.

Today, the really good news is that 47,000 good jobs were added to the Canadian economy in September. Meanwhile, wages have been outpacing inflation for the past 20 months. That is good news for Canadians.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House remains paralyzed by yet another Liberal government corruption scandal. This green fund did nothing but create more bureaucracy and line the pockets of Liberal friends.

We are talking about \$400 million and 186 conflicts of interest at a time when an unprecedented two million plus Canadians are using food banks every month.

Why will the government not hand the documents over to the police to get back those \$400 million in Canadian taxpayer dollars?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been answered a number of times already, but here is a question that has gone unanswered so far. Why does my colleague not invite the Conservative leader to talk to the 10,500 residents of his riding who received the new Canadian dental care plan card?

Many thousands of them have already gone to the dentist, often for the first time in years. The Conservative leader, however, says that this plan does not exist. When will my colleague invite his leader to meet with these 10,500 seniors?

* * *

[English]

PHARMACARE

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a momentous day for Canadian health care. Bill C-64, the Pharmacare Act, received royal assent. This landmark legislation will establish a framework for national, publicly funded, single-payer universal drug coverage; it will ensure that Canadians across the country have access to the diabetes medications and contraception they need.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health share with the House what passing this landmark pharmacare legislation will mean for the health of Canadians?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, it was an exciting day. Pharmacare is now law in Canada. This means that 3.5 million Canadians will now have access to diabetes medications. It means that nine million women can have access to contraceptives. We know that the Conservatives are always against public health care systems, so they voted against this, but what is really disappointing is that the NDP ripped up the agreement, in their own words, that is actually delivering progress. They have chosen politics over progress. They are no different from the Conservatives. We will stand up for Canadians every single time.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ever since Hullo Ferries launched a high-speed service between Nanaimo and Vancouver, my constituent Jamie Coleman is forced out of his wheelchair and carried on board, as are other Canadians who use a wheelchair. This is disrespectful and embarrassing. Hullo Ferries has a Q'Straint wheelchair system installed, yet Transport Canada continues to delay regulatory approval. No one in a wheelchair should have to endure this just to take a ferry.

When will the minister take action to ensure all Canadians can travel with dignity?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague on behalf of people with disabilities in Canada for his collaboration on the first Canada Disability Benefit Act.

Building an inclusive Canada is the cornerstone of our government. We have made historic investments of \$6 billion, and that is just the start. Now, we just need to work together to develop the rest and establish a plan to make life accessible for all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, since 2016, the City of Burnaby has opposed the Trans Mountain pipeline because of what it sees as an unacceptable risk of fire in populated areas from the expanded tank farm. Last week, the TMX corporation bribed and gagged the City of Burnaby, paying them \$21 million over 20 years to say, "Do not criticize us anymore. It is now a rule. You are not allowed to say anything about the Trans Mountain pipeline."

Did anyone on the Liberal front benches know about this? Did anyone on the government front bench approve spending taxpayers' dollars to bribe and gag the City of Burnaby?

● (1210)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her hard work for many years fighting for Canadians and speaking up for climate action. I want to go to the issue at the heart of her work, which is the need for strong climate action. I am really proud to be a member of a government that has made climate action a priority. Ours is the only major party that continues to advocate for a price on pollution, the most economically rational way to fight climate change.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Before moving on to the point of order, I would like to wish all members and all of my colleagues a happy break in their riding, for those who are leaving immediately after question period.

I wish you and your families a happy Thanksgiving.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I would like to quickly come back to what the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes said earlier this morning, mainly because his comments coincide with the tabling of a report in Quebec that looked at the reasons why women leave politics.

Routine Proceedings

We already know that there are obstacles that prevent more women from going into politics, but we are also seeing that they are more likely to leave politics faster than men. Some of the obstacles listed in the report include cyberstalking, threats and safety risks, which are more likely to affect women. However, the report also mentioned that women are more likely to be attacked for their physical appearance and dress. There seems to be a double standard there.

The comments that we heard this morning were not directed at a woman. However, what concerns me is that, because these sorts of comments may seem harmless as a one-off, we may tend to not follow up. However, such comments may indirectly give the public the idea that it is okay to make similar comments, which could discourage people in general, but particularly women, from going into politics.

Mr. Speaker, I would to make the following request of you. The next time such comments are made, I would like you to not only remind the House of the importance of using parliamentary language, but also ask the member to apologize and withdraw the comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My friend and colleague's comments were very well considered and well put.

To be honest, I had not really considered the gender implications of the insults from the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes earlier. However, I am struck with the reality that when people run out of arguments in this place, they resort to personal attacks. They resort to calling names, using pejoratives and referring to each other's appearance. That is beneath the House of Commons. It is actually something that I think a school-aged person would receive detention for or would be called out for, as inappropriate behaviour.

If the member has some sartorial advice for me, that is fine; we can talk about it in the halls, but I do not think we should be resorting to ad hominem attacks. I would appreciate an apology, because it was childish and beneath this place.

● (1215)

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members. I see that no one else is rising on the same point of order.

As I indicated earlier, the hon. member rephrased the question after the matter was brought to his attention. If it is necessary, I will look into the matter further, but for the time being I would like to let hon. members know that it was brought up and recognized by the Speaker. I hope we can move on.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS**BRAIN CANCER**

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. Petitioners note that an estimated 27 Canadians a day are diagnosed with a brain tumour. Canada is years behind the United States in approving new drugs and treatments, which could have an impact on thousands of brain cancer patients. There continues to be a shortage of brain cancer drugs in Canada.

With that in mind, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to increase funding for brain cancer research; work with provinces and territories to ensure that drugs, medical services and new therapies are accessible to brain cancer patients nationwide; and remove unnecessary red tape so brain cancer drugs can be approved expeditiously.

[*Translation*]

GATINEAU-OTTAWA TRAM

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling an important petition started by Patrick Robert-Meunier, executive director of MOBI-O and spokesperson of Coalition S'allier pour le tramway, which gathered nearly 900 signatures from residents in the region.

This petition calls on the government to fund the Ottawa side of the preliminary design studies for the Gatineau-Ottawa tram as soon as possible to ensure the completion of this much-needed project that is so important for our region.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: 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, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know it has been an hour and a half since the member last spoke about the issue. I know he has had a lot of communication from his constituents. Has he heard from any more of his constituents about the issue?

• (1220)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a great question because, unfortunately, I did have to cut off a page or two of my commentary.

Here is some feedback I got from one of my constituents this morning. Eric said, “It is the equivalent to insider trading and should have similar punishment attached to it for all parties involved.

“Government should be held to stricter rules than the general public and should never be allowed to escape punishment that the general public would not be able to.

“Using public office for personal gain is disgraceful and frankly disgusting.”

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to read a quote from someone I think Canadians would respect greatly, the former law clerk of the Parliament of Canada. I suggest that he is an individual who is truly independent, and what he says should be taken with very serious consideration no matter what part of the House one sits in. He says, “it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its power to demand and get documents from the government in order to transfer them to a third party (RCMP) that wouldn't otherwise receive them or to compel the government to give documents to the third party.”

Let us listen to what professionals, individuals and independent offices are saying. This is one example, not to mention what the RCMP is saying. Why is the Conservative Party so focused on continuing with the political games as opposed to listening to what these independent agencies are saying?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any political games. As I highlighted clearly in my speech, I am speaking to the motion for the first time. The member who just asked me a question has already spent over an hour and a half speaking. He has given two speeches on the privilege motion. If anybody is playing games, it is him. He speaks 10 times more in the chamber than I do. I do not understand how it is political games for me to speak on behalf of my constituents. I read 15 minutes of quotes. I have pages of them; 450 constituents have given me feedback of how upset they are about the illegitimate use of taxpayers' money.

Privilege

Ultimately, if the former law clerk has advice, maybe he should have provided it to the current law clerk, because the motion was supported by the majority of the members, and your ruling, Mr. Speaker, actually demanded that the documents be turned over.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people back at home in Langley, British Columbia, are asking me what is going on in Ottawa, why Parliament has come to a halt and what is the impasse so soon into the fall session.

The NDP tore up its supply and confidence agreement with the Liberals. What happened there? The NDP discovered that hitching its wagon to the Prime Minister's train was not really helping it very much where it really counts, which is at the polls. Nature abhors a vacuum, so the Bloc Québécois jumped in and started flirting with the Liberal government in the hope of maybe leveraging some favours. However, it too is finding out that being closely aligned with the Prime Minister in the waning days of his political career probably is not all that good as a political strategy.

Both these opposition parties are learning what has been obvious to the Conservative Party for a long time: the Prime Minister has what resembles the opposite of a Midas touch. King Midas got his wish that everything he touched would turn to gold, which was really cool for a little while, until even his food started to turn into gold and he realized he would starve to death.

The Prime Minister has something similar; everything he touches gets tarnished. Eventually it falls apart in a pile of dust. Here are a couple of examples. The WE Charity was at one time a functional charity here in Canada. It had a very high profile. It worked with school kids. It had the additional advantage of being closely aligned with the Prime Minister, some of his cabinet ministers and some of their family members.

The Prime Minister thought he would reciprocate that friendship by selecting WE Charity, without any competition at all, to distribute almost \$1 billion of COVID relief money. It was a short-lived golden moment for the charity, which ended when all the conflicts of interest became public. The harm was done and it shut its doors. It is history thanks to the Prime Minister.

SNC-Lavalin is another example. It was a profitable engineering and construction company with big projects right across the country and around the world. It made mistakes, admittedly, but if the Prime Minister had just left it alone, it would still be a thriving company today. His then attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first indigenous attorney general, had one idea, based on the professional advice she was getting, as to how to prosecute SNC-Lavalin. However, the Prime Minister had quite a different idea, so Canada's self-declared feminist prime minister fired Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canada's female, first-ever indigenous attorney general.

