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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 24, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 94(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2024 annual report to Parliament on immigration.

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[*Translation*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled “Economic Development of Official Language Minority Communities”. It contains 20 excellent recommendations that would enable the federal government to play a leading role in developing the economic potential of all official language minority communities.

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

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would seek unanimous consent to present the Bloc Québécois's dissenting opinion.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Bloc Québécois will be presenting a dissenting opinion. More importantly, I want Quebeckers to know that all of the recommendations in this report are aimed exclusively at supporting the economic development of English-speaking Quebec. That is really unfair and appalling.

We know that the English-speaking community is growing and developing and that it is highly favoured. For French-speaking Quebeckers, who are in the majority in their own state but in the minority in Canada, there is nothing, no offer of support. Despite the new elements that we managed to include in the new federal language law for Quebec and for all official languages support programs, there are only measures to strengthen the anglophone community. Let us remember that these measures are funded in part by the federal taxes that Quebeckers send to Ottawa every year.

The recommendations were all approved by the Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP, which shows that only the Bloc Québécois is defending French in Quebec and that the only real way to protect our national language going forward is for Quebec to become independent.

[*English*]

#### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled “Challenges to the Sustainability of the Yukon Salmon Stocks”. This study and its report examine an issue, the decline of the Yukon River salmon and how we can restore this ecosystem, that is of enormous importance to my constituents in the Yukon.

I thank the clerk of the committee; the many members, Canadians and Yukoners who participated in the study; and the analysts, who made this report possible.

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

#### INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which is in relation to Bill S-16, an act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

## CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, presented on Wednesday, June 19, be concurred in.

I am rising today to speak to a subject that is at the very heart of our society, and that is safe sport in Canada. Unfortunately, what we are seeing is a broken system that has been allowed to deteriorate over the past three decades.

This debate was launched by the motion I introduced here in the House of Commons about Hockey Canada's actions as part of a reported cover-up of an alleged gang rape by players on the Canadian hockey team in 2018, which was brought to light by an article penned by journalist Rick Westhead. I wanted to start a dialogue on the importance of safety in sports by encouraging us to listen to athletes' experiences with a view to keeping them safer and enhancing their well-being. Numerous experts have shined a light on the systemic problems, and I felt it was important to examine these issues at a higher level. I have led the charge on this, focusing on the need for a review as part of an independent public inquiry, which strikes me as the only solution.

Despite two years of study at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, despite the open letters, from gymnasts in particular, despite testimony from many athletes in over 16 sports, including water polo, swimming, soccer, kayaking, rowing, sailing, track and field, curling, fencing, speed skating, figure skating and boxing, and testimony from Canadian Hockey League players who were sexually abused, not to mention articles written by journalists like Rick Westhead, we have seen inaction and lip service, but little in the way of concrete results on the part of this government. The government's do-nothing approach in the face of these issues is alarming, and I am here to draw attention to the situation.

Recommendation 20 in the report calls for the launching of an independent public inquiry. We must get to the bottom of this. An independent public inquiry is still and definitely needed to delve deeply into the systemic problems affecting Canadian sports. We must understand these abuses and shortcomings that have arisen and persisted for such a long time. The inquiry's scope must not be limited to individual cases, but rather extend to the governance structures that have allowed these deficiencies to arise.

It is essential that athletes, coaches and all other people involved in sports be free to testify without fear of reprisals, including financial ones. Such an approach is needed to restore trust and ensure that concrete measures are put in place to protect those who dedicate their lives to sport in pursuit of their passion. Ignoring the call for an inquiry remains a serious mistake and encourages continued indifference toward problems that deeply affect our society. I would remind members that the launching of an independent public inquiry was favoured by over 95% of witnesses, including the Canadian Olympic Committee and the organization Own The Podium, which spoke out in favour of such an inquiry.

I would like to raise an important point about the future of sport in Canada commission, much trumpeted by the Minister of Sport

and Physical Activity. I want to make it clear that this voluntary commission is merely an advisory body, with no real authority to make significant changes. We must not be misled by the minister's empty words on this small-minded initiative. Instead of taking concrete measures to fix the pressing problems facing us, the government seems content to pursue this sham voluntary consultation.

What is more, the fact that the minister has announced that she will not be seeking re-election sends a troubling signal. This decision simply reinforces the idea that her commitment to sports was merely a means of playing out the clock, with no genuine desire to resolve the issues we are concerned about. If the government truly wishes to advance sports in Canada, it must stop hiding behind hollow speeches and take bold decisions. We need strong leadership and concrete initiatives, not some phony commitment. It is as though the minister had been installed to protect her own system.

It is also important to recall that the minister had the power to better align, through legislative means, safety issues in sports with questions of justice, coercion and grooming of athletes. Instead, for a year and a half we have had radio silence, and that is troubling. It is imperative that we discontinue mediation in cases where the events in question amount to criminal abuse. The safety of our athletes, especially child athletes, must trump any other consideration.

● (1010)

We must reinforce the message that it is essential to report these instances of abuse to law enforcement. Sports must be a safe space for all, and abusive behaviour must not be trivialized or concealed. Victims must feel supported when they report this behaviour, rather than being forced into silence by procedures that leave them vulnerable. It is incumbent upon the government to protect children in sports, and that starts with tangible, legislative action that reflects a genuine commitment to their safety. Ignoring these issues is not just negligence, but a danger to our collective future—hence the urgent need for a truly independent public inquiry.

It is alarming that when cases of abuse were reported to Sport Canada, departmental officials did nothing for years. There was no follow-up or investigation within the community. That is unacceptable. This lack of an active response not only exposes the victims to situations of ongoing vulnerability, but it also sends a horrible message on the culture of impunity that seems to be prevalent in sports. That message is all the more troubling because we discovered, thanks to the study by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, whose report we are debating today, that certain national sports bodies accessed funds to cover up cases of abuse. This practice raises serious ethical concerns, as was shown by Hockey Canada and Soccer Canada. This behaviour reinforces the perception that these organizations are more concerned about their image than about the safety of their athletes.

We also learned that they had shelved reports commissioned by independent third parties, reports that pointed to safety and abuse problems. When something is not in their interest, they put it on a shelf to gather dust. How can we hope for true societal change if this information is ignored and set aside? There is no mechanism for monitoring this practice, opening the door to a culture of silence in national sports bodies. This has to stop. We need total transparency and clear accountability mechanisms to ensure that all instances of abuse are not just reported, but treated with the seriousness they deserve.

In the face of these serious deficiencies, we called on the Auditor General of Canada to familiarize herself with the file and conduct an in-depth examination of Canadian sport policy. This is essential if we are to ensure that the systemic problems facing us are brought to light and treated appropriately. An independent analysis will not only assess the effectiveness of existing measures, but will also make concrete recommendations on how to enhance safety and integrity in the sports world.

It is high time that we take these issues seriously and act on a factual basis. The investigation by the Auditor General, as called for in recommendations 3 and 7 of this report, can also be leveraged to encourage the government to adopt necessary reforms and implement rigorous monitoring mechanisms. We need truth, not half measures. Public trust in our sport organizations depends on our ability to confront these realities head-on and to commit to building a better future for our athletes and our young people.

The Minister of Sport and Physical Activity played a key role in designing Canada's sports system. She must have the courage and humility to recognize her serious mistakes and commit to making the necessary corrections so that, one day, we will not have to confront the need to remedy these injustices.

How can the former chair of the board of directors of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, or CCES, be objective? Could this be a way of sweeping under the rug the problems in the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or OSIC?

How can the former adviser to the director general of Sport Canada deliver reforms on measures that she herself put in place? How can she justify all those trips around the world she took on the taxpayer's dime, at a time when the sports system was in such bad shape?

How was the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity able to award an untendered contract for CCES to take over the OSIC without any prior analysis? She is the architect and guardian of what has gone wrong in sports for some 20 years and of this culture of silence that protects the perpetrators rather than the victims.

● (1015)

I would also like to address the financial challenges and problems of access and inclusion in the sports community. The government promised investments, but where did this money really go? Budget cuts to sports programs, both provincially and nationally, had devastating consequences. Amateur sports clubs, schools and sports associations are on the front lines of this crisis.

### *Routine Proceedings*

There are also glaring regional inequalities. While large cities get new infrastructure, rural communities like those in Abitibi—Témiscamingue are still fighting for basic facilities. Young people in these regions are being left behind and are denied access to potentially transformational sports. To ignore these inequalities is to sacrifice the future of our young people and maintain the inequalities.

Let us talk now about access and inclusion. Sports should be a universal right, but in reality it is a privilege for only some. Registration fees, equipment costs and travel expenses for athletes and their families are barriers that many cannot overcome. While the government talks about inclusion, youth from underprivileged communities are left watching from the sidelines.

Moreover, minorities and persons with disabilities are often invisible in our sports programming. We hear the talk about equity, but the figures speak for themselves. Very few actual initiatives have been put in place to ensure that everyone gets to play. The government's indifference to these issues is unacceptable.

An article in *La Presse* is timely. I presented the case of Témiscamingue to the office of the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity. People do not have access to a swimming pool within a 100-kilometre radius, and government programs are not adapted to the reality of remote communities.

Let us turn now to governance. Sports federations must be models of transparency and integrity, but that is not the case. In the study carried out after my motion was adopted, we saw harassment and mistreatment scandals within these organizations, and we learned that the government took no concrete measures. It is high time to demand accountability. Media pressure and public indignation have done more to change the system than the minister herself has done.

The performance-at-all-costs culture cannot justify the sacrifice of athletes' well-being. The government's lofty words are no longer enough. We need concrete action to reform the system and to ensure a safe, respectful environment for our athletes. Failure to act now will open the door to further abuses.

Besides, should sports in Canada not fall under Health Canada, which aims to promote healthy living, rather than Canadian Heritage?

How to justify the presence of coaches with active criminal records at the Paris Olympics and the Coaching Association of Canada's failure to react? How to explain the drone scandal, the only scandal at the Paris Olympics? This sowed doubt among some athletes, who had to bear the brunt of complaints from the other teams.

How to explain the fact that Own the Podium still imposes its choice of coach for Canada's women's soccer team? What about the cost overruns of the Canadian competitions for FIFA 2026? This will be a scandal for Canada. How much has the federal government spent to ensure security for these events? The Liberal government will not even be there to defend itself.

*Routine Proceedings*

Can the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity rise and tell us that all of the national sports organizations will make changes to the membership of their board of directors and meet the criteria for receiving support from Sport Canada as announced in May 2023?

Can the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity assure us that Soccer Canada and Hockey Canada have no confidentiality agreements concerning reports of abuse, mistreatment or toxic environments? What is the situation within Gymnastics Canada?

Do all our national sports organizations have a firm serving as an independent third party, which was itself at the centre of the abuse and cover-ups? Can the minister explain what kind of scrutiny she has exercised over the wrongdoing, abuse and complaints from athletes who make their way through the sport system along with the judicial system? How many misdeeds have not been reported to the police?

Fortunately, today, outside the realm of Sport Canada and this minister, sport is often seen as a matter of national pride, and far less in terms of health and wellness. I need to point that out. We celebrate our athletes' success on the world stage, but we should not ignore the real problems in the sports community. Athletes should not be seen as mere commodities, as tools to enhance our image and boost national pride. This utilitarian vision exposes our youth to all sorts of abuse, whether physical, psychological, emotional or financial.

• (1020)

By prioritizing performance over well-being, we are creating an environment conducive to abuse, where victims' voices are silenced, and where athletes' physical and mental health are often sacrificed on the altar of victory.

Athletes, especially the young and vulnerable, should feel supported and protected, yet their value is reduced to the medals and trophies they can win for us. We are neglecting the true benefits of sport, namely, personal development, team spirit, sportsmanship, the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits and pushing one's limits.

We need to shift our discourse when it comes to sports. Instead of focusing solely on performance, we need to promote sport as a vector for health, inclusion and personal development. That is how we will protect our athletes and offer them a secure and fulfilling future.

Lastly, it is imperative that we reform the governance of our sports federations. We need to implement mechanisms for transparency and accountability. These are not promises, but systemic changes needed to restore the trust of our athletes and our constituents.

Also, who in our sports organizations are legally and ethically responsible for ensuring athletes' safety and wellness? This fundamental question has yet to be answered and deserves urgent attention. Sports federations, clubs and the government have a role to play in protecting those who dedicate their life to pursuing their passion. It is high time we took a look at the reasons why we keep avoiding this crucial subject. Having the courage to look back at the past 20 years of wilful blindness is a necessary step in understand-

ing how we got here, which is why we need an independent public inquiry.

We need to acknowledge that, in Canada, the government does not take its responsibilities seriously. It is unacceptable that there could have been abuse without concrete measures being taken to prevent it. Our laws and policies must be adapted to establish clear standards on safety and well-being. Organizations must be held accountable for their actions, as well as for their failure to act. We need to commit to change. As long as we continue to turn a blind eye, we will imperil the future of our sports and the safety of our athletes.

We also need to encourage private companies to invest in community sports, but never to the detriment of ethics. Sponsors should have no influence over the decisions made by sports federations or clubs. We need a clear regulatory framework to make sure that sporting values such as fairness remain paramount.

Lastly, it is imperative that we reform the governance of our sports federations. We need to put mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability. These are not promises, but systemic changes needed to restore the trust of our athletes and fellow citizens. This includes the creation of independent ethics committees to investigate complaints and scandals.

In conclusion, we cannot remain passive in the face of these problems. Indifference is not an option. The government's rhetoric is no longer sufficient. We need concrete measures, commitment and determination.

Change is possible, but it depends on our collective will to question the status quo. I encourage my colleagues to act, to take a stand and to ensure that every young person, regardless of their position, has an opportunity to dream, play and fulfill their potential through sport.

I would like to conclude by thanking the key players in this study, which, I would point out, took almost two years. I would like to thank Jessica, Kim, Rob, Kristin, Amélia, Ryan, Kelly, Randy, Whitney, professors Ross and McFarlane, Judge Aquilina, Judge Cromwell, Melanie, Sylvain, Janine, Quinn, Sophie, Christine, Andrea, Kiara, Myriam, the members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the former minister of sport, now the Minister of Canadian Heritage. As a point of interest, on May 11, she herself, as Minister of Sport, on behalf of the federal government, undertook to conduct an independent public inquiry into sport. Unfortunately, since she was promoted to Canadian Heritage, her successor has ignored the clear will of the witnesses in the study.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Amélie, my parliamentary assistant, as well as to Jean-François. I would also like to thank some of my parliamentary colleagues. Exceptionally, I will cite their first names: Andréanne, Kirsty, Peter, the members of the Conservative party, including their critic Richard, and the Liberals, in particular Adam. I thank them for their collaboration. I think that we made significant progress together. However, there is still much to be done.

• (1025)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the Bloc, who spent hours, along with other Conservatives and me, on the safe sport committee. It has been a failure since day one. The government is clearly trying to support Sport Canada, which has never done its job; it never checks in with the 62 national sport organizations. That was evident with the sexual assault charge against Hockey Canada in London, Ontario in 2018. Then the government added the OSIC. That is another layer of bureaucracy that is now doing the work that Sport Canada should have been doing all along.

To the member from the Bloc who put this concurrence motion forward today, what are his thoughts on what the government should do with Sport Canada? My own thoughts are to disband it altogether.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague.

I think there is something that Scott Smith and all the executives at Hockey Canada did not see coming in their great Calgary tower—which was probably one of the most inaccessible rights, and where Hockey Canada people were above it all. What they did not see coming was a little guy from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, a big fan of hockey and social justice, as well as the support of colleagues who love hockey. I really want to thank my Conservative colleague, who was a strong ally in the analysis of this situation.

Now Sport Canada needs to do some soul searching. Right now, institutions are protecting institutions. At some point there will have to be external scrutiny and things will have to be made public. That is the only way to end the culture of silence. It is not up to Sport Canada to conduct a review of Sport Canada. There needs to be a public, independent inquiry. We need an independent judge to make recommendations, someone who can call for the production of documents, much like the House is calling for documents. That is how we found out that there are funds within the funds, that there is wrongdoing, that there are people who are protecting themselves and hiding, and that there are corrupt boards of directors.

That is what we need to do to shed light on the whole situation. We need an independent public inquiry.

• (1030)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The Conservatives stand up to provide comment on the report. What do they say? They want to get rid of

Sport Canada. Why am I not surprised? When we talk about Conservatives, all they want to do is take things apart, cut, cut, cut.

There was the ministerial response to the report. Has the hon. member actually read the ministerial response and if the answer to that is yes, is there any aspect of that ministerial response that he supports?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I did do my homework and read the response.