I read her autobiography, and I hope everyone has read it. It is very informative. In there, she said, quite frankly, that she wishes she had never met the Prime Minister. She told him that to his face. There are many other people who have been too closely associated with the Prime Minister who feel the same.

Privilege

Another example is former governor general David Johnston, a man with a huge reputation in Canada for the services he has provided to his nation. He was appointed to—

• (1225)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to request that you look through the chamber. It appears we do not have quorum to continue this debate.

The Speaker: There is a quorum call and indeed, the hon. member is correct. The bells will be rung.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: At this point, we do have quorum in the House.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I was sharing some of travesties the Prime Minister has wreaked upon great institutions and great people, like David Johnston, the former governor general of this country, a man with a huge reputation until the Prime Minister appointed him as special rapporteur on foreign interference in our elections, our democratic institutions. That appointment was made despite the close ties Mr. Johnston had with the Trudeau family and Trudeau Foundation, a foundation that had received funds from a foreign nation, which was going to be the subject of the investigation.

Maybe this obvious conflict of interest was not immediately obvious to our high school drama teacher Prime Minister, but it certainly should have been obvious to highly educated David Johnston. Unfortunately, he did not get it, he did not understand it or he turned a blind eye to it. In the end, he resigned, another fatality of the Prime Minister's golden touch.

I could go on with other examples. I could mention the Winnipeg lab affair, the ArriveCAN scam or the billionaire island scandal. Some of my colleagues have raised those already. I am not going to belabour the point other than to relate this back to the question of the day: What happened to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, better known now by its new nickname, the Liberal Party green slush fund?

I will provide a little history. SDTC was created by an act of Parliament back in former Liberal prime minister John Chrétien's days to promote investment in green technology, a laudable objective. It continued its work under former prime minister Stephen Harper and would likely be thriving today if the current Prime Minister had left it alone, but he could not resist the temptation of firing the people who were there and putting his own friends in place instead. That is what went wrong. The Prime Minister's friends sat on the board and, despite conflicts of interest, distributed money among themselves, insiders helping other insiders, Liberal friends helping each other.

We know all of this from the independent Auditor General's report 6, which was tabled in Parliament on June 4, a couple of weeks before the House rose for the summer break. It is highly critical of what was happening at SDTC. I am not going to get into the details because the report is public information, but I will discuss some examples. There was \$390 million in misallocated taxpayer funds that was granted to insiders or non-qualifying projects. These are insid-

ers on the board of directors supporting each other in their grant applications. There were 186 examples of conflicts of interest, with board members voting for each other's applications.

The Auditor General learned about this from a whistle-blower. This is what one of those whistle-blowers told the standing parliamentary committee now looking into it: "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." There we have it. It is not just mismanagement but criminality.

Therefore, we, the official opposition Conservative Party, did what we were elected to do, which is holding the government to account and uncovering corruption. Where there is smoke, there is fire. We are doing our job.

We put forward a motion shortly after the Auditor General's report was tabled. I am going to read a small portion of it: "That the House 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 30 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017". The order goes on to describe what some of those documents are, the different types and categories.

This Conservative motion passed a little while later, on June 10, with the support of the other opposition parties, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. Only Liberal members of Parliament voted against it.

• (1230)

I know the Liberals are not happy with the order, but this is the reality of a minority House. This is the way it works. They do not have a majority. They need to play nice with, and get support from, one of the opposition parties. They failed to do that. They are now stuck with this order they say they do not like. Well, that is too bad. Parliament is supreme, Parliament made the order and the Liberal Party must now comply with it. The governing party does not have a choice not to comply with it.

That is what happened. Nothing happened during the summer. Some of the documents were delivered, but not all. Clearly, the order was not complied with. We got back here in September after the summer break and things started to get very ugly. The first day back in the House, our House leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, rose on a question of privilege "concerning the failure of the government to comply with the order that the House adopted on Monday, June 10".

I do not have to repeat anything in the House leader's speech. It is in Hansard for anybody who is interested in reading it. It is well researched, it is well written, and it is convincing. As a matter of fact, it convinced the Speaker, and a couple of days later, the Speaker made his ruling. The ruling confirms the earlier order. The Prime Minister's Office and all relevant government departments must comply with the original document production order as demanded, unredacted.

The Liberal House leader has been leading a valiant but ultimately failing charge against this document production order and the Speaker's ruling. She raises several interesting but specious constitutional arguments, which I would summarize as follows: number one, the document production order trespasses on the charter right of freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, section 8 of the charter; number two, the document production order exceeds the authority of the House by attempting to secure documents for a third party, namely the RCMP; and number three, the document production order is an unconstitutional attempt by the House of Commons to appropriate the role of another branch of government, namely the judiciary.

All are interesting and creative arguments but, in my submission, ineffective, and a little late in the day, as far as the Speaker was concerned. In his ruling, he said, "The Chair would suggest, respectfully, that these concerns ought to have been raised prior to the motion's adoption." The first thing we learn in law school is that if a person is going to present in court, they better get all the evidence in, all the facts and all their arguments before the judge makes his ruling, not afterwards. It is too late.

The Speaker came to the reasonable conclusion that the document production order of a couple of months earlier stood, that it was not followed, and that the Liberals are wrong. The Prime Minister's Office must comply with the document production order.

The ruling reads:

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. ...these powers are a settled matter, at least as far as the House is concerned. They have been confirmed and reconfirmed by my immediate predecessors, as well as those more distantly removed.

...The Chair cannot come to any other conclusion but to find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established.

That is the ruling. That means the government must comply, and the Prime Minister's Office, the PMO, must make it clear to the departments that the House order ought to be complied with fully. I know the Liberals are not happy with this, with the original motion or with the ruling. They say it is unusual, that this is not normal course of business. Well, maybe so, but it is the ruling of the House and the House is supreme, and it can make this order, as the Speaker has ruled.

• (1235)

It is important to highlight that the other two opposition parties, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, have both noted that while the order might be unusual, that does not excuse non-compliance, and I would underline that. There is no excuse for non-compliance.

Experts agree with that position. I am going to quote from Bosc and Gagnon, who are experts in this field. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, at page 985, talks about Parliament's right to order the production of documents. It reads, "No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power."

The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records; therefore, the production order stands.

Privilege

Ancient history says that Parliament can do this, and the Prime Minister refuses to comply. That is why we are at an impasse. That is why things have ground to a halt, and until this is resolved, nothing will be debated but this issue.

The Liberals blame it on us, and I am saying they need to comply with the orders. Canadians want to know what is in those documents. What are they hiding? I think that is the fundamental question. What are they worried about?

The Speaker was trying to be helpful and suggested that all the parties could send this off to the committee and have members look at it there, but he noted, correctly in my submission, that "it is ultimately for the House to decide how it wishes to proceed". The House has decided and the House has ordered the production of the documents. The Prime Minister and the Liberal Party must comply.

The way I see it, the Liberals have three choices. They can comply with the order, which is what we have been saying all along for the last nine days. Number two, they can sue the Speaker, who I know will not take that personally. They have done that before. They can challenge the Speaker's ruling based on all the specious arguments they have put forward already. Number three, they can ask the Governor General to dissolve the 44th Parliament and call an election. This is what we have been calling for all along. It is my preference.

Number one is obviously the simplest and the cleanest, which is to comply with the order and we get on with business. We can then send it to committee. Number two is the most interesting. It would be to sue the Speaker. The Liberals have done this in the past, and then they changed their mind, dissolved Parliament and called an election. As a student of constitutional law and Canadian history, I think that would be the most interesting. Let us go ahead and do it and see if the Supreme Court will even take the case on. If it does, it would make great Canadian history. Number three would be the best for Canada, and that is simply to dissolve this Parliament and call an election.

I spoke to a lot of people in my riding during the summer months, and this is what they are calling for. They say to call an election, call it now, as soon as possible. This is what people want. They deserve a government that will stop the corruption, fix what the Liberals have broken and offer common-sense solutions to the problems facing ordinary Canadians today.

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Canadians deserve a government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Canadians deserve a government that does not play favourites with insiders and allows non-insiders can work hard and get ahead. Canadians deserve a Canada that delivers on its promise to all who call it home: that hard work earns powerful paycheques and pensions that buy affordable homes on safe streets in a country where anyone from anywhere can accomplish anything. All of this is possible, but first the Prime Minister has to call an election. He needs to do it now.

• (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the political games of the Conservatives, people need to be aware that a former law clerk is saying the Conservative tactic is an abuse of power. What did the RCMP say? The RCMP said that what is being asked for causes a great deal of concern, and it raised the issue of the charter. The Auditor General of Canada reinforced what the RCMP said.

Every time I have asked the Conservatives why Canadians should be listening to them, with their political games, versus independent institutions, none of them have given a straight answer to Canadians. Why should we take the advice of the Conservatives over and above those—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I am going to turn that around as a question for the member for Winnipeg North: Why do the Liberals not comply with the order?

Parliament is supreme and we have the right to make this order. We did make the order. It is too bad for the Liberal Party that we have a minority government.

It is an order of this House; it must be complied with. There is an ancient tradition in our Parliament that we have the authority and right to make these kinds of orders.

What are the Liberals hiding from? What are they afraid of? Why are they hiding behind section 8 of the charter, which is there to protect individuals from government action, not the other way around?

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating this issue in the House for over two weeks. This is the third Friday in a row that the House has been discussing this question of privilege, and the government has still not expressed any interest in producing the documents that the majority of elected members of the House are asking it to provide. Meanwhile, no bills have been tabled, debated or moved forward. It seems as though the government is in no hurry to get back to work.

Why does my colleague think that the government is acting this way? Is it because, after nine years, this tired government does not really have any more legislation to introduce? Perhaps I should rephrase that. Would prorogation be an indication of that?

We see that the lights in the House are starting to dim. Is this the beginning of the end for the current government?

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting question. The easy answer is that the Liberals are not going to take any advice from me. I wish they would, because we have some pretty good common-sense advice to give them.