The problem is that the minister is talking about a voluntary commission. Those are fine words, but, when we are talking about meaningful measures, we should be putting the success of the future of sport in Canada into the hands of independent people. This cannot be handled by the individuals within this dying government.

Meaningful measures should have been taken to leave a legacy, but that is not the path the minister has chosen.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hard work on this very important issue. The NDP supports the idea of an independent public inquiry.

I know that the member is very passionate about the issue of ethics in sport. Why did his Bloc Québécois colleague vote with the Liberals this week to block a study on the soccer drone scandal that hurt our athletes and our international reputation in soccer?

Why did the Bloc Québécois support the Liberals to cover up what is happening at Soccer Canada and to prevent us from stamping out a culture of spying that goes against the ethics on which sport in our country should be based?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her commitment to social justice in sports and elsewhere. I think her sensitivity has moved a lot of causes forward in this Parliament.

As for her question concerning the motion, I completely agree with the substance of her remarks and the things she mentioned. I also want to say, as the member pointed out, that despite the penalty handed down to the Canadian team, the players had nothing to do with what happened, yet they are paying the price for the misbehaviour of Canada Soccer and Sport Canada.

The reality is that sometimes things in politics focus on procedure and priorities, but I am sure that this study could be revisited in due course.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorely tempted to answer my NDP colleague's question myself, since I sit on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and there were many good reasons not to support the motion in the form in which it was presented. However, I will let my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue handle it, because he did such a great job on the issue of safe sport at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

*Routine Proceedings*

Since the beginning of this study, since the beginning of the scandals that have been brought to light, the Bloc Québécois has done an outstanding job, through my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue and his team, among others. I just wanted to point that out.

However, at the end of the day, the Bloc Québécois made only one significant recommendation. In my opinion, it was a recommendation that would be easy to adopt, support and implement, and it is essential for improving safety in professional and amateur sports throughout Quebec and Canada.

I would like to hear my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue reiterate the importance of this recommendation in the report he worked so hard on.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member from Drummond, for his patience.

Why is the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in charge of sport? It has a lot of other issues to deal with. Maybe the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is too big, and we should consider creating a standing committee on sport to investigate these issues that affect our own and other countries' national sports associations.

This being said, there is one fundamental recommendation, which I mentioned. It is to launch an independent public inquiry that can make recommendations that basically have force of law. This would be different from a voluntary commission that will simply tell us to read the report that is on the shelf because there are good ideas in it.

The Bloc Québécois also submitted a supplementary report. Although the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's report contained more than 20 recommendations, which is a huge number, we added several pages in the Bloc Québécois's supplementary report because we need to get to the bottom of these sport scandals and make sure that no young person or athlete is left behind.

• (1035)

[*English*]

**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, I will have a speech in a few minutes. Before I get there, I would like to ask my friend and colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue a brief question.

The member seems to have temporary amnesia with respect to all the progress we have made collectively, and I think he should take credit for some of that. We have agreed that abuse in sport ought not to be a partisan issue and that, when we make collective progress, we will make it together under a team Canada approach. We have invested in community sport to an unprecedented degree, with \$75 million over the last couple of years, to inspire young kids and make sure there is an inclusive sport system right across this country.

We stood up the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. It has the tools and resources to adjudicate cases, making sure that we get to the bottom of abuse and that abusive coaches and individuals

are kicked out of the sport system. We have made incredible progress. The evidence of that is really clear.

Will the member not acknowledge that he has been part of that progress?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, yes, we have had many debates in the House and elsewhere. I have asked him questions whenever I had the opportunity, perhaps every two months or so, to get to the bottom of this. We know all about the things he mentioned. However, the federal government's real strategy is to hide behind a voluntary investigation, a voluntary commission. The reality is that the government refused to investigate fully. For me, the question remains the same: What does the government have to hide?

Parliament took one position, and the government took another. The minister herself made a commitment on behalf of the government, but no concrete action has been taken. An independent public inquiry has not been launched. Canada could have been a model for the rest of the world. Canada could have gotten to the bottom of this matter, as it did with doping in the 1980s. It could have become a world leader on this, as it did with the World Anti-Doping Agency. Instead, Canada chose to lag behind.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Liberals are offering such a strong defence of Sport Canada. Here are the facts: Senior officials at Sport Canada, a government agency, knew about the sexual assault allegations at Hockey Canada on June 26, 2018, and they did nothing. They knew about them for four years before they did anything.

Would my colleague from the Bloc agree that the government failed by sitting on these allegations for more than four years?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Perth—Wellington was an ally on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage when we studied the Hockey Canada case. I remember how hard he worked, so I am appealing to him today. If there is a change of government, which could happen sooner rather than later, I hope that he will take on the responsibility, on behalf of his political party, of making sure that there is an independent public inquiry. I hope that his party will vote to concur in the report, including recommendation 20, which calls on the government to launch an independent public inquiry.



*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**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, it is a real honour to stand in the House this morning to talk about an issue that is so close to my heart. I have been an athlete my whole life, although, when I was a young boy, I did not believe in myself. I did not think that I could become an athlete. The great coaches at the Burloak Canoe Club gave me the skills and the confidence necessary to achieve my dreams in athletics. Thanks to them, I am able to stand in the House. I honestly do not think I would be here in the House of Commons if it were not for all the institutions that support athletes across this country. It is a huge honour and privilege for me to be able to continue to support those institutions to make sure they are even better.

Today, I would first like to thank all the members of the committee, who have helped the government create such progress over the last four years. I was first asked to work on the safe sport issue by the then minister of sport, the member for Etobicoke North. That was back in 2017, a year after I retired from the national kayak team after 18 years.

I am very proud to have joined a woman whom we celebrated last night at the Order of Sport awards, Dr. Guylaine Demers. She is a researcher, an advocate, an athlete, a coach and a professor at Laval in Quebec. Dr. Demers has empowered generations of students, coaches, athletes, administrators and people like me to make sports a safer, more equitable and more welcoming place. She is a former high-performance basketball player and coach, and she has become a driving force for gender equity and safety in sport, right across Canada and around the world. She typically works as a volunteer. She was the chair of the gender equity task force for the then minister of sport when I joined in 2017. She is currently the president of Égale Action, Quebec's association for the advancement of women in sport, and she is an active member of the Canadian Olympic committee's Sport Inclusion Task Force. Last night, very deservedly, she was inducted into the Order of Sport, Canada's only sports hall of fame.

I would also like to take a moment to thank every single witness for their brave testimony at the heritage committee over this very challenging period of time; some old wounds were reopened, and some very important conversations were had. I know it was challenging for a lot of people, including members of Parliament who joined those committees. On behalf of the government and the sport movement here in Canada, I would like to offer our deep thanks to every single witness; the witnesses were brave in coming forward and courageous in giving testimony.

This past summer, Canadians from coast to coast to coast tuned in to cheer on team Canada at the Paris Olympic and Paralympic games in Paris. They cheered on athletes such as Nicholas Bennett, also there last night at the Order of Sport awards, who made history by securing Canada's first gold medal of the games, then followed it up with another gold and a silver medal; Brent Lakatos, with his incredible speed on the tracks, who secured multiple podium finishes; and Aurélie Rivard, who continues to make a big splash and secured three medals at the Paralympic Games.

Team Canada athletes are the pride of their communities. When Canadians come together to celebrate their hometown heroes, we see a testament to the unifying power of sport. These athletes show us what is possible and inspire the next generation of Olympic and Paralympic heroes. It is not just that; rather, when athletes come home with medals, we also see a rise in the registrations at clubs right across the country. It is an inspiring thing to watch Canadians perform on the world stage. I can speak from experience. Down at the Burloak Canoe Club, whenever we had success at the Olympics, registration was always through the roof in September.

These moments of triumph and perseverance unite us as a country. While Conservatives seek to divide us and destroy the institutions that support Canadians, Canadians of all political stripes unite to cheer team Canada on.

However, more than being just a unifying force, sport must be grounded in human rights. This means making sure that everyone, regardless of ability, gender, identity or background, has the same access to safe and welcoming sport experiences. Unfortunately, that is not the case everywhere across the country or around the world. Back in 2006-07, I started working in sport development with organizations such as Right To Play. It uses sport to unify people and to rebuild after countries and communities have been affected by war, poverty and disease.

Our challenges here in Canada are different, but they are important to address. I would like to single out some organizations, such as Spirit North, which brings sport to first nations communities, primarily in western Canada. I am proud that our community sport initiative has helped to fund some of that great work. I would give Beckie Scott, a former Olympic champion in cross-country skiing, a shout-out. She is the founder of that organization, which brings sport to many kids, and they enjoy it very much.

Back in 2022, Canadians were shocked and dismayed to hear revelations of alleged sexual assaults by members of the 2017-18 world junior hockey team. Over time, more survivors came forward to speak about various types of abuse at all levels of sport, in other sports and across other sport disciplines.

● (1040)

This abuse should never have happened. It has no place in our sport system, any system or our country. Nowhere does abuse have a place: not on our fields, not in our rinks, not in the locker rooms, not in corporate Canada, not in education, not in the arts and not in politics. Abuse is wrong.

*Routine Proceedings*

Those systems and those abuses of power resulted from a lack of accountability, from a culture of silence and, too often, from a desire to win at all costs. The reckoning that we now see in hockey and across the sport system is the result of brave survivors coming forward to share their lived experiences. It takes a lot of strength to stand up and share those horrifying experiences. Once again, I thank them for their courage.

Because of that courage, we can learn. We can better protect children. We can work to improve Canada's sport systems. We can believe them. We are listening to them every single day, and we are supporting long-term, meaningful changes that make our sport system safer.

Many stories were shared at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage or at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I thank the members of both committees for their work in terms of all the recommendations that they have made. We support these reports. Indeed, the government has already acted on the majority of the recommendations.

We are standing with survivors to implement long-term, meaningful changes to improve governance, enhance accountability, increase transparency and apply funding. This is a really important thing. We cannot expect a system to develop and implement new practices and policies without properly funding those organizations. We are demanding increased transparency and, ultimately, delivering a safer sport system for all Canadians. We have made remarkable progress over the last six or seven years.

I would like to take a moment now to highlight some of these actions. Most recently, in June 2022, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada launched its abuse-free sport program. This program prevents and addresses maltreatment in sport by offering a wide range of resources, mental health supports and services for sport participants.

Since April 2023, our government has required all federally funded sport organizations to be signatories of the abuse-free sport program, including services of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. This flies in direct contravention to what my friend and colleague from the Bloc Québécois has said.

It is not optional. This is a mandatory system. This is obligatory for all national sport organizations that receive federal funding. The commissioner administers the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, or UCCMS. They oversee a complaint management process. They regularly commission independent investigations. They maintain a registry of sanctions, and they monitor compliance of sport organizations.

Once again, I would like to say that this is mandatory, obligatory for all national sport organizations. This has been a process of learning and implementing a brand new system. This institution has integrity, funding and the resources necessary to implement these new policies, and they are working.

If sport organizations do not participate, they simply do not get federal funding. That is how it works. It is as simple as that.

Just now, the Conservatives recommend that we burn it all down, that we weaken and destroy institutions and systems that are cur-

rently protecting athletes. I was a part of that sport system for two decades. There were times when I found it frustrating, when I wrote letters to Sport Canada and to my member of Parliament. To be honest, I did not see progress for decades. I did not see progress when I wrote to my member of Parliament in 1999, when I was 17 and had problems with the selections committee, or in 2008.

Recently, because we have athletes in the government and in other parties who know the sport system and want to collaborate with athletes from across the country, we have made tremendous progress. I am not the only one saying that. Dr. Guylaine Demers has been doing this work for 25 years. Last night, she was directly asked what she has seen. Her response was that we must keep going, but we have seen remarkable progress.

When we see headlines about athletes being protected by a system that now has integrity, strength and resources, the progress is something to acknowledge and, at times, even celebrate. Again, the Conservatives want to burn it all down.

Through these funding agreements, we have also prohibited national sport organizations from restricting the rights of athletes and sport participants under the UCCMS. We also prohibit any contract, policy, procedure or action from restricting athletes under this code of conduct. This is a new code of conduct. It has been developed. It is rigorous. It is world class. Other countries are following suit. That is good because a lot of these athletes compete internationally and train internationally. It is important for us to ensure that this system is adopted by other countries, particularly peer nations with similar challenges.

● (1045)

The process is a bit complicated, but the bottom line is that athletes can no longer be muzzled by non-disclosure agreements. This is essential. Every athlete needs to sign an agreement when they get funding from their national sport organization or through Sport Canada. I will be honest that in the past, as a two-decade national team athlete, sometimes it seemed a bit burdensome. Sometimes it seemed as though we were being told what we could and could not say, and that is over. I am very proud of the government for taking action on that.

Last March we also launched the abuse-free sport registry. It provides a searchable database of participants subject to the UCCMS whose eligibility to participate in sport or to coach has in some way been restricted due to provisional measures and sanctions. It is a tool for athletes, parents and organizations to make informed and safe sport choices.

*Routine Proceedings*

Looking to longer-term solutions, last spring we launched the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. Through a trauma-informed approach, this independent commission is seeking to learn from the experiences of victims, survivors, experts, academics, parents and coaches. The process will bring these experiences to light. It will help identify the causes and impacts and will help determine how to move and how to improve the sport system in Canada.

I can say right now that it will not be by burning it all down and applying some cowboy approach to the sport system in Canada. We know that is what the Conservatives want to do with broadcasting by burning down the CBC and selling it off for parts. We know that they are against the Public Health Agency of Canada. We know that they, just like Doug Ford, want to burn down institutions, resulting in weakening Canada and making it poorer.

That is not what we are going to do. We are going to keep trying to strengthen our institutions. We are going to ensure that there is more rigour in the system. We are going to properly fund our institutions and we are going to make sure they have the resources, because if nothing is measured, then nothing will be managed. That is what the Conservatives do not understand: If we do not measure something, we cannot manage something. Therefore we are measuring the challenges, applying resources and putting in place leadership and expertise to confront the challenges head-on; we are not ignoring them, which seems to be what the Conservatives want to do.

I want to clarify briefly our decision to launch a commission rather than a public inquiry. Our government spoke to survivors, athlete groups, external experts, the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, among many other experts. We looked at other commissions in Canada and around the world, and at other public inquiries, to inform the structure this one would take on. We chose the commission because it prioritizes the voices of survivors to improve safe sport.

A public inquiry would have retraumatized victims by requiring testimony under oath or by subjecting them to subpoenas and cross-examination. That is not productive. It is not helpful, not trauma-informed and not the type of progress we need. We will not force people to relive their trauma. We believe survivors. We do not need to question them or call into question their integrity. We want to make the system better; we do not want to reopen old wounds.

Given that sport is a shared jurisdiction between municipal, regional, territorial and provincial governments and jurisdictions, a public inquiry would have required months of negotiating with provinces. I have been to a couple of FPT meetings, and they can be really, really challenging to develop consensus in. Canada is a great country, but we have a lot of various jurisdictions and sometimes it is challenging to get everybody at the table at the same time agreeing on one thing; therefore we would probably still be waiting for it to start, but with the commission, the work is already under way.

With that in mind, I encourage anyone with experience in sport who wishes to participate in the commission to do so. It is currently open to input. We want to hear from people. We want to make the system better and we know they do too. We know that Canadians love sport, physical activity and recreation. This is not a partisan is-

sue; it is about building the Canada we love and about making sure that sport, physical activity and recreation are available to anybody who wants to participate. We want an open-door policy and we want to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to engage with the commission.

Despite all these efforts, we know that there is still more work to be done. Like a country, a sport system is never complete. We have to lay bricks every single day to ensure that our sport system improves, encourages people to get involved and is as safe as possible. This past summer, the minister launched the ministerial athlete advisory committee to put athletes at the heart of decision-making about sport, and I could not be more proud of this effort.

The minister is also establishing an international integrity work group to promote a unified approach to sport integrity globally, including safe sport, because, like I said, sport is an international concern. Coaches are coming in from other countries. Our coaches are going to work in other countries. Our athletes are going to compete in other places and train elsewhere, and we want to make sure that the global community is following suit.

● (1050)

Our government is in the process of developing a sport integrity framework; through these efforts, we are working with sport organizations and also holding them accountable. I would like to reiterate that none of these things are optional whatsoever, as my friend and colleague from the Bloc pointed out; they are mandatory and obligatory. They are challenging. The system has rigour. Organizations have to do training and adopt new policies. They have to ask all of their coaches, participants, umpires and every single volunteer to do that training.