Why are they not anxious and eager to get on with their legislative agenda? I do not know. I can say that people in my riding are not all that anxious for the Liberal government to continue with some of their ill-advised, poorly-thought-out legislation, like the capital gains tax inclusion rate increases. People in my riding do not want that. They see that it is wrong-headed, so perhaps it is okay for the government not to be advancing its legislative agenda right now.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing my colleague started with in his speech was the NDP working with the Liberals, so I want to take a moment today to acknowledge the important work that happened, which was finished in the Senate yesterday. Pharmacare was passed through the Senate and was brought back to the House, and millions of Canadians will now have access to a pharmacare program. It is very exciting, and I think it shows that there are things we can do when we work together. As an opposition member, I work when I can for Canadians, and I oppose things when I think the government is not taking the right steps to help Canadians. I am very proud of dental care, pharmacare and the anti-scab legislation.

Does my colleague think that Canadians struggling right now, who find housing unaffordable and who cannot afford their groceries, think three weeks spent in the House not talking about ways to make their lives better is an appropriate use of parliamentary time?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we should get on with debating things that are important to Canadians, like axing the tax, building homes that are affordable and getting the cost of living under control. I encourage the corrupt government to get on with the business of running this place in a clean, clear and ethical manner. That is what we should be debating right now.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny when NDP members stand up to talk about all the things they say they have done. They fail to mention that for four and a half to five years, as long as their agreement was in place, they propped up the government. They were complicit in all of the corruption and scandal that we are seeing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, that is beside that point, as the heckles come from NDP members. They are obviously very worried about their own positions.

What we are talking about is essentially the theft or misappropriation of about \$400 million of Canadian taxpayer funds, which went to a green slush fund that was loaded with Liberal cronies, like the Liberal chair, who got rich. The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest, and the whistle-blower found, indeed, that there might be some criminality there. The Liberals like to say that the RCMP does not want to see these documents, but the RCMP does not know what is in these documents. Nobody does because they have been redacted.

If somebody stole something from the member, would he go to a committee or would he go to the RCMP? I ask because essentially what we are talking about is the theft of Canadian taxpayer funds.

• (1250)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, my colleague makes a great point. Indeed, this is theft, and it is not just us who are saying this. The independent auditor has said it. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has raised deep concerns about it too.

Indeed, we as the opposition would not be doing our job if we were not holding the government to account on what looks like scandalous behaviour, probably criminal behaviour. We need to get to the bottom of it. I just wish the Liberal side of the House would work with us to get to the bottom of it.

The Liberals say they do not like corruption either. Well, they can work with us. Let us have a look at what these documents say. Let us give them to the RCMP and let it decide how to prosecute.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are being accused of abuse of power. The Conservatives are also ignoring the RCMP, an independent agency and institution. That is what we know. The Conservatives are playing a political game here, and that is unfortunate. They are more concerned about the Conservative Party of Canada than they are about the citizens of Canada.

When will they get their priorities right, start focusing on what is in the best interests of Canadians, as opposed to the Conservative Party, and start listening to the RCMP, the Auditor General, the former law clerk and the former deputy commissioner of the RCMP?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, really, the Liberals should be listening to what Parliament has told them to do. Parliament is supreme. Parliament has the right to make these types of orders.

Talking about abuse of power, let us talk about the invocation of the Emergencies Act. That was an abuse of power. The courts have ruled on that.

The Liberals have nothing to be proud of. They are the ones who should be taking good legal advice.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I want to give our hon. colleague just one more brief opportunity to talk about the scandalous nature of the government.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, we are all getting very tired of it. I see that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is gone, but he had many quotes from many constituents who are sick and tired of the corruption from the government. In my riding, it is the same thing.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I became a parliamentarian, first as the member for

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Red Deer, and now as the representative of the great riding of Red Deer—Mountain View, I spent 34 years as a high school math and physics teacher. As such, I always felt that, when dealing with problems, it is critical to be concise and to work with undeniable facts. This is a task that we have at hand in the House, a task that the House has seized over a grievous disservice to the Canadian public. We must continue to go forward until this grievous matter has been rightfully resolved.

However, of course, whether or not this can be resolved remains to be seen as the Liberal government thinks it can gaslight Canadians into believing that somehow enabling corruption protects Canadians. Let me be on the record today saying that this government's reaction to the production order of the Speaker shows that they are only interested in protecting those who have been the benefactors of nine years of corruption, irresponsible deficits and dishonesty to the Canadian taxpayer.

The people of Red Deer—Mountain View and I have seen enough. Here is what we are up against: What do we get when we have significant lapses in governance and stewardship of public funds, plus poor management over conflicts of interest and non-compliance with the law? We get corruption, plain and simple. This is the root cause of the case we, as His Majesty's official opposition and as servants to Canadians, are prosecuting today.

The Auditor General found all those ingredients for corruption in a blistering report released this past summer. I have spent many years sitting on the public accounts committee, and since the time of Sheila Fraser, I have had the greatest respect for the officials who work at the Auditor General's office. What they have uncovered is mind-boggling.

As a teacher, whenever my students were tasked with solving a difficult physics problem, they had to show their work, and when the first steps became clear, they could more easily progress through to the next stage of the solution. Students had to show how they came up with an answer to the problems they were attempting to solve, and this gets more challenging the more difficult and complex the problem becomes, but in that way, basic truths allow them to analyze and solve more complicated questions.

I will acknowledge that managing the federal government of Canada is not an easy task. Overseeing how we will feed Canadians and our allies around the world, how we will safeguard the value of Canadian sovereignty and citizenship, and how we will have secure, reliable and affordable energy for all Canadians is indeed a complex venture, but these federal departments that we rely on must build upon trust and truth. It is all the more an indictment on this government that they are unwilling to show their work and fulfill an order from the House to produce the documents, as the Speaker has decreed. This government clearly did not comply.

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If we are supposed to tell our children, our youth, the bright young minds of the future, that they need to show their work when solving their math homework, why on earth is our federal government not able to do the same? I have a suggestion as to why. Maybe it has to do with the reality that they are so caught up in their attempts to cling to power that it will ignore House orders to procure documents on the failed glorified slush fund and will overlook what Canadians coast to coast already see when they tune in to their federal legislature, which is that this government has lost control of the House and must accept the reality that Canada is ready for a change, a change for the better, a change that will do away with scandal after scandal.

In the Auditor General's report I mentioned earlier, it is made clear that Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, did not establish clear assessment guidance to determine eligibility of projects, so let us allow that to sink in. According to SDTC's website, as of March 31, 2023, they had given out \$1.71 billion in funding. The words "assessments guidance to determine eligibility of projects" is fancy talk for how decisions are made to give money to projects and businesses.

● (1255)

It is absolutely ridiculous that a federally funded foundation, under the current government's watch, was able to hand out taxpayer dollars without a clear idea of who ought to be deserving of those funds to achieve the objectives its organizations were established to fulfill. It is no different from a football team paying a coach to run plays and make decisions without the notion of a playbook. The idea that taxpayer dollars were allowed to be played with in this manner is unacceptable and frankly disturbing.

To better illuminate the gravity of the situation, I will once again draw on my teaching experience. Let us all put ourselves in the shoes of a grade 11 high school student who is beginning to complete what teachers sometimes call an independent research project. For an independent research project, usually students are tasked with coming up with a topic to study, but the important role of the teacher is to give students a framework with which they will be able to structure their assignment and therefore use their findings effectively. Without an assignment structure or grading criteria, students are left with little to go on. Do we want federally funded foundations to be in the habit of having little to go on?

What I am trying to highlight by drawing out these parallels with what we take for granted as common sense in a classroom, is that these classroom experiences often seem to be very similar to what happens in the real world. Perhaps this is by design. That is why I am trying to paint a picture for Canadians, those whom have had the pleasure of teaching and all of us here in the House.

The Auditor General also found that SDTC poorly managed conflicts of interest. This, my colleagues, is really where I struggle to find any sort of solace from the Liberal government's response to this scandal. SDTC records show that conflict of interest policies were not followed in 90 cases and that SDTC did not report conflicts of interest. I would say this is shocking, but it is on par with what we and Canadians have now come to expect from our current government, and this is a shame.

There is an obvious reality that, for Canada to be the greatest country on earth, we need a new government that respects the rights of Canadians, has integrity and possesses a strong commitment to principles. It would seem that this no longer is the case after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. Back in the day, to their credit, Liberals stayed true to their word and would aim to avoid such scandals, although the Gomery inquiry shook their confidence so many years ago. However, today, those actions are commonplace and feel as though they are just a matter of daily business. True Liberals are now fleeing a party that has now become a shadow of its former self.

I am a firm believer that humility is a virtue, and a particularly valuable one for an elected representative of the people. Is it not common sense for us? Is it not common sense for decision-makers of a fund to recuse themselves from an investment decision regarding a firm they have clear ties to? I am sure it must be challenging to conduct this practice when the fund in question is both funded by the Liberal government and when that are also in talks with firms that have strong insider connections to their network. Therefore, I ask again, would it not be common sense to do what is best for the fund's performance and, in this case, the value for money received from Canadian taxpayer dollars? If it is as I suspect, then why has there been a failure to implement such an obvious standard for a federally funded foundation that had used at least \$1 billion in taxpayer funds?

I would like to let those who are listening now know that it was common-sense Conservatives who fought against the corrupt government after nine years, and common-sense Conservatives would work diligently to undo the mess that this has caused our nation.

I have already pointed out that the Auditor General had serious concerns with this glorified green slush fund. I would also like to bring it all together to a final point, and this goes back to what fundamentally shapes government. It is people. The former chair of SDTC had to resign as she was found to have improperly furthered the interests of companies associated with her own ventures according to the Ethics Commissioner. This is not right.

● (1300)

The Ethics Commissioner also found that this individual participated in funding decisions that benefited her own financial interests. The SDTC staff even tried to raise concerns with the staff of ISED and its minister at the time, but their concerns were ultimately dismissed. No one knows why these concerns were dismissed, but I can tell members one thing: Innocent, hard-working Canadians have been caught in the crosshairs of this mess.