I will give an example. This past summer, I competed at the national canoe kayak championships. I was on the national team for 18 years. I could not get into the boat until I had done a 15-minute survey online. I sat down in a chair and did the survey. I learned some stuff. I completed the training and submitted it with my signature, and then I was allowed to compete at the national championships.

It was my 25th national championships, but because of the new rigorous measures, every single participant needs to be accountable. They have to demonstrate that they have the interest and the willingness to learn. I have been participating in sport my whole life, and I learned something through that process. I am proud of that work. I showed my coach my phone afterward and said it is really cool that I have been working on safe sports since 2017, and I am really glad the survey exists for every single person, the 2,000 participants at the national championships.

I was just going to paddle a war canoe with a couple of 17-year-olds from my club. I had a great summer, and it was great to see that everybody has to do the training.

*Routine Proceedings*

We are putting our money where our mouth is through budget 2024, which, I will say as a casual observer of budgets for the last 25 years in Canada, is the most sport-forward budget I have ever seen. I am proud of that. The federal government recently committed \$16 million to prevent and address maltreatment, support people with concussions and mental health challenges and advance inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in sport. We have made specific investments in athlete mental health that did not previously exist.

I will be a bit vulnerable here. When I retired from the national team in 2016, we did not have a mental health package. I did not have benefits, so I had to go to an external agency to get a counsellor and sit down to talk about some of my challenges and problems. Athletes do not have to do that anymore; there is funding for them. There are applied funding and investments in athlete mental health. They can go to Game Plan, work with their safe sport advisers or work directly with their national sport organization or outside their national sport organization. It is up to them, and it is so much better than it used to be.

We have also made investments in athlete well-being. We have invested in the sport institutions right across the country. I am very proud to have one in Milton, the national cycling centre at the Matamy Athletic Centre. It is fantastic. Our track cyclists are amazing. Kelsey Mitchell is an Olympic champion, and another young guy just won a medal at the world championships. I am so proud of our investments, whether they come from big games like the Pan Am Games or the 2010 Olympics, or from the community sport initiative that I am going to talk about in a moment.

We also did something that athletes have been demanding since 1999. The current government has done it twice. I want to acknowledge that we increased the athlete assistance program. Many people ask me, almost as a weekly thing, whether we fund our athletes and whether we support our athletes enough from a financial perspective. I am proud to say that we have given them a more than 20% raise in the current budget. In 2017 we gave them the largest-ever raise they had received up until that date, and recently we have done it again.

Athletes still do not make enough money in Canada. I still do not think that Olympians and Paralympians are properly funded, and I am going to continue to make sure we fund them even more, but we have basically paid for grocery money every single month, and they will be getting that money in short order; it is with the Treasury Board. I am really proud of the athlete assistance program boost. Every national team athlete is asking me in my DMs when it is coming, and it will be there soon.

The Community Sport for All initiative is a hallmark of the government's action on making sure that sport is inclusive, available, equitable and safe for everybody across Canada. It has ensured that over a million Canadians have gotten more active through the power of sport, physical activity and recreation over the last couple of years. I am extremely proud of the Community Sport for All initiative, reinvested in budget 2024 with an incremental \$15 million.

We are making the investments and it is making an impact. Canadians are healthier and our communities are more connected. They have better mental health services. Whether someone is play-

ing in the sandbox or playing beach volleyball at the Olympic Games, team Canada is supporting our athletes. Unlike the Conservatives, we refuse to let Canadians go it alone. The Conservatives want to burn down our institutions. They want everyone just to be a cowboy and figure it out on their own, but our Liberal approach is to invest in the things that make our community stronger, like sport.

Our approach is to work to strengthen our institutions that serve Canadians instead of tearing them all down. Our approach is to invest in the things that support strong communities, like affordable child care, dental care and local community sport programs, and to invest in the things that unite us, such our athletes. Our approach is about making sure that everyone, regardless of ability, gender or identity has the same access to safe and welcoming sport activities, and our government's quick action to create a safe sport experience for all Canadians makes me proud to stand on this side of the House.

By investing in sport and athletes and by building a safer sport system, we are making Canadians safer, stronger, healthier and more united.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Milton for his speech on behalf of his government and for sharing his personal experience.

Today's debate comes after more than two and a half years of parliamentary work. This issue was examined by two standing committees, namely the status of women committee and the Canadian heritage committee. More than 100 witnesses came to testify and answer members' questions. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage made more than 21 recommendations in an almost 200-page report. What did the witnesses say?

Everyone, even the Canadian Olympic Committee and Own the Podium, says that we need an independent public inquiry. The victims are unanimous in demanding an independent public inquiry.

Why does the voluntary commission not work? It is because it does not sufficiently protect victims. That is a problem. Our parliamentary institutions allowed this. Why did we not implement real mechanisms to protect victims? The numbers do not lie. It will be a flop. The media is not talking about it. Why? It is because there is no mechanism to protect victims.

Why was there not an independent public inquiry in the first place?

• (1100)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you and congratulations to my colleague and friend. He has been an active part of the progress made over the last two and a half years.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

It has been a team effort. It has been challenging. The testimony has been hard to listen to and hard to read, but we have made extraordinary progress together. The one place where I will disagree with my friend and colleague is that we have not made progress. It has been extraordinary. We have stood up the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. We have invested an incremental \$75 million through the community sport for all initiative in a safe, equitable and accessible manner. We have made sure that the safe sport program is not just optional, as my friend keeps pointing out, but is mandatory; it is obligatory, and it is absolutely essential for every national sport organization that wishes to receive funding from Sport Canada.

The system is changing. The commission is absolutely under way, but the member refuses to acknowledge that. It is taking place as we speak, and that is remarkable progress.

I would like to thank the member once again. I would like to thank the members of the committee and all witnesses who have come forward to bravely share their testimony. It has created a safer sports system in Canada.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was part of the FEWO committee when members and witnesses came forward about the abuse in Gymnastics Canada. The CEO at the time did not do his job. He did not do a proper investigation.

The member opposite made a statement earlier that he believes survivors. That, to me, was a little strange. He stood up with his message and explained the protection of all athletes in safe sports. I want to ask him why he tried to intimidate one of our witnesses during committee meetings.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. It is false and it is defamatory. I am disgusted that, in the House, I would be accused of something like that. I attended the committee meetings as a participant to ensure that we were listening to survivors' voices. This is challenging for all of us. It is challenging for somebody who has been a part of the sport system, although I recognize that it has had its challenges. I want to be part of a process that improves it.

The CEOs of multiple national sport organizations have been dismissed. That is what needed to happen. We needed leadership change. We needed the reviews to take place and we needed sunlight to cleanse the system. However, accusing each other of such things is disgusting.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Are you saying it's not true?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, I will not stand for it. I refute those allegations, if the member wants to call them that. She made them up.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** No, I did not.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, frankly it is beneath the member to be accusing me of such things.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary speaks of the Liberal government's commitment to integrity in sport. We can all say that integrity is critical to sport, yet this week the Liberals voted against my

motion to have public testimony on their soccer drone scandal that took place at the Paris Olympics this summer, a scandal that did a disservice to our women soccer players and a scandal that tarnished Canada's reputation when it comes to soccer and sport on the world stage.

What are the Liberals hiding? Why did the Liberals vote against public accountability? Why did they vote against, to use the parliamentary secretary's own phrase, bringing sunlight to a scandal that has rocked our soccer and sport world? Our athletes deserve better.

Why did the Liberals vote against my motion?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, an investigation is under way in the very concerning case that my colleague has referenced. It is unacceptable. That form of cheating is absolutely unacceptable. Our Minister of Sport rescinded funding and demanded an immediate investigation with Canada Soccer, which is currently under way.

Performing a concurrent study in committee would be a distraction to that important independent investigation of Canada Soccer. It is important that we let that process remain with its integrity and not add this sort of committee business as a distraction to that very important independent investigation.

• (1105)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary, given his history in sport in Canada, certainly would have a lot of insight into issues such as these. I know that he talked about some of his personal experiences, about when he had to complete various testing or educational opportunities prior to participating in sport.

Could he talk about the importance of those and what he sees the true value is not just for individuals but for the sport community as a whole?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, it is a personal ambition of mine. It is a professional obsession, in fact. I love sport. I love community sport, high-performance sport and international sport, summer, winter.

Yesterday, I was the keynote speaker at the Ottawa Special Olympics Festival Breakfast and I had a great time. The athletes there were amazing, as always. They were articulate, kind and generous. They wore their medals. The Ottawa police and the Ottawa fire were there. My message to everybody was about participation.

Participation is key. Whether it is in democracy or in sport, we have to stand up for each other and ensure we show up, whether it is to hand out medals or to do a little talk, to coach or to hand out sliced oranges. Whatever it is, sport requires participation. It makes our communities healthier and more active.

The survey that my friend and colleague pointed to was a great step forward for Canada. It is an educational tool. It is another layer of accountability to ensure that people are undertaking those reminders on a regular basis.

*Routine Proceedings*

Despite having worked on the policy and having contributed, I still learned something from that survey, and that is remarkable. I am so proud of the work we have done. I am proud that it has been remarkably non-partisan despite some accusations in the House. I am so proud that the government has taken action on protecting young athletes, ensuring that high-performance athletes, Olympics and Paralympic athletes, have access to services, additional funding and supports. I am also proud that the community sport for all initiative has funded organizations like Spirit North in western Canada, the North American Indigenous Games in eastern Canada, just recently, and so many little community sport opportunities that I have visited, from free basketball games to cricket in Mississauga. It has been a fantastic thing and I hope it continues.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I am hoping my colleague, who would have made a good minister of sport and physical activity, can tell us about the current Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, who has been a key player for the past 30 years.

What impact has she had on safeguarding the Canadian Olympic movement from foreign interests in Canada? As an insider and the mastermind behind the sport system, the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity has protected it. Those directly involved abused their positions and used her public office to maintain the current system, at the expense of athletes' safety.

Does my colleague think it is odd that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was transferred from one agency to another without a tender? What was this intended to cover up? Certain friends' incompetence? We do not know. However, by being wilfully blind, the current Minister of Sport and Physical Activity eliminated duty of care and the UN principle of human rights from her governmental responsibility. She did so in order to protect friends and serve the foreign interests of the International Olympic Committee, or IOC, in managing Canada. This puts athletes at risk. She helped maintain the status quo.

Does my colleague think that she will be rewarded by sport leaders when she leaves the Liberal cabinet and Canadian politics? Does he think that she will transition to an international career in sports, perhaps at the IOC or in the Paralympic movement? We know that steps have already been taken.

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank three incredible women: the member for Etobicoke North, who was in the House this week after a prolonged time away; the member for Delta, who recently announced she would not be re-offering, which is a hit to the House. The House is stronger when we have representation, and the member for Delta is a strong representative for various organizations. As a Paralympic medallist. I look up to her very much, both professionally and athletically. I would also like to thank the current Minister of Heritage, the member for Brome—Missisquoi. These three women have been steadfast advocates for safe sport over the last little while.

I would also thank the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change who served.

The sport community is well served by this government, and I am proud of that.

• (1110)

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and talk to issues that are so important to Canadians.

It is interesting that the previous Liberal member spoke a lot about how his experience of an athlete has informed policy. I wish the Liberals would take that same approach when it comes to some of the expertise offered by, for example, farmers in this place to help inform things like agriculture and environmental policy.

Before I jump into my speech, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the fantastic member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

I rise to address an important issue, safe sport, and the need to ensure that Canadians have trust within the institutions, whether it is a parent dropping their kids off with an athletic organization or our athletes going on an international trip to compete. Over the last number of years, dating back to 2018 in specific instances, and throughout history, we have seen examples where people have taken advantage of that trust and have abused and hurt athletes. It is unacceptable and it needs to stop. We cannot overstate how important it is to ensure that we have those very real and honest conversations.

When it comes down to it, Canadians and our country should and can be proud of much of what we have accomplished in sport, whether it be the things that make it onto television or minor sport associations. Unlike what the previous Liberal member thinks, I am very proud of a professional and amateur rodeo circuit, a sport of which we can be proud.

I also am very proud of my two boys, who had their first year of baseball this past year. I had a fantastic time learning some of those key and formational skills of teamwork and the discipline associated with team sport. I am sure each member of the House, either directly or one or two steps removed, has a story, whether it be themselves, or their children or a family member, of being involved in various levels of sport.

We cannot understate how important it is that we are able to trust those in authority, especially when it can be in vulnerable situations. There is a power structure in the way sports organizations are run, and we see how abuse has taken place, and that is absolutely egregious.

*Routine Proceedings*

I appreciate my colleague from Quebec moving this concurrence motion, because it gives us the opportunity to not only talk about these issues, but also to ensure that action is taken so we can, as a nation, demand there be excellence and trust within the existing structures. As parliamentarians, looking at national sport organizations all the way down to the parents dropping their young kids off for those minor sports, there has to be trust throughout. When that trust breaks down, it leads to absolutely tragic situations.

We heard about a number of those scenarios in relation to Hockey Canada and gymnastics in hearings at the status of women committee. Parliament has heard about tragic stories where action should have been taken but was not. Words are not enough, and the result is that lives are broken and destroyed.

The idea of sport is an important one. This is not lost on me. As I mentioned, my kids started organized sport at a young age. Sport has an impact in building a resilient workforce and a capable structure. With the Olympics and the Paralympics this summer, we saw national pride expressed through sport.

To reference rodeo again, my personal favourite sport, a number of local athletes from Battle River—Crowfoot competed in the Canadian Finals Rodeo a number of weeks ago. I am very proud that a high school friend of mine will be going to the National Finals Rodeo in a couple of weeks.

We talk about sport and international competitions as being a point of pride. They give us something to believe in, including when times are tough.

● (1115)

I remember watching the gold medal game in the 2020 Olympics at a professor's house. It was incredible, a moment of intense national pride when Canada scored that winning goal. At the foundational level, when it comes to the role the government plays, it has to ensure that these national sport organizations and the leadership they provide in sport in this country can be trusted every step of the way.

I want to highlight a number of things that Conservatives, who were proud to participate in the report we are debating concurrence in today, put forward in addition to the work the committee put into the overall report. A number of additional recommendations were submitted in a dissenting report to ensure we can have that trust restored, as I referenced before.

The first one is at the very foundation of everything we are talking about: Sport Canada must hold national sports organizations accountable. There has to be accountability throughout the entire system, from leadership at the top all the way through our sports organizations. I have heard examples from constituents where that has not been the case, where there is erosion of trust and an inability by different organizations to have the clear accountability structure that is required to ensure that happens.

The second recommendation Conservatives highlighted in the dissenting report is that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner must investigate complaints in a timely and impartial fashion and enforce consequences for non-compliance. It is great to have an office with an idea, but I have heard from other members of civil

society who have been through various ombudsman processes and whatnot that an office needs teeth to ensure there can be investigations and an actual resolution of concerns that are brought forward. It may look nice on paper and may even have a nice office in a downtown building somewhere, but if it cannot result in action, then one truly has to ask what the point is. It comes back to that fundamental concept of trust. We have to be able to trust the process, investigate in an impartial fashion, investigate complaints in a timely manner and enforce consequences for non-compliance.

The third recommendation the dissenting report put forward was that Sport Canada must work with provincial and territorial governments to ensure provincial and post-secondary sport organizations are held accountable. It goes without saying that sport does not start and end in the nation's capital. I am sure we all have stories, whether it is our children, ourselves or high school sports team members all the way up to professional athletes. We have to ensure a team Canada approach, so to speak, that goes across governments and different levels of organizations to ensure accountability, again coming back to that fundamental principle of trust.

I would note the fourth recommendation in the dissenting report is that Sport Canada must establish a public registry. I want to dive into this very briefly. This is fundamentally important. As we heard in testimony before the status of women committee, there has to be the ability for athletes, coaches, parents and others involved in organizations to know that the person they are entrusting with either their lives, their athletes' lives or their children's lives can be trusted, to ensure they are going in with eyes wide open. That full accountability and trust needs to be there.

When it comes to the government's response, I found it interesting that the previous speaker talked about how great the government has been doing, yet it knew about allegations at Sport Canada for four years and did nothing. Action needs to be taken, trust needs to be restored and this debate today is an important step. However, without action, it is just words.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot for his question and his compassion on such an important issue. He talks about concrete action. I would be curious to know what concrete action he thinks a future Conservative government would take.