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On this side of the House, and I believe I speak for my colleagues, we believe in fair and just prosecution. I believe the inability of the Liberal government and a select elite few, who are calling the shots in agencies and foundations that are supposed to be at arm's length, does not reflect everyone involved. However, that is truly the saddest part of it all. Everywhere the government has gone and touched with its paws, it has sown disorder and distrust and broken the fabric that holds this country together.

The Liberal government has lost control of its spending. In 2015, it promised that it would only be in a deficit temporarily. This is a claim that, as outgoing prime minister, Stephen Harper called out from the beginning, and it is a claim that has cost many young Canadians affordable gas, affordable food and a warm place to call home.

Of course, it is on the Liberals that they have lost the humility to produce documents that would hold them to account, even when the Speaker of the House rules that this contradicts what would be in the best interests of Canadians. I will say once again what I said at the beginning of my remarks: Enough is enough. The Liberal government has a history of legislative manoeuvring that it uses to avoid accountability. Many believed the rhetoric of the need for a COVID election back in 2021, but the reality is that it was caught up in a scandal then as well. That scandal involved it not wanting to provide documents for the Winnipeg lab fiasco. Of course, by calling an election, it could and did put that controversy behind it, at least for a while. A \$600-million cabinet shuffle during a pandemic election was all it took to take the heat off the fact that the Speaker had moved to the next steps of controversy and taken the government to court. Whether the current Speaker takes similar steps remains to be seen, but the pattern is clear. Maybe proroguing Parliament will shift the focus, but when Parliament resumes after such a move, this matter still needs to be resolved.

To remind Canadians of where we were in June 2021, I will read from a press release pointing out the defiance of the government when it came to releasing documents:

The [hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills], Conservative Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, and [the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent], the House Leader of the Official Opposition, issued the following statement after the House adopted a fourth order requiring the [Liberal] government to hand over documents regarding the transfer of a dangerous virus from the Winnipeg National Microbiology Laboratory to the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the subsequent firing of two government scientists...

The statement reads:

Yesterday, the Speaker of the House ruled the Liberal government in breach of three orders of the House and its Special Committee on Canada-China Relations by continuing to cover-up the Winnipeg lab breach. These orders require the government to hand over documents related to the Winnipeg lab and its work with the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The [Liberal] government's defiance of these orders demonstrates a complete lack of respect for Parliament and smacks of a cover-up.

On June 2, the House adopted a motion ordering the government to hand over documents regarding the transfer of viruses from the Winnipeg lab to the Wuhan lab in March 2019 and the subsequent firing of two government scientists in January 2021. This June 2 order followed two previous orders from the Special Committee of March 31 and May 10.

Despite these orders, the Liberals continue to defy Parliament and cover-up information about these breaches of national security. It is appalling to see just how far they will go to defy Parliament and cover up details about the Winnipeg lab and its relationship with the Wuhan lab.

● (1305)

Conservatives have once again demanded the [Liberal] government release the documents they are hiding from Canadians so that Parliament can get to the bottom of this and ensure these breaches of national security do not happen again. However, the Liberals continue their cover-up by voting against a motion upholding the Speaker's ruling demanding the documents.

Now, for the fourth time, the House has ordered the [Liberal] government to hand over the documents. We expect the Prime Minister...to comply with this lawful order.

It further stated that:

It's time the Liberals end their cover-up. It's time for the Liberals to release these documents and be transparent with Canadians. Canadians deserve to know the truth about what happened at the Winnipeg lab and the breaches of national security. Canada's Conservatives are fighting to protect our national security.

As I said, these things have happened before. Now, there is another aspect of this that warrants more scrutiny.

I have a great deal of respect for Canadian innovators. The technology that has been supported since Sustainable Development Technology Canada was established in 2001 has been a constructive part of Canada's research and development mix. This government's obsession with green technology and the narrow scope that it has showed lately to such technology is defined, along with the now obvious lack of discipline by the board, which gives true meaning to the green slush fund.

What the AG found, and what committee members have dug up, is that 82% of funding transactions approved by the board over a five-year sampling period were said to be conflicted. Through the AG's analysis of 226 contracts, 186 were conflicted, and so it is entirely possible that the total 405 transactions approved by the board and the corresponding 333 contracts could also be suspect. If the ratios were correct, there would be a further 147 suspicious contracts. A federal investigation would need to get started really soon to get to the bottom of this, since this entire affair reeks of corruption.

If laws were broken and rules were ignored, then this government must get to the bottom of this. If CERB recipients were forced to return money that they were not entitled to, then I see no reason for an exception here. Canadians expect the truth, and they expect those who circumvented the rules to return the money.

This government needs to get to the bottom of this scandal, and it is time to give Canadians what they want. They want accountability from this government. They want to see what is in these documents that the Liberals wish to hide so desperately from the public, and Canadians cannot wait for the chance to bring back responsible governance to the true north, strong and free. We owe it to Canadians.

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• (1310)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. He is a former math and physics teacher, and I wish I could ask him questions regarding the quality of our math and physics education in our school system today. In my opinion, our students are falling behind in math and physics compared to their counterparts in many parts of the world, and this is affecting our competitiveness in the global, knowledge-based economy.

I want to acknowledge that the member's speech had less political rhetoric compared to those of many of his colleagues, although I disagree with many of the things he said. Specifically, being a member of the public accounts committee, I share with him the respect that we both have for the Office of the Auditor General. However, the Auditor General has expressed a concern on the blurring of the powers between different parts of the government, and the RCMP has specifically said in a letter to the law clerk of the House of Commons that it is very unlikely that it can use the records that this motion would provide to it in its investigation.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I have certainly enjoyed my time on the industry committee and other committees that I have sat on with the hon. member. When he speaks about math and science education, I do remember when we were in Centre Block that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom had come to speak. He said that the greatest mathematics and mathematicians that he had seen in the English-speaking world were actually from Alberta. As I had just come from teaching there, I was pretty proud of it, although I certainly did not suggest that I was going to take any credit for that.

However, to get to the point about the Auditor General and the responsibility that she has, I think it is very important that we respect the rulings that she is dealing with, and we go from there.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's speech about financial accountability was very passionate. New Democrats often are found in the interesting position of striving for financial accountability. No matter what government is in place, the Conservatives seem to care about financial accountability only when it means scoring partisan points.

However, in an interesting part of the member's speech, he mentioned a Liberal insider. I am sure he was referring to Ms. Verschuren, the former chair of SDTC who was kicking back millions of dollars to her own company. That individual happens to have donated to the Conservative Party for almost her entire time as chair of SDTC, maxing out donations to the Conservative Party.

How much money does the member think Ms. Verschuren donated in total to the Conservative Party that she was maybe or likely getting during the time she was the chair of SDTC?

• (1315)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the member is somewhat mistaken. It is true that, as a Cape Bretoner, Ms. Verschuren supported some Liberal candidates, but if the member wants to take a look at her most recent donations, they were in fact to the Liberal Party. However, that is fine. It is what a person does when they have power that counts, and that is the key component here. Sometimes people suggest that there is great money in politics and so on, but \$1,600 is the maximum donation. It is not like anyone can get big money from companies.

That is not particularly the point. It is what a person does when they have an appointment that counts, and that is where the problem lies.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see you in the chair this afternoon. I appreciate what you do.

Some of us are a little bit longer in the tooth. The hon. member is my colleague both by profession and as an MP, and he might remember the Gomery commission, as I do. I think we spent considerable time talking about the lost \$40 million, until finally the media paid attention and there was the Gomery commission. However, the present issue is many more times significant than that. It involves many more dollars, and it is about not only this one instance, but many.

My colleague knows the history. He is an ethical gentleman and believes in honesty. How would he respond to the question of the significance of the amount of money that we are talking about with the current issue?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, of course, when we are looking at nearly \$400 million that is questionable and we realize that it was spent without following the rules, it puts every dollar that was given by the SDTC into question. That, I think, is the sad part of all of this: Everyone has been painted with a tainted brush. As I mentioned in my remarks, I am a firm believer in innovation. I think that is where we should go. We have lost so much of our advantage in innovation over the last number of years.

The government has been allowed to take away our trust. That is where the problem lies.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we take a look at the essence of the issue, we see that the Conservative Party is saying that it wants all documents, unredacted, to be handed directly over to the RCMP. The former law clerk has said that is an abuse of power. An abuse of power is the game that the Conservatives are playing, and they completely sidestep.

This reminds me of Stephen Harper, who is the only former prime minister who has been in contempt of Parliament. Now the Conservative Party is abusing power from an opposition point of view. Is there any Conservative member who does not understand this? The Conservatives are ignoring the concerns of the RCMP, a fairly well-recognized institution here in Canada. Today, the games that the Conservative Party is playing are a disgrace.

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Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, to the point the member tries to make about contempt of Parliament, I was there. It went to different committees. One of the issues we had was being in a minority government, with members who did not support us. They came up with different motions in every one of the committees until they felt they had a critical mass, and then they tried to take it to the House. It was all a game that was played by opposition parties at that time, but look what happened after that: We finally got ourselves a majority government.

• (1320)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just admitted that the Conservatives want to play games with this issue.

The Bloc Québécois and the New Democrats have been consistent in our message. We need to see financial transparency with regard to the very serious allegations and issues present in the Auditor General's report. We know that these documents have an incredible amount of information that could shed light on a very important and credible issue.

I take issue with the member's answer about the structure of committees of this House and with the play the Conservatives are trying to utilize. It is one the member himself has experience with from when he was in government.

Can the member speak to why he thinks these games are occurring in this place on an issue as serious as financial accountability?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure why the member felt there was an admission of games being played. I was commenting on the reality when the government has all of the other parties against it, which can happen in these circumstances. We do not see that with the New Democrats, because they oscillate back and forth. We sometimes have the same situation with the Bloc. It becomes a tag team thing that they are going to support the government. It keeps the government in place.

The current government feels pretty comfortable in the position it is in. However, when all opposition parties are against the government, it is a little different.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “with great power comes great responsibility.” Many will recognize this expression from the wise words of advice Uncle Ben gave to a young Peter Parker in relation to his alter ego, Spider-Man. While this proverb has certainly been popularized again in the modern era by Spider-Man comics, its meaning is found throughout human history, such as the tale of the sword hanging by a single hair over the head of Damocles while King Dionysius permitted him to experience being king for a day. It is not only a powerful mantra for everyday living, but it is fitting for the situation we find ourselves in within the House of Commons today with the motion we have been debating for the past several days.

It is an immense privilege and responsibility to sit in this place, to be sent here by our neighbours to our nation's capital, to be their voice in the halls of power. The Westminster system is unlike any other form of government. This is the House of Commons, where the common citizen is chosen by other common citizens to be sent here to represent them. We have the government of the day, the Prime Minister, the Privy Council ministers, deputy ministers, as-

sistant deputy ministers, and thousands of bureaucrats. Canadians may well believe that those people have power, but in the Westminster system, quite the opposite is true. Everyday citizens of Canada hold the power through the people they send to the House of the common people. Canadians are the boss and we, in this place, are their servants, sitting in their chair for a very brief moment in the long arc of history.

This is parliamentary supremacy, a term that is not often used outside of academia, but what does it mean? Why does parliamentary supremacy matter to the marine mechanic in Pointe au Baril, the cranberry farmer in Bala or the server in South River? It matters to them because it means that they hold the power and that, collectively, the members in this place who represent them are far more powerful than any cabinet minister or even a prime minister. We are the people's voice and the people's voice is supreme.

A majority of citizen representatives in the House of the people has demanded the production of documents related to a \$390-million spending scandal of the government's making. Despite that parliamentary supremacy, the government, the cabinet and the Prime Minister have simply refused. This is not even the first time the Liberal government has ignored an order from the people's representatives to produce documents. Canadians may well remember the Winnipeg lab document scandal. Parliament ordered documents to be released that pertained to Canada's top infectious disease laboratory where two scientists were intentionally working to benefit the Chinese Communist Regime. The government fought to keep those documents hidden from the people, ignoring orders and even taking the former Speaker of the House to court to hide the truth, not just from us in the House of Commons, but from all Canadians.

There can be no dispute that oftentimes in this place we exchange partisan jabs in question period. It can be a very ruckus affair with heckling and plenty of theatrics. In certain circumstances, there comes a matter so fundamental to the functioning of the House, a matter so fundamental to the rights of Canadians, those citizens who sent us here to speak for them, that we must hit the pause button on the regular business of this place to protect the very purpose of this place and the rights of the Canadians who sent us here.

How did we get here? In 2001, the government of Stephen Harper created an organization that would, “Demonstrate new technologies to promote sustainable development, including technologies to address issues related to climate change and the quality of air, water and soil.” This organization was to fund public-private partnerships to commercialize new green technologies. It was called Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Since its creation, it invested in over 300 projects all across the country.

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It was a great idea that worked very well until the current Liberal government was elected. In 2017, just before the current government took office, the Auditor General reviewed Sustainable Development Technology Canada and delivered a very positive report indicating that the organization was operating appropriately. Then, late in 2018, then industry minister Navdeep Bains started to complain about the then chair Jim Balsillie. He was a chair who was leading the organization well, according to the Auditor General.

• (1325)

Minister Bains complained that Mr. Balsillie had been critical of some government legislation. Imagine that. Then in 2019, Minister Bains began appointing Liberal friends and insiders to the board of directors of Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

It is important to note that Sustainable Development Technology Canada was not an agency completely independent from the government. The Minister of Industry appointed the board, and several staff members from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada would regularly sit in on meetings and monitor the activities of the board. Minister Bains then appointed Annette Verschuren, someone who was receiving Sustainable Development Technology Canada funding through one of her companies, to be the new chair of the board. Immediately, red flags should have gone up. This new chair, the steward of this fund, the person who was tapped to oversee its operations and hand out money, was a recipient of the same money she was supposed to be watching over.

It turns out red flags did go up. Minister Bains, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office were all warned. They were all told of the risks associated with appointing this conflicted chair.

In an alternate universe where Canadians had a competent government that was accountable and responsible and followed the rules, an appointment like this would never have been made in the first place. Of course, that is not what happened, because Canadians do not have a competent, responsible government. We have a scandal-plagued, incompetent Liberal government that has proven time and time again that with every issue they tackle, they make it worse, and that the interests of their well-connected friends and supporters, or the interests of those close to them, always come before the interests of Canadians. We saw it with the WE Charity scandal. Friends of the Liberal Party were quietly and quickly awarded a government contract worth \$40 million, until the member for Carleton found out and started digging.

In June 2019, Minister Bains, after having received some sound advice that appointing an individual to lead a public fund whose companies benefit from that fund was a bad idea, ignored the advice and appointed her anyhow. Did this new chair implement a radical change in culture? Did she lead with integrity and honour to ensure that conflicts of interest between public funds and private interests did not occur? Absolutely not. In fact, the new Liberal board chair went on to create a corporate environment where conflicts of interest were not just merely tolerated but facilitated. Other members of the board went on to award public money, Canadians' money, to companies in which board members held stock or leadership positions.

I think it is important for everyone to understand what “conflict of interest” means. The Oxford dictionary describes it this way: a situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity.

In this case, Liberal board members' individual interests were enriched by their actions in their professional and public duties. That is a problem, and Canadians understand that. We can forgive the average Canadian, who is not likely as familiar with the fancy boardrooms that Liberal insiders frequent, but it is not really that complicated to excuse ourselves or remove ourselves from situations where we are or are perceived to be in a conflict of interest. It is a perfectly legitimate action to take. In fact, it is the law.

There are simple and straightforward procedures to avoid a conflict of interest. It is the honourable thing to do. It is an act of integrity, of being faithful to our public role and our solemn responsibility to the citizens of this country, whose money we are spending and whose trust we must strive to earn every single day. However, the Liberal insiders on the Sustainable Development Technology Canada board did not care about that public trust. They did not care about honour or integrity. Even more galling is that these dishonourable Liberals did it all out in the open. They were so arrogant and pleased with their self-enrichment at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer that they did not even try to hide their corruption.

Officials from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada witnessed 186 conflicts at the board but were apparently powerless to do anything about it, that is, until November 2022, when heroic whistle-blowers raised their concerns about the goings-on at Sustainable Development Technology Canada with the Auditor General. What did those whistle-blowers say when they appeared at a parliamentary committee? One of them said:

• (1330)

One of them said:

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...

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...

Again, if you bring in the RCMP and they do their investigation and they find something or they don't, I think the public would be happy with that. I don't think we should leave it to the current federal government or the ruling party to make those decisions. Let the public see what's there.

He also said:

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.

...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—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There has been a really tiresome background noise for a while now. If I wanted to hear white noise, something that sounds like a river, I would be in the woods right now. However, I am in Parliament, so I would prefer to hear the speech—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I am going to respectfully interrupt the hon. member. Thank you. From my seat here, I could not hear the discussions, but I would obviously ask all my colleagues to listen to the person giving the speech and not have any discussions in the House.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka has eight minutes and 30 seconds to continue his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General of Canada launched a thorough investigation that revealed widespread conflicts of interest, corruption and abuse of Canadians' hard-earned dollars at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. On June 10 of this year, the House members, by a majority vote of 174 to 148, developed a motion calling for the production of documents from Sustainable Development Technology Canada to be turned over to the RCMP.

How did the government respond to an order from the people's voice? Departments either outright refused to comply or heavily redacted and blacked out relevant documents that the people demanded. There was nothing in the people's order to allow for any redactions. The people have demanded the truth, and they want the RCMP to be able to investigate the misuse and abuse of their dollars. This has been the talk of the Ottawa bubble these days: The Constitution Act, the Parliament of Canada Act, parliamentary privilege and the privilege of the House.

Imagine that, while sitting in these hallowed chambers surrounded by deferential security guards, we could be debating our privileges as members. There are Canadians out there who are hungry and worried about how they are going to heat their homes as the winter sets in, but our privileges have been breached. It is not our privilege, but the right of Canadians to know what their own government is up to. Our Fathers of Confederation gave that power of the people to their representatives who sit in this place. It is not because I am a member of Parliament that I believe I have the privilege to access these documents. It is because the people who we all represent have that right. They have tasked us in the House and, as a House, we have a powerful ability to exercise that right, an absolute and unfettered ability to exercise that right.

Why did the House feel compelled to order these documents? It has everything to do with the Auditor General's findings. She found that 82% of transactions involving payment from Sustainable De-

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velopment Technology Canada to companies approved by the board of directors were conflicted. According to the Auditor General, \$300 million of Canadians' money was given to companies where the board members who voted to award those companies had a conflict of interest. Three hundred million dollars of public money was being used to fund private interests of the people who were voting to award the funds.

It is reasonable to think that this scandal goes deeper. In the five-year period of examination by the Auditor General there were 405 transactions approved by the board. The Auditor General looked at 226, so just over half of the transactions, and found that 186 of the transactions were conflicted. We can assume that the ratio stands for the entire package of 405 transactions. The Auditor General also found that the same Liberal-appointed board approved and funded another 58 million dollars' worth of projects that were outside the mandate of the foundation. They were not even eligible under their own rules, but the Liberal board gave them the money anyhow. The Liberals would have us believe that this is an example of a bureaucracy off track, but the Auditor General made it clear that the blame of the scandal falls on the Prime Minister's industry minister, who "did not sufficiently monitor" the contracts that were given to well-connected Liberal insiders.