It is highly likely that some of the very concrete recommendations will be implemented not by the Liberals, but by the Conservatives. Does my colleague promise that if his party forms government, it will call an independent public inquiry, in accordance with recommendation 20 of the report?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that little change in attitude with the Bloc acknowledging there could be, in fact, a Conservative government at some point in the future. I certainly hope that is sooner than later.

When it comes to concrete and tangible actions, the foundation of my speech was to articulate exactly that. It is one thing to talk, to have nice press releases and announcements and even training systems and questionnaires that have to be answered. Tangible action, and the results that follow that tangible action being quantified and accountability being enforced, is something that needs to happen, especially when it comes to an issue as important as ensuring our children, our athletes, are kept safe in this country. Tangible action is absolutely required. It is why Conservatives put forward a dissenting report. We will take that action when we have the opportunity to make the changes needed in this country.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the member; the Conservatives would take action on this file if they were in government. The first question the Conservative Party asked on this issue was about how it would get rid of Sport Canada. I should not say that came as a surprise, because I am used to the Conservatives talking about cuts, whether it is about cutting the CBC or cutting the dental program. They have those big scissors and they are prepared to do all the cutting their little hearts desire. However, I was surprised by how eager the member's colleague was to get on the record that the Conservatives would cut Sport Canada.

Does the member support his colleague's comment that the Conservatives would cut Sport Canada?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, for four years under the watch of the current government, Sport Canada sat on serious allegations, and that member and the government he supports did nothing. I find it rich that that member would suggest tangible action should not be taken, especially when it was that member who, on Monday, denied a unanimous consent motion brought forward to this place. Some of his constituents probably have some questions about the politics he is playing in that regard.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, obviously much of this morning's discussion has been focused on the need for ethics and fair play in sport, an end to a culture of lack of accountability and the full range of cases where the well-being of athletes was ignored time and time again by sports organizations and the federal government.

This week in the heritage committee, I put forward a motion to seek public accountability for the soccer drone scandal that threw our women soccer players under the bus and deeply affected Canada's reputation when it comes to soccer and sport on the world stage. I would like to ask my colleague why he and his colleagues supported this motion and about how troubling it is that the Liberals, along with the Bloc, are seeking to cover up a scandal that rocked our country on the world stage.

● (1125)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, being a member of the heritage committee and having the honour of fulfilling the shadow

minister role during this time, I was shocked when the Liberals, along with the Bloc Québécois, rejected the motion the member brought forward asking for some accountability and answers on a sports scandal that truly shocked the world and put Canada and its athletes at a disadvantage when there should have been a coming together of our nation. It was the leadership and just simply being able to demand answers. I do not understand why for the Liberals at every turn, whether it is sports, corruption or the fiscal status of the country, their default answer to everything seems to be to bury their heads in the sand, cover it up and hide the real answers from Canadians.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was screaming, insulting, body shaming, ridiculing, isolating, humiliating, manipulating, controlling, comparing, berating, grooming and touching.

Those who know me recognize I will often be the optimistic one in the room and focus on the good. In reference to sport and youth, I would love to be speaking on the benefits and life lessons acquired through sport, such as healthy communication, commitment, concentration, competition, confidence, control and self-respect. However, today I am speaking to a report regarding safe sport in Canada that was tabled in the House by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in June 2024.

To provide some context, this report covers the study of abuse in organized sport in Canada, mostly hockey and soccer. This study was triggered by reporting that Hockey Canada had reached an out-of-court settlement with a woman who alleged she had been sexually assaulted by members of the national junior hockey team. This was later found to be a deeper issue within Hockey Canada and the study was expanded in September 2022 to include all organized sport, on ice, on fields, in gyms and on spring floors.

The key findings included abuse experienced by athletes, testimony concerning junior hockey, racism, issues faced by indigenous athletes, issues specific to minors, culture within the Canadian sport system, fear of retribution, jurisdictional issues and suggestions to amend best practices.



*Routine Proceedings*

I am not a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage; I never have been. However, I chair the status of women committee, previously sat on the national defence committee and currently serve as the shadow minister for women, gender equality and youth. This may seem a rather scattered membership that would not tie into this report, but it does. In every one of these areas, we have dealt with predation by people in power positions on vulnerable Canadians, be they women, especially indigenous women, children or persons in abusive relationships, and with institutions that just do not care about what is happening unless it makes the headlines. This is true for resource extraction companies, the Canadian Armed Forces, the federal public service and apparently some of our sport associations here in Canada.

It seems wherever I turn in my political career, sexual, physical, emotional and mental abuse rears its ugly head. My most relevant role in all of this is my most important job and biggest privilege, which is to be the mother of two gifted athletes. I have two daughters. My youngest, Reese, is a club volleyball player with the U16 Peterborough Thunder, and my eldest, Tori, plays south of the border with the U19 Connecticut Junior Rangers. Watching our girls in competitive sport is what I love, alongside watching my nieces and nephews, who all love to compete and do it well.

I was raised with sport my entire life. I have seen, and continue to see, outstanding, motivating and firm but fair coaches and teammates along the way. However, it is disturbing to acknowledge how the twisted and dark stories of some can stain the very fabric of sport in Canada. Small rural communities like those in Hastings—Lennox and Addington are home to thousands of athletes, from house league to high performance. We play, we cheer, we win, we lose and we learn. Small communities rally together to support our own and can only hope they are experiencing safe, inclusive and fun sport cultures. Sadly, this is not always the case.

For the report itself, the testimony was harrowing but so essential in helping us, as legislators, try to address the systemic issues plaguing organized sports in Canada. The report itself was very thorough, but there are a few areas where additional action could be taken. In the dissenting report presented by the Conservatives, four particular areas were laid out.

The first was that Sport Canada must hold national sports organizations accountable. The report goes on to cite the revolting actions by Hockey Canada in establishing a hush fund for the survivors of rape and sexual misconduct by its players. To be very clear, Hockey Canada was complicit in covering up and, quite frankly, promoting and enabling the sexual harassment of women.

Before I was elected as a member of Parliament, I would have asked myself how this was possible. Now I know better. This is possible because these institutions often exist, in part, to protect and enable themselves, to the point where they are willing to cover up rape because some particular young athlete has outstanding talent or is a star on their team. This is the exact same issue plaguing the armed forces.

● (1130)

There needs to be buy-in from the government to bring the hammer down on these organizations when the issues are made so obvious. It should not have taken 10 months for Sport Canada to inter-

vene, as it did in the Hockey Canada case. We should be teaching our children that respect, consideration and justice are more valuable than a trophy.

Similarly, point two says that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner needs to be fully independent from the sporting community. Far too often, victims and survivors feel that they will not get a fair shake with the OSIC because it is populated by people with a vested interest in sport. Again, this is similar to the complaint heard in CAF, where many survivors feel isolated from justice because they need to go through the chain of command, which often involves an associate of the perpetrator, if not the perpetrator themselves. The government is moving to rectify that by reforming the military justice system, but that needs to continue. Sport Canada should take a long, hard look at both the pitfalls of populating the review board with people involved in the industry and what steps the government is taking to rectify that and apply those lessons to sport in Canada.

The third point was on co-operation between the provincial, federal and territorial governments to ensure that provincial organizations and post-secondary sport organizations are being held accountable. The federal government needs to be exceptionally clear on what is expected from provincial and territorial counterparts, and leading by example would be an excellent start.

Lastly, we need transparency for the parents and young athletes who are making that transition into the next level of organized sport. We need a public, accessible, searchable registry of all coaches who have been found to have been in violation of the universal code of conduct to prevent and address maltreatment in sport, regardless of the type of violation. This registry should be detailed and include the name of the offender, the number of complaints, the number of arrests and the number of convictions. This would not only help ensure that our kids are kept safe from predators but also provide ease of mind to athletes and parents alike, who would know that the history of the person they are trusting is clean and issue-free.

Provocative testimony of allegations of sexual assault and secretive, unaccountable organizations have been covered up. While the committee was waiting for a response to this very report, the Minister of Sport claimed that it was her mandate to repair the erosion of trust within the sport system in Canada. Is this happening?

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Sports is a significant part of who we are. The Liberal government must take responsibility, ensure that the toxic culture is eliminated and make sure that protecting our athletes who have been victimized takes precedence over protecting bullies, abusers and government officials. Crossing the line is never okay. Having athletes feel threatened and uncomfortable should never be tolerated or ignored.

I would like to acknowledge, in the last part of my speech, that earlier today we heard comments regarding intimidation towards witnesses. More specifically, they were conversations that members had with other members. I will speak more clearly to that and share acknowledgement from a member who wrote to me to say that they were sorry. They said they let their emotions surrounding the safe sport conversation get the better of them, and that, in one instance, they reacted in an unprofessional manner and called integrity into question. This was directed at a member, not a witness. Most importantly, we cannot turn a blind eye, or we will be jeopardizing the future of sport in Canada.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for being so sensitive toward victims of abuse. Her sensitivity came through very clearly in her speech.

I think that our parliamentary privilege also comes with institutions that protect these victims and that compels organizations to produce documents.

Take, for example, motions in the House of Commons, like the one on SDTC or the one on Sport Canada and Hockey Canada. It is very clear that such motions are one way to bring the truth to light and achieve greater justice in our society. They make it possible to go further and to stop people who have no business continuing to hold the positions that they do.

In short, does my colleague agree that a voluntary commission does not do enough to protect victims and that an independent public inquiry would give them the standing to share their stories and be heard in order to bring about real change in society?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the government has failed athletes. Our victims need to be protected. If, at any point, either of my daughters were to come home and share a concern, there would be zero tolerance, and we would move forward. The government needs to do the same.

**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, I deeply respect the member opposite and her work on the status of women committee and in various other important conversations in the House.

I would like to ask for clarity on the question of whether or not the system of sport in Canada requires strong institutions, which require resources, expertise, regular funding, personnel and documents, such as the universal code of conduct for the maltreatment in sport.

Does the member not agree with me and the vast majority of Canadians that institutions, such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, are worthwhile and important organizations to protect, uphold and fund to ensure they have the resources necessary to do their work?

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a quote: “Every day without that action is another day that the brave survivors...must find even more strength against a system that has failed to protect...and threatens to leave the next generation at risk of horrific abuse.”

We have so much to celebrate with sport in Canada, but the voices of athletes are much too loud to be ignored. Action must be taken.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been involved, over the past two and a half years, in the development of this documentation. Over time, I have been at many different meetings on this issue and have listened to many of the witnesses. Oftentimes, witnesses had major concerns about accountability.

The report basically addresses the issue of expressing accountability through the OSIC, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. The question I have for my colleague is as follows as a lot of the concerns that we heard from the witnesses were around the fact that they do not trust the OSIC.

How are we to be accountable for those who are supposed to be accountable? I am wondering if she has any comments on how we might help assure these witnesses that the avenues being taken to protect them are being taken appropriately.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge and thank the witnesses that provided testimony for the vulnerability they showed. It is extraordinarily difficult.

Most important is trust in our institutions, and that trust in our institutions is lacking. What more does it take to spur action? Stories, testimony and heartfelt trauma are being ignored. Government is sitting for three or four years. What does it take to spur political action for our youth in sport? It is not good enough.

• (1140)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on such an important initiative, which came directly from parliamentarians, from MPs, and speaks directly to some of the most horrific experiences of our youngest citizens who are engaged in sport, something that we as Canadians believe is important. I want to acknowledge the tireless work of so many and the strength of so many survivors who came forward to take part in the safe sports study. I want to acknowledge the tireless work of many advocates, those in research and academia and those who have been involved in sport, who want to support the survivors coming forward and work, very much, toward effecting long-lasting, systemic change when it comes to sport in our country.

I want to acknowledge the work of my own colleague who was the lead on this committee from the NDP. My colleague, the MP for New Westminster—Burnaby, along with others, put in many hours to make sure that this report was of the highest quality and that critical recommendations were made on how we need to go forward. I believe that, first and foremost, the importance of a national public inquiry is critical.

We in the NDP are clear. There must be a national public inquiry into safe sport. We have heard that from survivors, advocates, and those in academia. We have heard it from people who want change. It is deeply disappointing to see that the Liberals, despite their commitments to integrity and fair play, do not actually support a public inquiry into safe sport. Before I go any further, I would like to reflect on some of what we heard from the report.

On May 26, 2022, a story was published by Rick Westhead regarding an out-of-court settlement made by Hockey Canada to women who had been sexually assaulted by a group of hockey players on the 2017-18 national junior team in London, Ontario, after a gala. Five players, Dillon Dube, Carter Hart, Michael McLeod, Cal Foote and Alex Formenton, are now facing jail time.

One hundred and four witnesses spoke to the committee, but it was that story, that bomb that went off, that really underscored not just the horrors within our sport system, the level of abuse and, in this case, sexual violence or sexual assault oftentimes targeted at women, but also the way in which our sport system, sport organizations and sport officials turned a blind eye while fully knowing that this kind of abuse and horror had taken place under their watch.

This is not what sport should be about. Canadians rightfully love sports. In the case of hockey, which is oftentimes referred to as our national sport, even though, of course, lacrosse is our national sport, the fact is that hockey was tarnished by these stories of abuse that came forward. The way that Hockey Canada dealt with this abuse was shocking to so many Canadians.

We have all grown up with hockey as part of our lives. Here in northern Canada, it has been a key part of the lives of many boys, girls, young men and young women. It is part of our fond memories as we grew up, such as the more recent one of Sid calling out for Iggy to score the Olympic winning goal, or sitting with friends, and maybe family, on a Saturday night to cheer on Canada's team. However, it is clear that the culture that surrounds hockey needs fixing. For too long, we have put young boys on a pedestal, especially within junior hockey, expecting boys to act like men without giving them the supports necessary to be their best selves.

● (1145)

It should be clear to anyone who has been reading the sports sections of the newspapers over the last couple of years that harassment and abuse are sadly endemic to high-level sports in this country. We would be remiss to ignore the all-too-common pressures that athletes face to play or practise with some pretty serious injuries. It is only in the last couple of years that sports have even begun to take seriously things like brain injuries, especially when dealing with minors. There is no question that this needs to change.

Hockey culture in particular admires Patrice Bergeron for suiting up in game six of a playoff game with a small puncture in his lung,

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a cracked rib, torn rib cartilage and a separated shoulder. The careers of Carey Price, Shea Weber and Paul Byron ultimately ended after the injuries they faced in the Habs' run to the Stanley Cup that ultimately came up short in 2021. We admire their courage and tolerance for pain but ignore the lifelong cost.

Shea Weber recently opened up about his post-career quality of life. After a charity softball tournament, he could not walk for two weeks. Carey Price, an inspiration for so many, even in my riding, talked about how his forced retirement contributed to descending deeper into a drinking problem that he has since gotten help for. Athletes sacrifice their bodies, but in many cases, we are talking about kids. It is often too big a sacrifice they do not fully understand, and they are surrounded by adults who do not take their long-term health seriously, which needs changing.

Even since the completion of this study, we are reminded of a culture that needs fixing. Just recently, Rick Westhead, who along with Katie Strang led a lot of the reporting that forced Canadians to start being honest about a broken culture that needs fixing, wrote about an incident, this one in 2014, where a woman was allegedly sexually assaulted by eight OHL players. She decided to come forward after watching a press conference where the London chief of police apologized for not appropriately dealing with the sexual assault by team Canada players.

She had been invited to watch TV with a 19-year-old player. When she arrived, there were eight players in the basement, aged 16 to 19. Here are her words:

I was taken into a bathroom. And that's when the player who invited me over began...starting sexual acts. They never closed the bathroom door fully.... And then next thing I know more players start coming in. There's players standing and watching. They start taking their turns, doing whatever it is they want. I never told anyone because I thought it was my fault. I thought I was the one that was responsible because I had made the choice to go hang out with this guy and a buddy.... I did what I could to just forget it, not think about it, wipe it away. But it just built up inside in the back of my brain....

When she went to the police in London to report the incident earlier this year, she was told they could not help her. Hockey Canada responded to this reporting by saying that it was out of Hockey Canada's hands and to use the appropriate CHL league. The cycle of violence, followed by disappointment over the lack of consequences, continues. We have work to do in this country, and the Liberals are not getting the work done.

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When representatives of Hockey Canada came to the heritage committee, they attempted to show that sexual assault was taken seriously. Do not forget that this is the same Hockey Canada that, after covering up the sexual assault that took place in 2018, welcomed Carter Hart onto team Canada at the World Juniors and the IIHF World Championships a year later. This is the same Hockey Canada that claimed that its attempted cover-up of sexual assault was done because it respected victims, saying that it had a “moral obligation to respond to the alleged behaviour that occurred at one of our events by players who attended at our invitation.” Hockey Canada wished to respect the alleged victim's privacy and avoid requiring her to participate “in a prolonged court proceeding”, and said it was “inappropriate to victimize the young woman in court.” Apparently, the board's instinct was “one of compassion for the young woman”.