What we have here is not just gross mismanagement, it is corruption and blatant conflict of interest by Liberal appointees to the tune of \$300 million. There was abuse of the public purse: A personal enrichment under the guise of helping the environment. Once these companies that were connected to Liberal insiders received these government grants, they were seen as having a seal of approval by outside financiers. This allowed these companies to go and collect millions more dollars to further their interests. It was a green slush fund for well-connected Liberals. Canadians' money was mishandled and private interest got in the way, once again, of the public good.

It would be reasonable to conclude that we are debating yet another Liberal spending scandal. Reasonable because there have been so many Liberal spending scandals that it is tough to keep up. It would be understandable if some were to believe that we are engaged in some sort of self-serving debate about members of Parliament's privilege. In truth, this debate, this motion of privilege that has halted all the other work of the House, is about the very foundations of our democracy and the right of citizens of this country to know what their government is doing. That sword of Damocles hangs over the head of the government. It hangs precariously over the Liberal government and its ministers who, on so many occasions, arrogantly operate as though they are above the law, as though they are above the people. Conservatives will never relent in exposing the corruption of the government, and we will never relent in our solemn duty to be the voice of the people in the House, their House, where we defend their rights above the rights of Liberal insiders, Liberal cabinet ministers and, most certainly, above the rights of the Liberal Prime Minister.

The citizens of Canada, through the House of Commons, have demanded the truth, all of it. It is time for the government to hand it over.

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• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to read verbatim a couple of very important quotes. The first one is from the RCMP, signed by the commissioner. It states, “There is significant risk that the Motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections.” It is talking about the Charter of Rights and the Conservative motion.

The next quote is from the former law clerk, again, an independent individual. I would ask the member to really listen to this part. It says, “it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its power to demand and get documents from the Government in order to transfer them to a third party (RCMP) that wouldn't otherwise receive them or to compel the Government to give documents to the third party”.

The Conservative game that we are playing right now says we should get this information directly to the RCMP. We have the RCMP, the Auditor General, the former law clerk and the former deputy commissioner. Who are the advisers of the Conservative Party today?

• (1340)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the member's question is quite simple. The people of Canada are our advisers. This Parliament is supreme based on them sending us here. A majority of members in the House have demanded these documents. The Liberals should hand them over.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an information has been laid, and we agree that we have a right to these documents and that parliamentary privilege has indeed been breached. Although we can go on discussing whether we are using the time of the House wisely, the fact remains that the question is substantively important.

That being said, apart from the proven or suspected corruption he talked to us about, is my colleague calling into question all subsidies paid out under the program, which helps these companies transition?

I want to make sure I understand the Conservatives' position.

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my earlier comments, the concept behind the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund was good. It made sense. In fact, it was a very wise and competent prime minister who put it in place: Stephen Harper. I do not disagree with that.

What I disagree with is Liberal corruption and insiders enriching themselves over the benefit of Canadians as a whole.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, part of what we have heard in the last many days on this issue, in particular, is this idea that these are Liberal insiders. This is a Liberal-Conservative insider, as a matter of fact. We have pointed out many times that Ms. Verschuren, the former chair of SDTC, donated to both the Liberals and Conservatives during near-

ly her entire stint as chair of SDTC. She pushed money back to her own company, to Conservative campaigns and to the Conservative Party.

Can the member promise Canadians that, should the Conservatives form government, they will not allow Ms. Verschuren back in to this place and that they will ban donations from her to their party?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that, yes, as a government, we would make sure that Liberal corruption and Liberal conflicts of interest were a thing of the past. The country is desperate for a Conservative government. We will fix the budget, clean up the fiscal mess here in Ottawa and get this country moving again.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in her audit, the Auditor General determined that there were 186 conflicts of interest, totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. In fact, the audit did not even include all the contracts. It was just over half of the contracts, and approximately 85% of them were found to have conflicts of interest.

Could the hon. member speak to how massive, incredibly egregious and important this is, as well as how, in fact, the Liberals seem to be okay with not wanting all of this information to come to light and to be turned over unredacted?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, my colleague describes it quite accurately. It is massive.

I come from a lifetime of municipal politics, and in municipal law and municipal government, a conflict of interest is an incredibly serious thing. People can be removed from office for a conflict of interest, because representing the people is a sacred trust and any single conflict of interest is a breach of that trust. It is a betrayal of the people who they represent, who they serve.

Imagine hundreds of conflicts of interest and a minister who appoints somebody to chair a board when he was warned not to do it because they were in conflict. The minister did not care. He broke that sacred trust.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the greatest defender of Stephen Harper is the current leader of the Conservative Party? Stephen Harper is the only prime minister in Canadian history who was held in contempt of Parliament.

Is there any wonder why the Conservative leader has a problem listening to the independent RCMP, the independent Auditor General of Canada and the former deputy clerk of the House of Commons? Is there any reason Canadians should believe that the Conservatives are doing anything more than just playing a political game, a gimmick, at great expense?

They do not have any problems walking over the charter rights of individuals, and that is the bottom line. This is more about politics for the Conservatives than it is about concern for Canadians. I say shame on the Conservative Party of Canada.

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Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, as entertaining as the rantings of the member are, I must say that he stands in the House every single day and defends a Prime Minister who has twice been convicted of breaking ethics laws. I do not know how he can stand there with a straight face and continue to defend a corrupt government with scandal after scandal. Whether it is a spending scandal or an ethics scandal, the government thinks that it is above the law. It thinks it is above the supremacy of Parliament.

This Parliament said to hand over the papers, hand over the documents, and the member thinks he knows better, so he is going to lecture us and defend a corrupt Prime Minister who has been twice convicted of ethics scandals. That is the shame.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, for those who are tuning in to this debate, it is very clear to see that with the extreme issues present in the current Liberal government, like the serious mismanagement of funds at SDTC, and with the historic contempt case of the former Conservative government, these parties are consistently abusing Canadians. They are abusing Canadians' ability to get things done in the House and abusing Canadians' tax dollars. When it is politically convenient for them to call out each other's mismanagement, they do so in this place. It shouldn't have to be that way.

The New Democrats always believe in financial accountability and transparency. That is why we voted in favour of this motion. However, we cannot help but point out the direct hypocrisy we have witnessed in this debate from these two parties and their complete lack of memory when it comes to their own mismanagement.

Does the member agree that a serious debate on this issue should require reflection of one's own actions, in particular regarding the issues present not just to the Liberal government, but to that of Mr. Harper?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, this is comical. It is hard to take the member seriously. He has voted consistently for four years to support the corrupt Liberal government.

He stands in here saying we are horrible; we are this and that. His leader ripped up their agreement, saying the marriage is over because the Liberals are so corrupt, so bad and so evil. However, the New Democrats still vote to support them every single time to continue the corruption. I cannot take the member seriously.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have breaking news, and it comes from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It deals, of course with the latest, \$400-million, scandal facing the Liberal government. The RCMP confirms that it is investigating the \$400-million scandal of the Liberal Prime Minister that has paralyzed Parliament. It also confirms that it has and is using the documents that have so far been turned over by the parliamentary law clerk.

This raises questions about why the government was willing to turn over some of the documents, yet some departments refused outright. Some departments have said they are not even a part of the government, which is an absolutely incredible statement to hear. I want to reference another bit of information about redacted records or the absence of them. The list of departments that did not comply is typed in a very small typeface on an 11-inch by 17-inch sheet of paper.

One in particular stands out: the Department of Justice. There are more than 10,000 pages they are not turning over. Why will the Prime Minister's DOJ not turn over the documents to the cops? What is so damning in them that, while the RCMP confirms they have some of the documents, the Liberals and their co-conspirators are not prepared to turn over the rest? Canadians have a right to know what is in the documents.

As a matter of fact, the Liberal government has a legal obligation to turn the documents over. It is not because I said so; it is because Canada is a democracy. A majority of democratically elected MPs used the powers that have been bestowed on the House of Commons to ensure that when a matter is of public interest, the production of papers is absolute and unrestricted.

What could be more important to the institution of Parliament and to the protection of our democracy than to make sure, in this matter involving more than 180 conflicts of interest and \$400 million in a corruption scandal overseen by the Liberal Prime Minister and all the Liberals who have stood up today, especially the parliamentary secretary, who has clocked over 100 minutes in this saga that has paralyzed Parliament, that the government turns over the documents. Why will it not turn over the documents, which are so important, so Canadians can get answers?

Are we looking to be the judge, jury and executioner in this place? No, we are not. We want to turn the matter over to the RCMP. Is the RCMP going to investigate because we told it to? No, the RCMP is investigating because it has reasonable grounds to believe an offence under the Criminal Code has been committed and that it is in the public interest for it to investigate.

The RCMP will lay a charge if it believes there is a reasonable prospect of conviction. Is that why the Liberals are withholding all the documents from all the many departments? There is the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; it is too afraid to turn over documents. Others include the Canada Revenue Agency, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, foreign affairs, the department of housing, the Department of National Defence and Natural Resources Canada, and on and on it goes. There are 10 thousand pages from the Department of Justice alone.

We have heard this before from the Liberals with respect to the RCMP. The justice minister has said that it can get a production order, knock on the door and tell the Liberals to turn over the documents. The Liberal government and the Liberal Prime Minister, the one who has been found guilty of breaking the law twice himself, along with his public safety minister and the small business minister, broke the law.

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With that as the context, when the RCMP knocked on the Prime Minister's door, in a case of a criminal matter, the Liberals said they could not turn over the documents because of cabinet confidence. This is what is going to happen; this is the game they want to play.

• (1350)

They want this to go to committee, they say, but why? Is it because the documents would be tabled with the committee? No, it would be to study the question of whether the documents should be tabled. The House already ordered the production of the documents, so that is done by a majority of democratically elected members, not the one party with a minority of seats in this House, shrinking returns in every election and evaporating public support. That is not who gets to decide; the majority of democratically elected members does.