These statements rocked the world of minor hockey and junior hockey. It was felt in communities like—

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on a point of order.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that there are no government representatives in the House right now, which shows how little the government respects victims in sport.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Members are not permitted to say whether someone is present or not. However, if the hon. member wishes to call quorum, he may.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, that was what I was implying. I would like the government to respect quorum in the House for the victims' sake.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will do a count.

*And the count having been taken:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think we do have quorum.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski may continue her speech.

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, it is telling when we do not even have the attention of the Liberal members, not just on the—

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, as this is coming from someone who is never here, I find it difficult to understand why—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a point of order from the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with an extremely serious topic today, and the fact that the Liberal House leader explained—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Can we just get back to the debate? I respect that we need quorum in this chamber to do the work we normally do, so I want to thank those who joined us.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Sport is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, I support any member who wishes to stay home and use the virtual aspects of the House, but I think it is against the rules, as has been stated before, to call out any member who is currently not in the House—

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is right. We cannot say who is here and not here, and we counted three people on Zoom in our count.

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Mr. Speaker, the member who is currently speaking is doing her job right now. What we need is the Liberals to do their job. They need to be present in this chamber—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are falling into debate, and I do not want to fall into more debate.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to know whether being on camera in a lobby counts as being virtually present. I would like the Chair to look into this.

[*English*]

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there is chaos in the Liberal caucus right now. We see members back—

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

Are we done with points of order? I suggest we are done with points of order, and we are going to allow the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski to complete her debate.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to get back on track.

I am deeply disappointed by the Liberals' cheap shots. Nothing covers for the fact that the Liberals are not doing what is needed to ensure safe sport in our country. We are seeing half measures from them and a lot of PR stunts, which I will get to in a couple of minutes, but it is the same Liberals who just a couple of days ago blocked a motion that I put forward in committee to seek accountability on the soccer drone scandal that rocked our reputation in soccer and sport on the world stage during the Olympics. The Liberals are doing what they can to cover up what happened there, perhaps not unlike what we are seeing in the House today.

I will get back to the heartbreaking story of victims of sexual violence who were targeted by hockey players and the incidents of sexual violence and sexual assault that were known and covered up by Hockey Canada.

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Following the explosive allegations that came up and and knowing the extent to which Hockey Canada knew and covered up the abuse, it is hard to see how Hockey Canada can come back from it, even with the changes it has made in response, including revising its player code of conduct, introducing mandatory training on alcohol abuse and sexual assault, and better managing Hockey Canada events.

The former board chair maintained, “Hockey Canada took appropriate action by reporting this incident to the police, Sport Canada and launching an independent investigation.” Was that appropriate action? Nothing about this was appropriately handled. As shocking and horrific as this case was, we cannot turn away from it. There is a problem within sports in our country, and this report makes that clear.

Kristen Worley, a former high-performance athlete, described her experience of undergoing gender testing, saying, “I would be violated as a predetermination of my participation in cycling.” Throughout her career, her experience was “about abuse, trauma, maltreatment, collusion, the use of wilful blindness, the lack of state responsibility, gross liability, brand protection and foreign interference”. This is damning testimony.

Even the former minister of science and sport, the member for Etobicoke North, appeared at committee to describe her experience, saying:

I also know the darker side of sport. While I have not experienced the horrific abuse that you have heard about at this committee, I am a former gymnast and I know what it's like to be told to eat Jell-o, laxatives, toilet paper and water pills, and what it's like to be weighed and shamed.

Former athletes have described how broken they were upon leaving sports before they even hit 18. We heard from a number of witnesses describing the trauma and pain they carry to this day following their experiences in organized sport. One witness, a fencer named Emily Mason, said:

When I left the sport, I was 17 and I was a broken individual. I was in a mental health crisis. I attempted suicide. I was seeing a mental health professional. The difficulty my family has gone through in the years since I left the sport has been immense. It's been five years now, and it will be a part of our lives for years to come.

This is an endemic problem. As the report notes, as many as 70% of participants in sports will fall victim to at least one form of abuse during their sporting journey. The last record for the number of sport participants in Canada dates from 2016 and stood at eight million people. At 70%, that means 5.6 million people are harmed.

Another witness talked about how uncaring the junior hockey system can be. One of the witnesses shared:

I ended up with a puck to the face. When it happened, I also drove myself to the hospital. I got evaluated and I was told that I had a double jaw fracture. I drove to the pharmacy to get medicine, and I had to head home for recovery.

When I came back from my injury, I learned that the team, which was supposed to have warned my teachers about my incapacity to attend my classes.... Actually, I learned that I had failed all my exams, so I ended up quitting school. The emotional turmoil and the anger I felt coming back had me quit the team I was playing for.

Another parent described their kid's experience as a “dream that turned into a nightmare”.

• (1155)

That is not what sport is supposed to be in our country. We know that sport has the potential to transform lives. It can be key in terms of building not just athletic prowess and better physical form, but also a sense of self-confidence, self-worth and belonging.

Since ancient times, we know the power of gathering to compete in sport, as through the Olympics. Owing to my Greek heritage, I am familiar with the proud history of the Olympic Games as a special time where that part of the world came together to engage in sport as a high form of living and, certainly, as a way of people reaching their full potential.

I will say that Canada talks a good talk when it comes to its commitment to sporting ideals. We heard it from Liberals in the House today, commitments to integrity, commitments to safe sport, commitments to accountability. However, the reality is that Canada has failed many of our young athletes and their families and has failed the advancement of sport in so many ways.

I want to turn to a more recent scandal and again point to the failures of Canada when it comes to ensuring that ethics in sport, integrity in sport, is held to the highest standard. This summer, we all tuned in to watch the Olympics with great pride. We saw major successes from Canadian athletes, but we also saw a major failure. That was the soccer drone scandal that in many ways engulfed a big chunk of our time at the Olympics. We have one of the best women's soccer teams in the world, former gold medal winners, who are incredible players. I want to acknowledge the great Christine Sinclair, who did not play this summer but was critical in supporting and building the sport of soccer for women in our country.

However, we were all shaken when we found out that officials of Soccer Canada, officials of the Canadian women's team, engaged in flying a drone and engaged in spying, which was clearly known to be illegal, during the Olympic Games. It did not just make the news in Canada; it made the news around the world. It was so bad that FIFA launched an investigation, docked points from Canada and fined Soccer Canada. It was so bad that teams from around the world reached out, asking about what Canada was doing.

What was so problematic, in addition to the act of spying, was the arrogance with which Canadian officials responded, the pretense, making comments along the lines that everybody does it. We heard from teams that came out publicly to say no, that they do not engage in flying drones to spy on other teams, on their practices and as they prepare for games. Yet, Canada was out there flouting the most fundamental tenets of ethics in sport, of integrity in sport, of fair play in sport.

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I admire our women's soccer players who gave the game their all, who gave it their all as a result of their years of hard work and the support of their families, of their coaches growing up and of their communities. They put it all on the line. However, shame on those Canadian officials. Shame on those within Soccer Canada who thought it was not just acceptable but legitimate in a way, as they went on to defend, to engage in that kind of culture, to engage in spying and to engage in the use of drones to spy on other teams.

I think we all recognized that this was needed work when Soccer Canada said that it would engage in an independent investigation, but that was months ago and we have not heard anything. That is why I put forward a motion to seek accountability on the parliamentary side. This motion finally came to a vote this week and I was shocked that the Liberals, along with the Bloc, blocked our initiative to have public testimony on the soccer drone scandal. Canadian athletes, families and fans deserve answers. They deserve to know that this mess is going to be cleaned up and that we will put an end to the culture of spying and cheating that was clearly encouraged in the lead-up to and during the Olympics.

What do the Liberals have to hide when it comes to Soccer Canada? What is it that they have to hide when it comes to truly getting to the bottom of integrity, ethics and fair play in sport? Canadian athletes and all Canadians deserve better.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As we can see, it is somewhat chilly in the House. Perhaps it is because there are not enough people. I would like a quorum call.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I will also check the number of members participating online.

*And the count having been taken:*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** With the members who are here and those participating virtually, we have quorum.

Resuming questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity.

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from the New Democratic Party for her interest in safe sport. I know that this is not new for her. She was a volunteer at my first Olympics in 2004 in Athens. We have discussed that before. I sincerely appreciate her support for team Canada beyond just the women's soccer team.

Athlete mental health is of sincere and genuine importance to me personally. I was really grateful to have worked on the Canadian Olympic Committee's game plan program, which has brought forward really revolutionary mental health supports for athletes. I referenced them earlier in my speech. That is the third party I reached out to when I was struggling after I retired from the national team.

Our government has invested an incremental \$2.8 million for athletes to access mental health, as well as a really revolutionary athlete and coach mental health resilience program so they have the mental health literacy tools and resources required.

I would like to hear the member opposite reflect on all of these incremental investments and what is available to athletes in 2024 that certainly were not in 2014.

• (1205)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments and certainly our shared connection around the Athens Olympics. It was a critical moment on my end with respect to seeing upfront what the Olympics can mean, and as a volunteer promoter for the years prior to the Olympics, the extent to which the Olympics is not just about athleticism, but about humanity. That is why it is so important that we get the job done with respect to cleaning house and restoring ethics and integrity in sport as critical values in our work here in Canada.

While I appreciate that certain investments have been made by the Liberals, particularly around mental health, which is important, I wonder why it is that they are voting against looking into the problems that happened at the Paris Olympics around the soccer drone scandal that contributed to ill mental health. We know that it had an impact on our athletes. Let us prevent this kind of culture that puts the mental health of our athletes at risk, and that is—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member can answer other questions as well. It is just that time is of the essence here in order for everyone to get in their questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, since this morning, this NDP member has been harping on the fact that earlier this week, her motion was defeated at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The motion called for a study into the Canada Soccer drone spying scandal at the summer Olympics. Let me put things into perspective and provide some context.

It is not that the Bloc Québécois does not support the motion. On the contrary, we already explained that we would support it in another form. We had asked her to include the names of witnesses we wanted to hear from as part of the study, which she did not do in her motion. The motion she moved also included a deadline, imposing an agenda on the committee. That was not acceptable either. In addition, and this is the main reason, there is an external investigation currently under way.

*Routine Proceedings*

What is the point of starting a committee study when we have not yet seen the results of an independent external investigation into the matter? Here are my comments in response to the NDP member's many criticisms and outcries. If she does her job properly and thoroughly, taking into consideration the discussions she is having with the other parties, her motion will lead to a study in committee.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I am feeling a bit defensive. I do not think that the situation is quite as my Bloc Québécois colleague explains it. We all know that the Bloc Québécois had the opportunity to amend the motion, but did not.

I would add that, as parliamentarians, we do not need to wait for a private, internal investigation. The drone spying scandal at the Olympic games in Paris affected our country. Canada's reputation hurt our athletes. I believe that as parliamentarians we should all feel a sense of obligation to find an accountability mechanism to ensure that we put an end to this culture that clearly seems to exist.

I wonder why the Bloc Québécois joined the Liberals to block the implementation of an accountability mechanism. This is something that needs to be done right away to ensure the integrity of sports and soccer in the country.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member did a fantastic job, not just on the file but in her intervention, outlining the ways in which ethical breaches in governance can go from organizations cutting corners to perhaps trying to find a competitive advantage, to cheating. We have discovered some of the most violent and pernicious aspects, the underbelly, of the dark side of sport.

Can the hon. member please expand upon why having a clear, strong and accountable ethical framework for sports in Canada will be essential to ensuring that we do not repeat some of these disgusting acts of violence against our athletes?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I know, as an ethics critic, he spends a lot of time working on issues of ethics and is also tasked with the Herculean task of getting the Liberals to see the importance of ethics in their conduct.

The safe sport study made it clear there is no sense of accountability when it comes to our sports organizations. There is not proper oversight from these organizations. There is not proper oversight from the federal government. Sport policy in our country is not just something that is adjacent to the federal government. It is our responsibility. It is our responsibility to oversee the development of safe sport in our country. The Liberals have dropped the ball and they are continuously dropping the ball. I brought up the most recent example around the soccer drone scandal.

Canadian athletes deserve better. Canadians deserve better. We need to see ethics in sport. We need to bring back the core values of integrity and fair play.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the strong convictions on

human rights that she has displayed so remarkably today. I thank her for her commitment.

I have a question for her. We know that she referred to the alleged facts of 2018: the gang rape in London. Today, we know that criminal charges have been laid against five of the players. She mentioned that in her speech.

I moved the motion in Parliament to call in the heads of Hockey Canada on this issue. Parliament ordered documents, including the Hencin Hutchinson investigation. In response, we got excuses. If parliamentarians had not worked collaboratively, does the member think these charges would have been laid?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge my colleague's work, particularly with regard to Hockey Canada. Clearly, it was thanks to his work and that of the committee—I mentioned my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby—that we were able to hold Hockey Canada to account. The committee looked closely at how Hockey Canada tried to protect those who committed the abuse while silencing the victim.

This study is historic work. It illustrates what still needs to be done. It also shows how concerned Canadians are about abuse in sport. They want to see a culture where integrity and accountability are an integral part of youth sport going forward. I hope we can do the work that needs to be done. It starts with a national public inquiry. We will not give up on that very important point.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on this very important issue. There is no doubt that the standing committee did a fabulous job of gathering information. I would especially like to give a shout-out to those individuals who shared their personal stories. I am sure that if we were to canvass members who listened to those personal stories, we would find that members in all political parties would express a great deal of gratitude to the witnesses for having the courage to share their stories. By going to the standing committee, they shared their stories with all Canadians. In my book, that would have taken a great deal of courage. For this reason, I would like to acknowledge those presenters who went before the committee.

I want to emphasize that this has been a very important priority for this government. When we think of sports and the abuse that has taken place, this is not new, unfortunately. It has been there for many years. I can assure people that the government's priority has been the safety of kids. We take this very seriously. It is one of the reasons why we were very pleased to see the standing committee deal with this important issue. Even the presentations we have had thus far have been really encouraging, at least in some ways, not as encouraging in others.

I will be sharing my time, Madam Speaker, with one of my colleagues from the Bloc.

Let us look at a number of the comments that were put on the record today.

*Routine Proceedings*

I thought the parliamentary secretary, the member for Milton, did a fabulous job explaining, to anyone following the debate, the types of actions the government has taken. He also shared with us his personal experience. He is someone who can relate, at least in good part, with individuals who are most affected. He has a depth of knowledge that very few people in the chamber would have, and I would encourage others look at what he had to say.

I was disappointed in the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood's thoughts in regard to the issue. We are trying to come up with some ideas with respect to how we can improve the system, and he summarized the Conservative Party's position by saying that we should get rid of Sport Canada. That is the far-right attitude we often see from the Conservative Party. Cutting something does not make things better. I had the opportunity to ask another Conservative member if he supported that and he did not deny it. I am led to believe that is what a Conservative government would do.

We have a contrast between the Liberals and the Conservatives in the way we would approach public policy. It is one that is based on marginalized government, where it cuts where it can, versus a government that cares about people and the role that government can play to support Canadians. We see that when we get speeches like the ones we heard earlier and in the questions on those speeches. Here is what the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood said in his response to a question from the Bloc member, “disband it altogether.”

● (1215)

In the background, I can hear some members from the Conservative lobby saying, “Hear, hear.” Canadians can hear them. When the election comes, we will ensure that Canadians know how sharp the knife is in the Conservative Party, that the leader of the Conservative Party yields two machetes, like a samurai, cutting everything he can see so he can fix the budget.

We just heard another statement about something they are going to fix, but at what cost? As a government, our primary concern is the safety of kids. What is the alternative? What is the Conservative Party going to do to deal with this issue? First and foremost, I would like to think the Conservatives recognize the seriousness of the issue.

Instead of just talking about cuts, what are they going to do to deal with the issue? I understand that Stephen Harper did nothing, and the leader of the Conservative Party was one of his minions back then. However, at the end of the day, the issue does not disappear.

Through organizations, we are able to build upon it, whether it is through regulations or codes of ethics. The government has done that to ensure our athletes, both today and into the future, are in fact being protected.

The report deals with the issue of how we can best provide support to our children. We can answer that by reading what the minister has provided to the House, responding to the issues listed in the report that we are debating. The minister gave about an 12-13 page response. I would highly recommend that members read the response.

I want to pick up on another point. As the House deals with concurrence reports, it does give us a break from the Conservative game and why the leader of the Conservative Party does not want to get the security clearance, unlike every other leader in the House of Commons, because he does not have an interest in foreign interference and its impact within the Conservative Party. I believe there is a reason, and it might have something to do with Conservative leader's past. We are getting a break from talking about that issue, whether it is concurrence reports or the hours and hours of debate by the Conservatives on a bogus issue, which is their motion that ultimately asks for the issue to go to procedures and House affairs committee. The Conservatives do not want to allow it to go to committee. The Conservatives are actually talking out their own motion.

With the sort of behaviour we have witnessed over the last few weeks, they are denying the government the opportunity to bring forward its legislative agenda that deals with things such as the inappropriate use of the Internet, and I am talking about the harms to children, to reforms of our military court system being transferred to the civil side to changes to our Citizenship Act.

● (1220)

My plea to the Conservative Party is to start thinking about Canadians first as opposed to the Conservative Party. Hopefully this report will pass.

● (1225)

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in the heritage committee, we heard from a senior government official, Michel Ruest, that he became aware of sexual assault allegations by Hockey Canada on June 26, 2018. He did nothing about those allegations for four years. This individual, Michel Ruest, is still a senior government official at Sport Canada.

Would the member agree that it is entirely unacceptable that a senior government official who knew of allegations of sexual assault at Hockey Canada did nothing for four years?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I will tell the member what is unacceptable. Are there individuals who could have done a whole lot better? Yes. Am I disappointed that actions with respect to this were not taken as quickly as they might have been? Absolutely. However, what I disagree with wholeheartedly is that when the Conservative Party has an opportunity to say that it supports Sport Canada, it declines to do so.

We have had more Conservatives stand in their place and ultimately defend what the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood has said, which is that they will disband Sport Canada. However, we do not have to get rid of Sport Canada because we do not like the actions of a few people. This institution does have a role to play. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves for not recognizing that fact.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would remind members that they have had an opportunity to ask a question. If they have anything else to contribute, they can do so through a different round. I would also remind members who I have not recognized to not yell out. If they want to contribute, they should wait until the appropriate time.



*Routine Proceedings*

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary referenced the government's response several times today. I would like to read an excerpt from the second paragraph on page 3 of the English version. Obviously, it is an opinion.

“The Commission is better suited than a public inquiry for what we are trying to achieve,” the government's objectives, that is, “as it allows for a broader scope and can be adjusted as needed”, and I will stop there.

This is precisely the problem. The minister's voluntary commission is going to cater to the government's needs, in other words, perpetuate the cover-up and keep buying certain people's silence. Strangely, the reaction to this report's publication has been subdued. Why? It is because people know that the office is making the rounds of organizations, such as Own the Podium and the Canadian Olympic Committee, that appeared in committee and said they supported an independent public inquiry. The former minister of sport said that she was in favour of an independent public inquiry. Why is there one? It is because of pressure by the public, the media, and Parliament. Why is it that stalling for time makes things settle back down? I do not accept that.

I would like to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say about that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect, if the member opposite were to read the first couple pages of the letter that was provided by the minister, the answer to his question will be found. It states:

...the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. Canadians deserve a sport framework that upholds our national values of equality, fairness, and inclusivity. I am committed to a system grounded in human rights, where sport participants have access to safe, welcoming, inclusive and accountable sport environments that are free from all forms of maltreatment and serve all participants responsibly.

The minister even makes reference to how this committee could have a positive impact on the future potential of a public inquiry. I see that as a positive thing. It is a good, detailed letter.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, one of the critiques of this entire process was that survivors did not really have a meaningful voice. Understanding how this happened, how can the Liberals ensure that whistle-blowers, vulnerable athletes, should this ever happen again, have a direct seat at the table and that perpetrators of violence against them are finally held accountable?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the Future of Sport in Canada Commission should provide a great deal of assurance, as should the amount of advocacy that has taken place. People want a really good understanding of how the government is approaching this issue. All one needs to do is to read what the member for Milton said earlier about his first-hand experience. At the end of the day, I believe we have made significant progress on this file.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to begin by reminding everyone in the House that people are watching us at home right now. I would remind them that victims and survivors are listening to this debate. I want to recognize Kim Shore, from Gymnasts for Change, who is calling on us to rise to the occasion and to take action for victims and survivors. I also want to recognize her entire team.

I am rising today to take part in the debate on the Minister of Sport's response to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's report on safety in sport. This issue was first examined by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, but the Standing Committee on the Status of Women also examined it at my suggestion. This is an issue that the Bloc Québécois has worked on as a team, and I commend my sport critic colleague for bringing this issue before the heritage committee. We then also looked at it at the status of women committee. I had to invoke Standing Order 106(4) for an emergency study to be conducted on the growing number of cases in the media. Yes, the media had to talk about situations of violence, abuse and bullying, particularly the terrible sexual assault scandal at Hockey Canada, before the minister finally took action.

We need to get to the bottom of this matter and provide better protection for young people. As we know, high-level athletes are not just 50-year-olds, but also young people between the ages of 16 and 25. We have a duty to protect them. The Minister of Sport had the opportunity to do something following the committee's report, but she did nothing. Given the letter from the 1,000 gymnasts sent in March 2022, given the Hockey Canada issue, given the many scandals in sports, 16 different disciplines want and deserve action. The committee even heard that this could be just the tip of the iceberg and that further investigation is needed. Accusations were made, but the minister did nothing. Other examples include the Olympic Games and all the stories of coaches abusing athletes.

The Bloc Québécois wants an independent public inquiry because aggression in sport is systemic. The sports policy expired over a year ago. There is still no clear direction for action, and the minister is not giving any direction. If there is no clear leadership on this issue, sports businesses are not going to follow through and nothing will change. The minister has a duty of due diligence and verification. If the minister does not ensure athlete safety, who will? The revolving door for the position of Minister of Sport over the past few years certainly has not helped either.

Today, I am going to approach the issue from three angles. First, I want to go over a bit of background, which I have already started doing. Then, I will come back to our crucial recommendation, which we see as a priority. Finally, I want to talk about other ideas related to today's debate.

*Routine Proceedings*

To begin, I would remind the House that, following the allegations in the media, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage held an emergency meeting in the summer of 2022. Then, seeing that there was still a great deal to learn about the allegations, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women launched a study, during which we heard from victims, sports organizations, in short, a long series of witnesses who came to explain why this issue could not be swept under the rug and why there absolutely needed to be an independent public inquiry. Let us not forget that the previous minister of sport froze funding to Hockey Canada but reinstated it far too quickly and without the systemic changes demanded by victims and survivors.

Second, let us come back to our work in committee. To take meaningful action to eradicate maltreatment in sports, a rethink of the sports governance system in Canada is needed. Witnesses identified systemic changes that could be made to the sports system. These changes include: an oversight of sports organizations' funding use and ways they process maltreatment allegations; the creation of a publicly accessible national coaches registry aiming to prevent coaches subject to sanctions for maltreatment from being able to coach in another sport or to coach in a different province or territory; the improvement and expansion of safe sport education and training for athletes, parents, and any other individuals involved in the sports system; and efforts to increase women's and girls' participation as well as gender equality and inclusion in sport.

In order for all of those changes to occur, most witnesses called on the government to establish an independent national public inquiry into maltreatment in sports. This inquiry could shed light on how the sports system has allowed maltreatment to occur and go unpunished. First of all, the slate needs to be wiped clean and truly everything needs to be put on the table through this inquiry. In the report that was tabled, despite the 24 recommendations in total to prevent the maltreatment of athletes, the recommendation on the independent public inquiry was crucial and a priority. It was the one that stood out.

• (1235)

Third, I will talk about other important issues related to this file, including the non-disclosure agreements that sought to cover the whole thing up and protect the institutions. We heard that victims were forced into silence through these non-disclosure agreements. We also need to look at that, if we really want to make a change.

There is also the matter of grooming, where an adult sexually propositions a 15-year-old minor or a person representing themselves as such using electronic or other means of communication. We also heard about that in committee. We heard about adults using their position of authority as coaches to manipulate underage athletes, while the parents of those athletes thought that they were safe.

We also talked about the CCES, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, and the OSIC, or Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. The OSIC is a mechanism that is available to only a small proportion of athletes. Witnesses who appeared before the committee expressed concern that OSIC's complaint mechanism set up by the previous minister of sport was not independent from the sports

system. As a result, athletes may not report maltreatment, fearing retribution.

Here is another subject that is very close to my heart. I raised this issue at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where we are currently doing a study on coercive and controlling behaviour. I will give a definition of coercive and controlling behaviour. It includes physical, sexual or psychological abuse, financial control and implicit or explicit threats of harm to a victim. Coercive and controlling behaviour is not limited to a single incident, but rather involves repeated behaviours. It is important to understand that certain actions taken in isolation could be considered normal, but in some cases, it is the recurrence and repetition of those actions that make it coercive and controlling violence.

These definitions were given at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, but they reminded me of what we heard during testimony at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Coaches and other organizations exert this kind of control repeatedly over victims, witnesses and survivors.

These authority figures can also restrict a person's movement and even control what they eat and what they do. I myself have a bit of personal experience to share, unfortunately. I was with my sister through her journey as a gymnast, and I saw how much pressure she was under. They tried to control everything, including what she could and could not eat. It is unbelievable that young kids are being put through this. It can put them at serious risk.

Coercive control is insidious and repetitive. We have heard about physical violence, but it is not necessarily physical. It ends up eroding athletes' self-awareness and self-confidence. That is what we heard from witnesses in committee. The victims stop making decisions based on what is best for them and what really motivates them. Their decisions are based on fear of what the coach might do to them or what other people might do to them. They even end up making bad decisions.

Abusers use these intimidating, degrading and dehumanizing tactics to instill fear in their victims. The goal of abusive behaviours is to provoke fear and gain power and control, even over the victim's thoughts and actions. Such behaviours start to control all of the victim's thoughts. That is pretty terrible, and that is where we are at. We have to do something about that. Coaches use physical and psychological isolation. They do everything to control their victims.

Many victims who appeared before the committee told us, in their courageous accounts, about how they were living in fear and about how this is systemic and far more widespread than we think. We really need to keep the issue of coercive control in mind when it comes to all sports.

In closing, once again, the government thinks it will be better off if we do not get to the bottom of this. With a voluntary commission, the victims are the ones who have the most to lose. This is not the way to restore confidence in the system or to encourage young people and parents to participate in sports.

Maltreatment in sport is truly an ongoing problem that has been reported by survivors for decades. The report by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women was our way of shedding light on the various measures available to protect women and girls from maltreatment in sport, but that requires an independent public inquiry, not a voluntary commission. There are two problems. First, as far as the commission goes, the minister is not required to report on what she does. Who will she appoint to the commission? She might even try to protect people. Secondly, the word “voluntary” means what it says. It means that no one is under any obligation. That is a real concern.

• (1240)

I would like to say one final thing because I am also a sports fan and I want to draw attention to two pieces of good news. On October 12, I was lucky enough to have a hand in dropping the puck for the Granby CEGEP's new women's hockey team, Indigo. This team is a positive model and a worthy inspiration for many women's hockey players. Last week, the Bloc Québécois, together with my colleague for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, received—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I have to interrupt the hon. member as her time has expired. However, she will be able to add to her remarks during questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.

[*English*]

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague and I were on the status of women committee and the women in sport study; we heard horrifying stories of what was happening to children, to young girls, to the survivors. I want to thank her for talking about our committee recommendations. Our government is already acting on many of them, including creating a commission, the Future of Sport in Canada Commission, and the sport integrity framework.

How does my hon. colleague think we can work together more, with all parties, to make sure that the voices of these courageous survivors of all the abuse in sport are heard?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just want to remind members not to run into the chamber here and make comments. If they wish to participate in debate, then they should be sitting in their seat and waiting for the appropriate time to contribute.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for her question. I will simply say that we should be listening to what victims and survivors are asking for.

### *Routine Proceedings*

Victims and survivors were pretty unanimous in their calls before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, but that is not what the ministers put in place. It is not working. For example, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner has proven that it is ineffective.

What they want is clear and straightforward. We must listen to them. We need an independent public inquiry to truly create the culture change they are asking for.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois to be very strong in her feminist convictions. Since she has taken part in this process, I think she would also have some compelling information about how the process of ethics and governance, the failure of the leaders of these organizations, starts with such things as cutting corners and cheating. It then evolves into what we are seeing: some of the most pernicious, violent and predatory practices.

Could the hon. member please expand upon the need for very clear ethical guidelines, within the governance of these organizations, that include accountability, thereby centring the voice of survivors and victims?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is an important one. We talked about the impact on victims at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, but I know that, at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue was mainly concerned about the issue of governance.

Our committee also heard about governance and accountability for the people running these sport organizations. People told us that, in the end, more time was spent letting these organizations protect each other and sweep things under the rug instead of really shining a light and uncovering problems, not only the problems victims are facing, but also the governance problems plaguing the sport community.

Sport should be healthy. That is what I said at the end of my speech. There should be nothing but good news stories in the sports community, stories like that of the Granby Loutres, who are currently in Bahrain. I salute the Granby coach and his team. Sport should be a healthy activity for everyone.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my incredible colleague for the depth of her convictions on this issue. I would like to encourage her to elaborate on the answer she just gave about governance.

Often, when there is a problem, the government will pass the buck and ask an independent third party to conduct an investigation. What is the point of that? It is to cover up what is happening, to buy time. The government seems to be using that same approach in this case by proposing a voluntary commission.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would like my colleague to tell us how such an approach is used to buy the silence of victims and how it serves to revictimize them rather than helping them seek justice.

• (1245)

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, the whole issue of revictimization is absolutely terrible for victims. We heard a bit about that in committee.

Who are these people the minister has appointed to the commission? What do their pasts look like? Do they truly want to shed light on what is happening in the sports world and work for the victims, or would they rather participate in a system that allows people to help friends out in order to hide a chequered past, either theirs or that of someone else?

How is it that coaches were able to participate in Olympic games despite what they had done in the past? That is unacceptable. The only way to put an end to this system is to conduct an independent public inquiry, as called for.

As far as the current commission is concerned, there are doubts about whether the members are truly able to be independent and neutral in order to shed light on this affair and bring about systemic change, as the victims are demanding. We want to get to the bottom of this so that we can make the necessary changes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

I would like to start off by highlighting why the matter of safety and trust in the world of sports is so important and why the concerns raised by the athletes who came to committee, who highlighted their experiences, is something we need to take seriously.

For a lot of young people across our country, especially young people lacking in opportunity or facing a series of adversities and barriers to success, sports are often where they find themselves. It is where they access mentorship, guidance, personal growth and development, and learn about hard work and discipline. It is a place where they often find the first adults who ever care about them and are invested in their success.

When I think about the positive things in the world of sports in our country, I think of some of the people who are doing excellent, incredible work at the grassroots level. I think about people like Michael “Pinball” Clemons, the general manager of the Toronto Argonauts, who has been able to work with youth in some of the most challenging circumstances across our country and do what he describes as bringing young people from the margins of society into the mainstream and building a bridge for young people who grow up in circumstances where they feel like they are looking at life from the outside, unsure of where they fit in in school or where they fit in in our economy. It is by building confidence and self-esteem through sports that they are able to perform well in school, pursue their dreams and live up to their potential.

Mr. Clemons has done a phenomenal job through his foundation of building grassroots programs and supporting them across our country, but particularly in the Toronto area. One of the organizations he supports, which has operated in the Jane and Finch com-

munity for a long time, is the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education, run by a schoolteacher named Devon Jones.

Mr. Jones has been in the Jane and Finn community for a long time. He works in classrooms by day and is operating incredible sports programs and tutoring programs by night. He has shown many young people who did not believe in themselves what they are capable of by first engaging them through sports and then opening up an entire world of possibilities for them.

Locally in my community of Durham, Scott Dickinson, a basketball coach, has run local basketball programs for young people in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters all across Clarington and Oshawa, showing young people all the incredible things they can do.

The reason these programs are so successful is that they prioritize safety and trust. Parents who know their kids need more opportunities and access to ways that allow them to live up to their potential and learn all the skills and abilities they have inside of them given by God know they can trust these programs and trust these people. They can hand their kids over to them and it will be an incredible experience that will elevate their lives.

Unfortunately, what we have learned through the process of understanding what has happened with safe sports in Canada is that there are far too many young people, student athletes and parents whose trust has been broken. They believed that organized sports were going to be the positive experience they are for some, but they instead found that they were not getting the support they deserved. In fact, there has been poor conduct and people have not lived up to a reasonable standard, or even a decent standard, of how to treat other people.