That decision has been made. They must turn over the documents, because it is the law, but that does not concern these Liberals or that Attorney General, because they want this to go to committee, and they want the police to come and say, "Can you turn over those documents? You said if we brought a search warrant that you would provide them." They will say, "We are afraid it is cabinet confidence. Here are those 10,000 pages heavily redacted."

That is the game that they are playing with our democracy. It makes me wonder, if they are prepared to violate this law, what other laws these Liberals will break. We have seen some broken, as I said before, by the Prime Minister, by the public safety minister and by the small business minister. These Liberals, when they got tired of being found guilty for breaking Canada's Conflict of Interest Act, the laws that are supposed to protect from exactly the kind of thing that led to \$400 million in corruption in this latest expense scandal, appointed the public safety minister, who had been found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act in clam scam, awarding lucrative contracts to his family members.

Again, Liberal insiders are always their priority. They appointed his sister-in-law to be the Ethics Commissioner. How convenient would that be? At Thanksgiving dinner this weekend, they would say, "Nice to see you. Could you pass the stuffing? Also, could you look the other way on this latest conflict of interest affecting the Liberals?" That is what they are cooking up this Thanksgiving weekend, but the production of these documents was ordered by the House.

They, of course, want it to go to committee to bury it. The amendment and sub-amendment put forward are extremely reasonable. The list of witnesses that we would want to testify to provide fulsome answers to committee is incredibly important, but we would be faced with another problem when we get there, and we will get to a point where the House can vote for this to go to committee, once we have had the opportunity to have this debate.

However, then we are going to deal with another issue affecting the government, further paralyzing Parliament. That deals with the employment minister, this Liberal Prime Minister's minister from Edmonton, who, along with his pandemic profiteering business partner, have this unbelievable scandal that has seen a ruling from the Speaker about the rights of democratically elected members to get fulsome, honest answers and information from individuals who are sent for by this place. Again, it is a right of this House to send

for people and to send for papers. In that case, the individual, the business partner of the Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre, refused to provide information on who the "other Randy" is.

We need to know that information, because it strikes at the heart of a matter that is incredibly important to Canadians. We learned that the Liberal minister from Edmonton Centre's business while he is serving in cabinet, of which he owned a 50% share, was awarded a contract by his own government. That is not okay, but what makes it worse is that the minister said he had not been in contact with his business partner for all of 2022 in particular. That year is important, because his business partner said the minister had not been in touch with him either for that year. We will take the minister at his word, and it is case closed. Unfortunately, we can trust them as far as we can throw them.

• (1355)

We demanded the production of papers, which is, again, one of those rights that we have, and what did we learn? They were texting and they were talking. Why is that a problem? It is a problem because what he said was not the truth. What the witness, his business partner Mr. Anderson, said was not the truth. What they told the newspaper was not the truth.

It also means a sitting member of the Liberal cabinet was directing the day-to-day business affairs of a company that was netting Government of Canada contracts worth tens of thousands of dollars, to say nothing of the fact that the service it provided was, as I said, pandemic profiteering. It was like the guys during the pandemic who would go to Costco, buy up all the toilet paper and then sell it out of their van at the end of the parking lot for an inflated price. Instead of just people in the community being the victims, it victimized people across Canada, getting contracts from all kinds of governments, with the name of a sitting cabinet minister as the co-owner of the business.

That is what they have been doing. That is the matter this House is seized with and paralyzed by. It all has to do with conflicts of interest and refusing to follow the law, orders of Parliament. If Canadians have to follow the law, why do the Liberals not have to? I get asked often by Canadians. They want to know why the RCMP will not finally investigate. Here we have a letter from the commissioner of the RCMP dated October 9. It reads, in part, "I wish to inform you that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigation into SDTC is ongoing."

SDTC, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, operated under governments of different stripes up until 2017 with a clean bill of health from Canada's Auditor General. Stephen Harper absolutely oversaw this fund. We hear the Liberals say Conservatives do not want to take any action on environment. Here we are with this clean-tech business, with a billion dollars of Canadian tax money, looking to help start-ups and innovators in the clean-tech space. We think it is incredibly important that we solve issues facing our environment and our climate, with technology and not with a tax on everything. We know, in my province of Ontario, that is going to cost families \$1,400 more than they get back in the fake, phony rebates that the Liberals talk up.

We had this fund, SDTC, which was given a clean bill of health by the Auditor General up to 2017, but it was after that when the trouble set in. The current Liberal Prime Minister appointed his choice, a Liberal, as chair of the fund. Can members guess what happened? The Liberal Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking ethics laws twice, so what do we think happened when he put his hand-picked selection in as chair? Well, along came the conflicts of interest, 186 of them, and \$400 million that we know about. This is really important because the Auditor General did not look into 100% of the deals done and votes cast at the \$1-billion slush fund, but of the cases they looked into, the Auditor General and her army of auditors found conflicts in 80% of them.

There is no other organization in the world that, when it finds out one of its subsidiaries is rife with corruption and alleged criminality, would say, "We are not going to turn over the documents to the RCMP; we are not going to call the cops. We are going to call a committee." There is no other organization that would do that unless it has something to hide. What do the Liberals have to hide?

I think we know. It is all the things they do not want the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to see. They are worried that the King's cowboys are going to ride in and find all kinds of dirty deals with Liberal insiders getting rich while Canadians were lined up at food banks in record numbers.

● (1400)

StatsCan this week said that income inequality in this country had reached a point never seen in the history of our country since it started measuring it. It is StatsCan that said one in four Canadians do not know where their next meals are going to come from. That is really important because the unemployment rate in this country is not 25%, or one in four, so that means there are millions of Canadians going to work and, between the shift at their first job and the start of their shift at their second job, they need to make a stop at the food bank so they can afford to feed themselves and their children.

That is life after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister. It is not that the Liberals have been spending money to help Canadians get ahead. They have been spending money to make sure Liberal insiders live large. We saw it with their \$60-million arrive scam. We see it in this case with the \$400 million at their green slush fund, Sustainable Development Technologies Canada. Of course, when confronted with the problem, Liberals denied it, and then they folded the organization only to pull it underneath the industry minister, who was not turning over documents to the police.

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We saw it when the Prime Minister tried to reward his buddies at the WE Charity organization, Marc and Craig Kielburger. We saw it when he tried to help his friends at SNC-Lavalin with a get-out-of-jail-free card. When he was called out by the then attorney general, how did he treat Ms. Wilson-Raybould, an experienced Crown prosecutor? He fired her. He threw her under the bus. When the then health minister, an experienced physician, stood up and said what was happening was wrong, what did he do to the second woman in his caucus who spoke out against him? He threw her under the bus too.

It is because it is all about Liberal insiders, like when the Prime Minister gets a phone call from someone who is getting millions of dollars from his government and is looking for a big grant, looking for a couple million bucks, and says that they should talk about it at their island in the Bahamas, and that he should bring the president of the Liberal Party with him so they can all have a nice conversation about it together. It is a free trip for the Prime Minister, but who is picking up the tab? It is always Canadians who are stuck with the bill when it comes to the Prime Minister, who is helping Liberal insiders and his well-connected friends get ahead.

The ask is very simple: Do not break the law. It looks like the Liberals have struggled with that one. Parliament has the legal authority to order the production of these documents, which is a matter of fact. The parliamentary secretary can stand up, wave his arms and shout about it, but it is the law; it is a fact. He does not have to like it—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: You're right. I don't.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, he is saying he does not like the law. We know that about the Liberals. They break the law. They do not like the law. However, we were not elected to make him happy. We were elected to protect the interests of Canadians, who are just struggling to get by.

I have really good news at the end of what seems like a pretty depressing 20 minutes and a depressing nine years. Common-sense Conservatives have made a promise to Canadians, which is that life was not like this before the Liberal Prime Minister, and it is not going to be like that after him.

We will restore the Canadian promise of bigger paycheques, homes that people can afford in safe neighbourhoods and a comfortable retirement. That is the Canadian dream. That is the Canadian promise. It is why all of us ran for office. It is why we cannot wait for there to be a carbon tax election. Canadians deserve a choice. After nine years of taxes going up, costs going up and crime going up, now time is up. Canadians are ready for a change, and we are ready to bring it home.

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• (1405)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member started off with breaking news about the RCMP doing an investigation. That is interesting because the Conservatives can let the RCMP do what it needs to do. Instead, they want to blur judicial independence. That is what this motion, or whatever game they are playing, is about. It is contrary to what the RCMP is recommending.

I take issue with how the member, probably more than any other Conservative member, tries to politicize things. How many times have we heard him say “Liberal-appointed chair” and that she is a Liberal and Liberal-friendly? He knows full well that she was an adviser to Brian Mulroney, Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty. She is a big donor to the Conservative Party, having donated thousands of dollars, yet he continues to say she is Liberal-friendly.

The bottom line is that we do not condone and have taken strict actions against what has taken place, with independent investigations, the freezing of funds and a replacement of the board. The only one who is being irresponsible is the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1410)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we know the Liberals love to speak out of both sides of their mouth, so let me share with Canadians an article from *The Globe and Mail*, which the Liberals have called fake news in the past, while the Prime Minister has run down the honest reporting of his record. It is from September 11, 2019: “Ottawa blocks RCMP on SNC-Lavalin inquiry”. It says, “The RCMP has been looking into potential obstruction of justice in the handling of the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin Group Inc., but its examination has been stymied by the federal government’s refusal to lift cabinet confidentiality for all witnesses.”

This is the game the Liberals play. There is no law they will not break and no falsehood they will not offer to cover up what we know they do best, which is help Liberal insiders get ahead. We are not going to stand for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncás (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague’s speech was, of course, no different from what all his common-sense Conservative colleagues are telling us. I think, however, that common sense has gone out the window, because they have forgotten their history. I agree that corruption is very much part of the Liberal DNA. That said, it is also in the Conservative DNA. My colleague likes to remind people of the facts, so I am going to remind him of a few facts about his government when it was in power.

Some \$50 million was embezzled in Tony Clement’s riding, a former industry minister under the Conservatives. What did the Conservative Party do to reward him? They promoted him. That is rich. They reward people who embezzle funds. I would also like to remind him that, on questions of privilege like today’s, the Conservative Party opposed handing over documents requested by the House. In 2009 and 2010, there was the Afghan detainee transfer scandal. In 2013, there was the Senate expenses scandal. In 2011,

there was the robocalls affair. In 2012, there was the omnibus budget implementation bill, Bill C-38.

I think that my colleague has forgotten some of the history. I have just one question for him. How can Quebeckers have confidence in a Conservative Party that has such a shameful record of scandals?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, with arguments like that, it is a real shame that I do not have the opportunity to run against a Bloc Québécois member in my community, because I think Canadians would find that pretty flimsy.

The member and his party have been propping up a Liberal government that is unrivalled in its corruption. We have seen it with this \$400 million scandal. How could anyone supply confidence to a Liberal government despite its \$60-million arrive scam? How could anyone in good conscience do that when people in the province of Quebec, as in every province and territory in our federation, have been suffering and are lined up at food banks? The lines at the food banks in Quebec are no shorter.

It is a real shame, because there is an opportunity to have a carbon tax election. There is an opportunity to remove confidence from the government. However, it is up to the member to decide with his caucus whether they are going to continue to support a government that certainly has not been supporting people in my community, my province or my country, which includes Quebec.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the commentary from the member for Winnipeg North, who repeatedly said that Conservatives are abusing power. I find that very illuminating in terms of the Liberal mindset on this. They believe that our holding the government accountable and exercising the most ancient parliamentary privilege, which is to call for persons, papers and things, is an abuse of power. I would charge that they are abusing power by defying the order from the House and yourself, Mr. Speaker. Could the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes comment with his thoughts on that?

• (1415)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who does a tremendous job representing her constituents. It is no wonder they sent her to this place, because she hit the nail right on the head.

This is an absolute abuse of power by the government, but that has been the hallmark of the Liberal Prime Minister. He has been staunchly defended by the parliamentary secretary, the member for Winnipeg North, against the interests of his constituents and all Canadians. This is when we see that, in the interest of supporting their friends, they refuse to follow the law.

In the example I gave earlier about SNC-Lavalin, the Prime Minister cooked up a phony story about trying to save jobs. He was really just trying to save his buddies, who were giving him big donations. In fact, he obstructed a criminal investigation and obstructed an investigation into his obstruction of justice. That shows us what an abuse of power is, and it has been perpetrated on Canadians by the Liberal Prime Minister and his Liberal members for far too long.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is not only me, the member for Winnipeg North, who is saying “abuse of power”. The former law clerk of Parliament did so. He is from an independent institution and is not partisan, and he said, “it is an abuse of its powers for the House to use its powers to demand and get documents from the Government in order to transfer them to a third party (RCMP) that wouldn't otherwise receive them or to compel the government to give documents to the third party.”

It is this individual who is saying that the Conservatives are abusing power. How do they defend that?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I have great news, which is that the current parliamentary law clerk has affirmed for Canadians that Parliament continues to have the unfettered right to send for persons and papers. This is in spite of a Liberal government and a Liberal Prime Minister wanting to trample on the rights of democratically elected members to represent them, to stop the corruption being perpetrated on them. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you know that, because your ruling that the order for the production of documents was valid was informed by the expertise of the current parliamentary law clerk.

Therefore, the member opposite can find whatever straw men he wants to prop up in a field, but we have an institution with a parliamentary law clerk who has asserted that the right remains intact, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are investigating their corruption. It is about time they came out with their hands up.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy coming from the other side is mind-blowing.

The member started off by talking about breaking news with the RCMP. The Liberals have asserted throughout the whole debate that the RCMP wants nothing to do with this. The member across the way then said, “Well, listen, if only the Conservatives weren't doing what they're doing, the RCMP could do their job.” Is he kidding me? The hypocrisy and the talking points are changing on the fly.

Could the member wrap up and just highlight some more of the hypocrisy coming from the Liberals?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it is a great question from the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, and it is great to see him. He raises a great point. It is hypocrisy from the Liberals. The RCMP is investigating their corruption. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians have had enough. It is time for a carbon tax election.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise and speak in this chamber, but not happy about the occasion. We are talking about yet another example of the culture of secrecy that has penetrated the government. It was baked in right

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from the start and that is the shame of it. Many Canadians are old enough to remember the 2015 election campaign. The government promised to be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history, and the shame of this is how it has flagrantly broken that promise every day of this Parliament. This is a government that is reflexively secretive in all things and scandal-prone from the start.

Going back to the Liberals' promise of openness and transparency to set part of the stage here, this is a government that passed an access to information law after it was first elected, which the Information Commissioner said was a step backward in access to information. The Liberals promised. They succeeded in that 2015 election. They figured out how to eat the NDP's lunch and how to go after traditional NDP supporters. Many members of the NDP, to their credit, have long spoken about openness and transparency, and they had criticized access to information over the decades in Canada. That was one of the promises where the Liberals zeroed in on a group of voters, promised them what they wanted to hear and then broke the promise. This attitude of reflexive and instinctive secrecy governs every bit of conduct of the government. We have seen it time and time again. The government is a scandal-plagued government that has no regard for our laws around ethics and around access to information.

Early on in the government, let us not forget that the Prime Minister broke the law and accepted an illegal vacation. That was one of the first things he did. He became the first Prime Minister to be found to contravene the Conflict of Interest Act. This is the type of scandal we see from the government over and over again. There was the India trip wherein the government sent an invitation to a man convicted of terrorism, convicted of the attempted murder of an India cabinet minister and who assaulted a former premier of British Columbia and member of this Parliament. That is the company the government keeps.

We saw early in the 42nd Parliament, the SNC-Lavalin scandal wherein the Prime Minister brought in a new law by sneaking it into a budget implementation bill. I was at the finance committee. Mr. Speaker, you were there too, I recall. The government snuck a deferred prosecution law into a budget implementation act. At the finance committee, we scratched our heads and wondered what that was doing in a budget implementation act. Even you, Mr. Speaker, and other Liberals around the table were wondering about this.

It was implemented into law and it became pretty clear pretty quickly why that deferred prosecution law was brought in. It was brought in to get a corrupt company off the hook in furtherance of the interests, in his own words, of the member for Papineau, who said this was why it was essential that this corrupt company be granted a deferred prosecution, something hand-delivered to that company for that purpose by the government in a budget implementation act. What we saw from that was a fallout that resulted in cabinet resignation, caucus expulsions and the retirement of the chief clerk of the Privy Council.

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• (1420)

It is to the credit of Jody Wilson-Raybould, who stood up to the government and said that this kind of greasy corruption would not be allowed to stand, that she would not allow the Prime Minister and his office to interfere in a criminal prosecution. She was fired as minister of justice, shuffled, then dumped and expelled from the Liberal caucus.

We have a government where the then-fisheries minister tried to give a lucrative clam fishing licence, to a relative. I thank my friend behind me, the member for Cariboo—Prince George, for bringing that to light.

This was all in the 42nd Parliament. This was right from the beginning. We came back into the 43rd Parliament, with much reduced numbers on the other side, in no small part to this kind of dishonest conduct, and what did they do? They picked up right where they left off and handed half a billion dollars over to a friendly but ultimately discredited charity, the WE scandal, where the conflicts of interest of the then-finance minister Bill Morneau and his ties to that organization ultimately led to his resignation. We saw the Winnipeg lab scandal emerge in the 43rd Parliament, where Parliament found the government in contempt over its refusal to table documents for which the production was ordered by the House, by elected members of Parliament who have the right, under the Constitution of Canada.

We have the charter, which guarantees the democratic rights of Canadians, and the Constitution of Canada, which declares that this is the supreme inquisitor for Canadians, that members of Parliament have the right to documents and to compel witnesses in furtherance of holding the Crown and the government to account for Canadians.

There was the refusal to table in the House documents dealing with the espionage that had occurred in a top secret laboratory. We had to order the chief of that agency to the bar to be admonished by the Speaker but the Liberals make sure that they help their own. That member, after being admonished by the House, was shuffled off and given a high-paying job with another agency. That is how accountability works with the government.

We had another election. These guys squeaked their way back in and no sooner did that happen than we had the pandemic. Toward the tail end of the pandemic, they trotted out the ArriveCAN app, an application that did not work and that sent thousands of Canadi-

ans to quarantine unnecessarily and in error. We found out that a couple of middlemen made off with millions of dollars. When the parliamentary investigation revealed this, again, the Liberal insiders who were getting rich off this refused to answer questions and had to be brought to the bar again. These were unprecedented steps that had not been resorted to in decades but under the level of corruption of the government, the necessity to obtain information to get to the bottom of scandal after scandal leads us to where we are today.

We are at the point, today, where we have the current SDTC crisis, where we have \$400 million that has gone out into the pockets of Liberal insiders and questions that remain unanswered, documents that, again, have been ordered by the House. The House voted for the production of these documents. This is not something that Conservatives have just dreamed up.

• (1425)

This is the House of Commons, where the Conservatives have 121 seats. We do not have enough votes to do this as an act of partisanship. This is what the majority of the House of Commons wants, including members of all parties, except for the Liberals, who, in furtherance of their culture of secrecy, continue to withhold documents. That is why we are seized with this.

Liberals say, “If the Conservatives let us kick this over to committee, we could carry on with the business of government.” However, Canadians want a carbon tax election. That is what we want. We need to settle the issue of getting the documents now, and then we can move on to other matters.

• (1430)

The Speaker: Having reached the expiry of the time provided for today's debate, the House will resume consideration of the privilege motion at 11 a.m. on Monday, October 21. Pursuant to Standing Order 94, I wish to inform hon. members that Private Members' Business will be suspended on that day.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 21, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

[*Translation*]

Again, I would like to wish all members a happy Thanksgiving with their loved ones and their constituents.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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