The impact of sports hinges on safety and trust so that young women and men can engage in sports organizations and receive the mentorship, guidance, personal growth and development they need. The report on safe sports in Canada highlights where Sport Canada and national sports organizations have failed to create a safe and trusted environment for athletes.

I stand in the House today in full support of the Conservative Party's dissenting report on safe sports in Canada, which outlines changes that would help us provide a positive experience to more Canadian youth. I would like to focus on the lack of accountability highlighted in the testimony provided by witnesses before the heritage committee. In particular, the testimony highlighted a lack of accountability resulting from failures of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which, as many people across our country have highlighted, needs to do a better job of investigating complaints in a timely and impartial fashion and needs to enforce consequences for non-compliance.

• (1250)

The issue of a lack of accountability is a theme that comes up very often when discussing the current government, but some very reasonable, logical, actionable recommendations have been provided on how the OSIC can better do its job of protecting athletes and enforcing accountability in sports across our country. I would like to highlight three of those recommendations.

*Routine Proceedings*

First, the OSIC is not trusted by many Canadians to take their concerns seriously, act in an impartial, investigative manner and enforce compliance. These are the reasonable expectations of any commissioner who receives a complaint, a red flag or a concern about what an athlete, a young person, might be going through. Time, impartiality, seriousness and enforcement are the basic foundational elements of any ability to evaluate a complaint and make sure not only that victims are heard, but that what they share, which is often a very uncomfortable and difficult experience to begin with, is acted upon. That is the first recommendation to the OSIC.

The second recommendation is that the OSIC work with provincial and territorial governments to ensure greater transparency and accountability on provincial and university teams. We heard from witnesses that red flags, concerns and complaints can be raised at the national sports level, but they are not necessarily enforced locally when it comes to provincial and university teams. This is a jurisdictional problem that should not exist, but it is the result of a bureaucracy that is not working with local partners to make sure that if violations are found or complaints are raised, those who have been found guilty or proven to be violating a code of conduct are followed.

Young athletes, young men or women, naturally work with and are members of teams in sports at various levels. The idea that we have a commissioner who cannot work with universities and provincial and territorial governments is absurd. It is a very reasonable recommendation that deserves action immediately.

The third recommendation, which is also common sense, is to establish a searchable and accessible public registry of coaches who have violated the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. This makes complete sense. Coaches are trusted authorities in the lives of young people. When a mother or father sends their kid to practice or to perform as part of a team, they are trusting that their coach is going to use their authority within the law, with respect, care and love. When that does not happen and there is violence and, as one of my colleagues adequately put it, pernicious behaviour on the part of an authority figure in the world of sports, that needs to be known to parents. That needs to be known to athletes. Putting coaches in an accessible and searchable registry makes sense. This is how we protect people and hold people accountable for their actions.

I call upon the Liberal government to take action on these items. The report that we received identifies many items that could be acted upon now. Actions could be taken now, with the best interests of families, students and athletes in mind, to restore what should be a trusted and safe environment for all young people to be involved in.

As I mentioned at the top of my comments, many people, and I count myself among this group, find their best mentors and sources of support, the people who believe in them the most, through the world of sports. It makes such a difference in the lives of young people, especially young people who are struggling and overcoming adversity.

I believe this needs to be a top priority, as another one of my colleagues mentioned, to ensure that the bad behaviour of certain actors in the world of sports does not taint or poison how sports

broadly are perceived. We hope that the Liberal government will take action to hold those who give sports a bad name accountable.

• (1255)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the contributions that my hon. colleague from Durham has made to this debate. It is a very important issue, and as I have said repeatedly, I do not think the safe sport issue and abuse in Canada ought to be partisan issues. We should all be working together for a better and safer system and for better resources for the institutions that support and protect athletes.

I am very glad to let the member know, if he is unaware, that the registry he recommended and called for was established last March so that athlete organizations, athletes themselves and potential employers can look up any of those considerations. I would ask if he is aware of the \$2.8 million that our government invested in athlete mental health or of our support of the Canadian Olympic Committee's establishment of the game plan program, which has provided many of the resources that my hon. colleague has recommended we put in place.

**Mr. Jamil Jivani:** Madam Speaker, there were three recommendations brought forward concerning the commissioner. One was about the registry, and I am glad to see the government has taken action on that. There are two additional recommendations, though. One is regarding the time and impartiality of investigations and complaints, and the second one is about whether the OSIC is working in collaboration with other jurisdictions, including provincial and territorial governments.

A lot of reforms are needed, and I would encourage the Liberal government to address all of the recommendations on how the OSIC can become more effective. I am glad to hear that investments are being made in mental health for student athletes, but until these reforms are made, I do not think the Liberals should be patting themselves on the back.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I particularly appreciate the member for Durham's contribution to this debate that leads us to reflect on the recommendations. I will direct him to the ones pertaining to the Auditor General of Canada. Just like an independent public inquiry, it is a means to ask independent people to change things.

*Routine Proceedings*

Recommendation 3 proposes that “the House of Commons ask the Office of the Auditor General [to conduct] a comprehensive audit of the programs of Canadian Heritage pertaining to sports”. There is also recommendation 7, which suggests that “the Office of the Auditor General of Canada conduct a special audit of Sport Canada’s 2019 directive, which requires national sports organizations to integrate for-profit private firms as independent third parties in the complaint processes involving athletes and their sports organizations, and the audit should consider [various elements]”, including everything to do with complaints and individuals.

Could the Office of the Auditor General of Canada take the mandate to shed light on what is happening in sports organizations and on the funding that Canadians invest in sport?

I would like to know what my colleague thinks.

[English]

**Mr. Jamil Jivani:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the report has many recommendations in it, and some of them deserve some consideration. However, I am here to focus very clearly on what the Liberal government could be doing right now, right this moment. That is why my comments today focused on the OSIC.

The recommendations concerning the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner are things the Liberal government should have already done and could do now. As a Liberal member acknowledged, one of the recommendations has been acted on, but many more could be done. I would like us to focus on what could be done immediately, actions the Liberal government could take now, because as we have heard numerous times, which I think is something shared by all parties, we have very serious problems in the world of sports and time is of the essence.

• (1300)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Durham. Earlier in the debate, we heard from one of his Conservative colleagues that in his view, due to the egregious behaviour and performance at Sport Canada, the organization should be entirely disbanded. I wonder if the member shares that view.

**Mr. Jamil Jivani:** Madam Speaker, what I would like to see is the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner strengthened. That is my focus today. I am not here to talk about any other parallel debates that may be happening in the House. I am narrowly focused on wanting to see real changes. Those changes would involve making sure there is impartiality and timeliness in the commissioner’s investigations, that the commissioner works with the provincial and territorial governments so that provincial and university teams are aware of issues that occur at the national level, and that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport is prioritized and held up.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have been involved in sports for some 45 years. I have enjoyed it and seen a lot, but how dare the Liberals suggest that we should keep funding an organization that contributes to a culture of abuse in sports?

Here is part of the issue I have. In the spring of 2018, the then sports minister proposed, and in fact held a news conference, that

the government was going to roll out a new safe sport agenda for Canada. Good for the minister. However, within probably two weeks, one of the biggest sex assault scandals in sport in this country took place in hockey. Sport Canada, which was in charge, failed to even follow up with Hockey Canada.

We heard nothing from Sport Canada, which should have suspended funding immediately. That is its mandate, and it was not following through on its mandate. It stayed silent and did nothing until May 2022. Why? It is because a prominent sports reporter broke the story about the sexual assault allegations from the Hockey Canada gala in London, Ontario, which had actually taken place four years earlier.

Only when Sport Canada was embarrassed by its lack of due diligence, I believe, did it even begin to take half-hearted measures to manage the crisis. At the time, Sport Canada funded hockey. Canada did absolutely nothing. The government proved its incompetence and its unwillingness, I believe, to support safe sport in this country.

Then we found out that Hockey Canada paid out, from a slush fund, \$3.5 million as a settlement to a woman known as E.M. We found out in testimony from Hockey Canada that it had an equity fund. It was actually set up long before, to take money from hockey membership registrations paid by parents, just to cover uninsured liabilities that included sexual abuse claims. Again, where was Sport Canada?

This is the issue I have. Understandably, minor hockey parents in this country were livid about the allegations of Hockey Canada’s taking registration money and putting it into the fund. It paid out \$7.9 million for nine claims out of the national equity fund. Of that, \$6.8 million was for the settlement related to Graham James in my home province of Saskatchewan when he was head coach of the Swift Current Broncos.

The government set up the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to investigate complaints in a timely and impartial fashion. However, we have received numerous anonymous calls to my office here in Ottawa from individuals, parents and athletes who are concerned that the rules are not being complied with in a timely manner by OSIC. That is right; my office is receiving anonymous calls because people are very concerned about the repercussions of even speaking out about abuse.

Sport Canada was told it must hold national sports organizations, all 62 of them, accountable. However, it is silent. We know from the Hockey Canada debacle in 2018 that it failed to do this. Sport Canada is not fulfilling its mandate.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

## CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

We also heard from a number of members of the Canadian women's soccer team on their concerns about pay equity. It has affected their training and preparation for World Cup matches. Again there has been nothing from Sport Canada.

The funds must be fully accounted for and transparency must be disclosed, which it has not been. Since only national sports organizations are captured by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commission, OSIC, it is now essentially doing the job that Sport Canada was asked to do for many decades. That is the issue I brought up earlier: Sport Canada is not fulfilling its mandate. OSIC is another level of bureaucracy by the Liberal federal government, which has spent millions of dollars to set up safe sport in Canada, to the embarrassment of Sport Canada.

• (1305)

We would think in this country that is where we should start the conversation about safe sport. How does anyone know, when they drop off their children at soccer, ringette or hockey, that they are safe? It is provincial jurisdiction, and all the sport organizations do is ask for a police check of the coaches and volunteers. We know that every organization in this country is grappling with the lack of volunteers. Many organizations will take anybody from the sidelines; they simply invite them onto the field or the ice.

The disappointment is that the heritage minister knew of the 39 recommendations, still funded Hockey Canada and funded only six recommendations.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point order. Earlier today, the member for Milton, the Prime Minister's most ardent defender, accused me of lying during the debate on safe sport. I am asking for unanimous consent to table the evidence that will show he threatened a witness during the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's investigation into abuse in sports and had to apologize for doing so. He said that he was writing to say he was sorry he had let his emotions surrounding the safe sport—

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There is no consent.

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

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

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to table e-petition 5035. Nearly 1,000 Canadians have signed the petition, demanding action on the Canada disability benefit.

The petitioners say that people with disabilities often face barriers to employment along with higher costs associated with health care and housing and that the proposed Canada disability benefit restricts eligibility to individuals receiving the disability tax credit known for its many barriers. There is a risk to life due to insufficient supports on current disability programs federally and provincially. They say that Canadians living with disabilities on provincial and federal disability benefits are struggling immensely with benefits significantly below the poverty line, with the cost of living crisis and with the ever-increasing amount of homelessness.

According to petitioners, the proposed Canada disability benefit outlined in budget 2024 is not what the disability community called for, falling short of the government's promises and the disability community's needs. They say that the proposed maximum amount of \$200 per month is insufficient to alleviate poverty levels.

Petitioners are calling for action on the implementation of the fast track of a private member's bill, Bill C-403 from the member for Victoria and to allow Canadians who qualify for a provincial disability benefit or program or CPP disability to automatically qualify for the disability tax credit and the Canada disability benefit, in addition to several other measures which they urge the government to act on.

• (1310)

## PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I rise for the 53rd time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The community of Swan River is struggling with the rising rate of crime in its area. Statistics Canada reports that after nine years of the Liberal government, violent crime has risen 50% and gang-related homicides have nearly doubled. Within the last five years, Swan River's crime severity index has increased by over 50%.

The people of Swan River see the devastating effects this crime has had on their community, their safety and economic stability. The people of Swan River are calling for jail, not bail for violent repeat offenders. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

*Privilege*

## GAZA

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens across Canada, including hundreds of thousands who take the streets and those who are protesting on campuses regarding the ongoing Israeli crimes against humanity, collective punishment and forced starvation that constitute genocide in Gaza.

The petitioners draw attention to the severe loss of life, the catastrophic hunger and the widespread destruction affecting the people of Gaza, especially the children. They express grave concern over the reported obstruction of humanitarian aid and the resulting human suffering and starvation.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take immediate and decisive action by advocating for a permanent ceasefire, ensuring the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and supporting the critical work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. They further urge the government to establish an international humanitarian corridor to protect aid deliveries and civilians in Gaza.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

[*English*]

**PRIVILEGE**

## REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand here representing the good people of Battle River—Crowfoot and talk about issues that are so important to them, especially when it comes to the appropriate use of tax dollars, which is at the crux of what the House has been seized with for, I believe, 14 days.

As I referenced yesterday, just prior to the House adjourning for the day, it is not just about some documents or a stack of paper. Rather, the privilege debate taking place in the House is about the fundamental basis of our democratic system: the ability of Parliament and those elected by the people of this country to fulfill their constitutional duty in ensuring that, in this case, there is accountability. Ultimately, it is about ensuring that this place, the people's House of Commons, is, remains and continues to be the supreme law-making authority of the land, and that Parliament has what is

often referred to by the technical term “unfettered access” to any document in the country. That includes documents in relation to government spending.

Now, the government has kind of flip-flopped. Each day the Liberals seem to have a different tack on how they want to attack Conservatives for simply asking for accountability. What is very interesting is this whole debate could be avoided. It is quite simple. It could easily be avoided by the government simply releasing the documents. This debate could come to a close if the government was willing to take the step of being transparent.

Thus far, the government is unwilling to do so. Does that mean there is incriminating information in the documents? Well, it could. We do not know because we do not have the documents. Could that mean criminality would be exposed in those documents? Well, it could, but we do not know. It certainly raises the question.

I have heard from so many Canadians, and not just constituents. What is interesting is, as this debate has raged on, I have increasingly heard from folks from across the country, including some who live in Liberal ridings. At least, they are Liberal ridings today; we are not sure that will be the case after the next election. They are asking why the government would waste so much energy in a cover-up. The Liberals claim they have nothing to hide. If that is in fact the case, and this is what people are sharing with me, then they should be more forthcoming.

I would invite members of the governing party, Liberal backbenchers who have the constitutional obligation to represent the people who sent them here, to end the cover-up and release the documents. It is truly simple and straightforward, yet the Liberals refuse at every turn.

What is distressing to so many Canadians is that over the last nine years, there has been an erosion of trust in the very foundation of our democratic infrastructure in this country. We have seen it time and time again. I talked yesterday about the normalization of constitutional crises, and how one would outline, nine years ago, what the Liberal government would perpetuate in terms of normalcy in how they treat the institutions of Parliament and of government, and how they would treat Canadians.

The fact is that the Liberals, under the modern Emergencies Act, are the first government since the Prime Minister's father invoked it in the 1970s to suspend charter rights. Can members believe the current Prime Minister suspended the charter rights of Canadians? It is astounding that the Liberal government, with such disregard, is so quick to trample on the rights and freedoms of Canadians. Time and time again, we saw it.

I mentioned briefly yesterday, as my time was coming to a close before the House adjourned, that it was the current government that dismissed 800 years of parliamentary tradition by asking for unfettered taxation and spending authority. It wanted to bypass this place. It wanted to bypass democracy.



• (1315)

It is unbelievable, and it has certainly contributed to this culture of corruption the Liberals preside over. It is essential that we right the ship. The good news is that it is possible, because we have seen difficult times in this country before.

I have heard stories, although I was not born yet when the Prime Minister's father was leading this country, that it was a disastrous time for the west. There were national unity crises, constitutional crises. Flipping the bird to the west is what the Prime Minister's father was doing, and certainly that seems to be the Prime Minister's attitude toward the west as well. There was the national energy program stealing the wealth that could have benefited our country, but instead he targeted his own political self-interest above the national good. We have seen difficult times before, and we have seen the ability and the resilience of Canadians showcased in the innovation, ingenuity and potential that exists in this country. I believe we will see that unleashing of potential again.

However, we have to get back to the point that the House of Commons is in order and can do its job. The foundational element of that is that the government needs to understand it is Parliament that makes the rules. It is Parliament that can call for documents. Ultimately, for the Prime Minister, the government and the members of the governing party, it is Parliament that is the final law-making authority of the land.

My hope is that we can see, through the mechanisms that exist in this place, a level of accountability take place today, in the 44th Parliament, to ensure the government does the right thing and releases the documents. I must be honest; I have my doubts. I saw how the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament when the WE Charity scandal was under way in the midst of COVID. After saying he would not for so many years, he prorogued Parliament the day the documents were sent to the clerk of a committee.

For Canadians watching, proroguing Parliament puts a stop to committee activities. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament to cover up his family's involvement with an organization that would have gotten hundreds of millions of dollars in sole-source contracts across this country. The lengths to which he goes to cover up the corruption is astounding. So, forgive me when I say I have my doubts that the Liberal government will do the right thing. However, that is where Parliament steps in. Parliament has the ability.

I understand from media reports that there is some dissension in the Liberal ranks. Some MPs are figuring out that it is MPs who are elected to the House of Commons, not governments. It is MPs who make up a party that then forms a government. It is almost hard to believe that I have to explain these basic principles to my colleagues across the way. I am glad, in a sense, that they are waking up and realizing they have the ability to stand up for their constituents. However, I would urge them as well, when it comes to the debate before the House, to take a stand, to allow Parliament to get the documents and the evidence that is required.

An SDTC whistle-blower had this to say:

I think the Auditor General's investigation was more of a cursory review. I don't think the goal and mandate of the Auditor General's office is to actually look into criminality, so I'm not surprised by the fact that they haven't found anything crimi-

### *Privilege*

nal. They're not looking at intent. If their investigation was focused on intent, of course they would find the criminality.

That was from a whistle-blower who put their career on the line to tell the story of what the Liberals have been up to.

As my speech comes to a close, this is a plea to all members in this place, but in particular, to members of the Liberal Party. It is an honour and a privilege to be able to stand and represent the people we do, but along with that comes great responsibility.

• (1320)

As for the fact that we have a Prime Minister and members of the government who are so quick to dismiss the need for integrity and accountability in the structures of governing our country, I would urge them all, and this is a plea, to stand up for what is right, stand up for accountability, and stand up and demand that these documents be released. If there is nothing to hide, then we will see that.

Madam Speaker, forgive me for suggesting that if someone has nothing to hide, they do not go to the extremes to hide that the government has been doing. The question before the House and before so many Canadians is simple. The government must release the documents so the investigation can be done, to take that small step to bring integrity and accountability back to the institutions that are so dear and so important and that, I would hope, we all love so much.

I had the honour of celebrating with a number of others from the class of 2019. I would like to thank, once again, the people of Battle River—Crowfoot for the honour and the opportunity to serve them, now for five years, in Canada's Parliament.

• (1325)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to invite Canadians to be woke, woke to the disingenuous narrative being put forward by the Conservative Party. The RCMP says it has the documents it needs. The RCMP has the ability to ask for further documents directly and not have them be spoon-fed through Parliament. The Speaker has said the proper transit of the documents being requested would be to a standing committee. It is my understanding that this is precisely what the government is prepared to do.

With all that, why are the Conservatives burning up three weeks, now, of parliamentary time on a proposition that is totally improper?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, here we go again. We have a member of the Liberal Party who is somehow suggesting Parliament should not be doing its job. Here are the facts. At any point in time, a majority of the House could in fact shut down this debate, but it has not, because there is, I think, an agreement among a majority of members that the release of these documents is that important to this institution and its ability to function properly.

I was flipping through and could not find the letter right in front of me, but the RCMP itself says it has some of the documents but it does not have all of them.

*Privilege*

The fact that the government is unwilling to be transparent and forthright with that information, I would suggest, speaks to a culture of corruption, and it looks like there is a cover-up before us.

Conservatives are not saying we want to conduct the investigation. We simply want to ensure the RCMP has everything it needs to conduct its investigation. It seems to me this is just common sense. What are the Liberals hiding?

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege of serving with the hon. member. Despite our political differences, I think there are areas of common ground, particularly around process, procedure and integrity. In his opening remarks, he said the House has been seized with this issue. Let us talk about that for a moment.

The question I want to put to the hon. member is this: Who is seizing the House? He talks about what the Conservatives put forward. They put forward a motion to go to PROC. We will have to go back to the Hansard to see how many times we have had to explain it to them.

I know him to be an honourable man. Will the hon. member please rise, come clean with Canadians and let them know that, indeed, it is the Conservatives who are permanently causing the House to be seized on this issue, by filibustering their own motion?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working with that member, despite our political differences. What I find very interesting is that at any point in time, the government could put an end to this debate, with the support of one of the opposition parties, and it will not be the Conservatives, as we have made very clear. It could invoke closure on the debate. Thus far, that has not happened. It is, I believe, such an important issue that we need to continue to bring it to light and give the Liberals the opportunity to simply do the right thing: release the documents.

When it comes to those who are engaging in debate on the subject, it is certainly not only Conservatives. Members of every political party are asking questions, providing commentary and even, in some cases, giving speeches. It is incorrect to suggest it is only Conservatives who are holding this up. I enjoyed the opportunity this morning to have a very important discussion on safe sport, in addition to the debate here before us, so it is not like we are not also talking about other important issues facing Canadians.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain, for the people watching today, how our leader would be gagged if he did go through the security check.

Can you please explain that the only person in Parliament who can expose those names is the Prime Minister? Can you let the people of Canada know that?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I remind the hon. member that she is to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the members.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, it is interesting; members of the Liberal Party have taken great pains to politicize something that the Prime Minister initially said he did not want to politicize.

That was the issue surrounding foreign interference, secrecy and getting top secret security clearance. At the Hogue inquiry, the Prime Minister even admitted to getting too political. I believe that was how he referred to it when he took the stand.

My colleague from King—Vaughan made a very interesting point. The Prime Minister does not actually have security clearance. It is interesting because many Liberals may not realize that. He is given access to top secret information because he is the leader of government. That is a constitutional tradition that our Parliament holds.

When it comes to the gag order, there are many different mechanisms; yesterday, my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, expanded very specifically on what some of those measures are. If the Prime Minister were truly earnest about wanting to do what is best for Canadians, he would release the names. There are a number of mechanisms by which he could do so, but he refuses. He would rather play politics. He is playing with the security of Canadians and the interference of elections. That is shameful, and it puts our democracy at risk.

● (1330)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, foreign agents assassinated my constituent, Mr. Nijjar. That falls in my constituency, but that is not what I am hearing on the ground. What I am hearing is that the leader of the Conservative Party is not accountable to Canadians, because he will not get a security clearance to look at the way the Indian government intervened in our sovereignty and assassinated my constituent. In fact, the leader is standing with India. He very well would have been able to find out who the six Conservatives are that we have been talking about. He does not want to find out who those members are, which is why he is not getting a security clearance.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of this country could release the names so that Canadians could know and make that decision for themselves. Instead of doing what is in the best interests of national security and democracy, the Prime Minister has decided that he will prioritize his own political self-interest.

I would say specifically to the member, who highlighted a significant issue, that I am curious about what his constituents think of the parliamentary secretary denying the unanimous consent motion that was put forward on Monday. It was about the standing up of a special committee to investigate the very issue that he claims is so important. It was not a Conservative who denied that, a member of the Bloc or a member of the NDP. It was not an independent member. It was the parliamentary secretary, I believe, to the Prime Minister or to the House leader. Members will have to forgive me; I do not recall. He is up so often that it is easy to forget.

The fact is that a senior Liberal in his own party denied a unanimous consent motion to stand up a committee that would have gotten the answers he just communicated are so important. Has the member heard that from constituents?

*Privilege*

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I find it really interesting that the member opposite is talking about putting up another committee to look at an issue. There is a suggestion that the papers he wants to have examined can go to a committee, that we can move forward on this issue by actually following the suggestions of a committee already in place, as was suggested by the Speaker. He seems to be suggesting quite freely that people's information, including their names and the allegations against them, as well as any personal information that might be in those business documents, could be released to whomever asks for them.

While I realize this is our right and our privilege, we need to exercise that right with some discretion. I would maintain that our Charter of Rights and Freedoms actually supersedes our right to do whatever we want in the House.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to look very carefully at the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as at some of the hard-fought and hard-won histories of the constitutional set-up of the Westminster system of governance. She does not like my referencing the history that has gotten us to the point where we are today. I would suggest—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Hon. members have had an opportunity to ask a question; they need to listen to the answer, whether they like it or not. If they have other things to contribute, they should wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

• (1335)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Speaker, what it comes down to is that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is absolutely meant to protect Canadians from government, not to protect the government from revelations of its corruption. If the Liberals are so concerned about privacy and whatnot, the solution is very simple: They can release the documents so that the RCMP can do the work that it has been called to do.

What are they working so hard to cover up? It is so simple; why are they complicating the issue?

**Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure and a privilege to rise in this place to promote and defend democracy, as well as to demand transparency and accountability from the government.

Before I begin, as a new member, I would like to thank the members of my team in Toronto and in Ottawa, who have helped me get up the learning curve to serve the great people of Toronto—St. Paul's: Chelsea, Ryanne, Jessie, Karen and Brooke. I thank them very much for their efforts. I have been stopped in the streets by strangers in St. Paul's who have thanked me for their good work and the work they do for other constituents.

We are on the 14th day of a debate that did not need to happen. It would not have happened if we had a government that was interested in accountability and transparency. Alas, here we are.

If the government would hand over the documentation that has been asked for and allow the RCMP to do its job, Parliament could move on. However, that is not the case.

I may be new in this place, and I may have a babyish face, but I was not born yesterday. The government's excuses for not providing the unredacted documents have changed several times since Parliament began asking for them; that makes me question the authenticity of the excuses. The government members said they were protecting charter rights; they then said the RCMP did not want the documents. It feels as though the government keeps flip-flopping to keep the documents hidden.

I have a particular interest in the government green slush fund scandal; we all do. It has already been established by the Auditor General that there was something awry with this fund, but we have all already heard a lot about that. I will talk more about that later.

One reason the green slush fund is interesting to me is that I used to work in the environmental field. Yes, that is true. In fact, I have a degree in civil and environmental engineering from Queen's.

**An hon. member:** That will make you popular in your caucus.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** This is a big tent party, and—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I ask members who have anything to contribute to wait; they will have lots of opportunities. I would also hope that the hon. member does not interact with others who are trying to make comments.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I still have members who are, for some reason, trying to have conversations. The hon. member for Foothills may want to step out and have a conversation with the other member so that they are not interfering in the business of the House.

The hon. member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Madam Speaker, I was about to say that, when I worked in that field after graduation, I was involved in environmental waste containment projects. They were exciting projects, such as building sewage lagoons, mine tailings dams, solid waste containment and even waste water retention ponds. It was magical. Maybe that is not exciting to most, but it certainly was to our customers; the engineers, who are a difficult to excite crowd; and others who benefited. Yes, it is true: We all want clean water and clean air to breathe.

We were selling real products; they were being sold and installed by real people in real environmental projects. Materials were manufactured in Canada and sold throughout this country and in the United States. That means GDP for Canada, exports and productivity. These products were considered new technology at the time; therefore, while early adopters were happy to embrace them and realized their environmental and economic benefits, others were not so sure.

### *Privilege*

As such, we went to the government for help, but this was not a green slush fund; we had no contacts to get easy money. We did not have a slate of directors who were investors, who had contacts or who were sitting on the SDTC slush fund board. We applied to the government for research dollars and had testing carried out at our universities to prove the products. We conducted strength testing at the University of Western Ontario, as it was called then, and later at Queen's.

Why do I tell that story? How could my career possibly be germane to the House? It is because, as we heard earlier, 82% of the projects that were sampled by the Auditor General were conflicted. If we apply that rate of malfeasance over the universe of projects, we come to a staggering \$832 million of questionable funding. If we add the opportunity cost back to that \$832 million, we are very close to \$1 billion of taxpayer money funnelled to sketchy destinations.

However, there is more: \$58 million was spent on 10 ineligible projects in the sample. That scales up to \$104 million if we factor up to the full size of the universe of projects in question. How many projects like the one I described above, that I was involved in and that was undertaken by the small business I worked for, were displaced because of the highly questionable awarding of funds by the board of the green slush fund? Certainly, because the money was misallocated to ineligible projects, good ones did not get funding. Some of these potential projects may well have been home runs.

That is forgone GDP, jobs and tax revenue. Does this not suggest to everyone in this place that oversight of this fund was weak at best and potentially criminal at worst? Does this not make one think that we may need a change in the management of the government's spending writ large? I see some heads nodding. We may need some people with real financial expertise in charge of the books. This is green technology science. This is not rocket science.

Getting to the bottom of this scandal may not be easy, but it is a journey worth taking. This is not \$400 million that we are talking about. That is the number that has been confirmed. It only represents 226 projects of the 405 that were funded. As I stated earlier, this is \$832 million plus opportunity cost, so we are very close to a billion-dollar scandal. One billion dollars could buy a lot of Girl Guide cookies.

One thing that is concerning for Canadians is the level of corruption in the board and the Governor in Council appointment to the sustainable development technology fund, otherwise known as SDTC. People at home are calling it the green technology slush fund.

- (1340)

Another thing is the federal government's refusal to produce key documents on this matter, which is stifling public scrutiny and raising red flags about accountability. When government actions, particularly those concerning the use of public funds, come under scrutiny, it is the right of every Canadian to demand clear answers, but we are not getting clear answers from the government, which leaves one to ask what it is hiding.

Who are the Liberals protecting? They are protecting their friends and associates who benefited. The fact that we are still dis-

cussing this and asking for a disclosure that was demanded by Parliament is bewildering to this rookie MP. Maybe I should not be surprised. When I consider the long list of Liberal scandals, there are almost too many to count, but I will name some here for good measure.

We will start with the SNC-Lavalin affair. This political scandal involved an attempt at political interference in the judicial system by the Prime Minister of Canada and the Prime Minister's Office. Ultimately, the company changed its name, partly to distance itself from its tarnished brand.

In no particular order, next we have the ArriveCAN affair, affectionately known as "arrive scam". In this one, the federal government spent over \$50 million on an original contract of \$80,000. It spent \$54 million. I am not making this up. A group of programmers created that app over a weekend, so this one is out of control. The GDP is under attack. Ten thousand people were erroneously forced to isolate. I may have been one of those because officials made me isolate for longer than I needed to.

There is the Aga Khan scandal. The Prime Minister was found to have broken no fewer than four provisions of the Conflict of Interest Act when he vacationed over Christmas on the posh private island in the Caribbean owned by his good friend the Aga Khan. The Prime Minister was the first prime minister in Canadian history to break federal ethics rules.

Next, we have the WE Charity scandal. This one in particular I did not like because my daughter actually participated in raising money for WE Charity. My daughter Charlotte raised over \$10,000 to build a school in Africa by carrying water through the streets of Toronto—St. Paul's and generating donations by doing just that, so this one hurt. However, the Prime Minister granted his friends at WE Charity a project to oversee a \$1-billion program for student employment grants. Do we not have government employees who do the same thing?

There are two common elements we can quickly identify through this partial list of government scandals. Members can identify their own, and these are the two that I have picked. If members have a few in mind, I invite them to keep them quiet and see if they match up with mine. The first one is friends in high places in the Liberal government awarding their Liberal friends at the expense of taxpayers. The second is a complete lack of ethical behaviour.

What we do not see is transparency. Transparency and accountability are the cornerstones of any functioning democracy. They are the twin principles that ensure those in power act in the best interests of the public rather than serving their own narrow political or personal agendas. The concept of transparency is not just theoretical. It is embedded in laws and regulations that compel governments to disclose information, especially when there are questions about the misuse of public funds.

Parliament has this power. Parliament has asked for the documentation. Therefore, the documentation must be produced. The government's accountability to its people is not optional. This is a fundamental responsibility.

• (1345)

A 2024 CanTrust index poll revealed that less than 25% of Canadians trust the Liberal Prime Minister and the government. Is that a surprise to anyone? That number might be high since this poll was conducted back in February, but it makes sense. When the government refuses to release key documents, especially in response to serious allegations, it erodes public trust. It undermines the very fabric of our democracy. Without transparency, how can citizens know that their government is acting in good faith?

Let us look at this from another angle, and I promise again that I am not making this up. I will give a bit of a timeline of how we got here. In 2018, the then Liberal industry minister decided he did not like the chair of SDTC, which was Mr. Jim Balsillie, because he was criticizing the government. The chair of SDTC was asked to stop his criticism, and he did not.

In 2019, the then Liberal industry minister decided to appoint a new chair, but this one already had conflicts of interest. He did this even though the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office were warned of risks associated with appointing a conflicted chair. The new chair had ownership positions in companies receiving green slush fund SDTC funding.

The funding floodgates opened. Conflicts of interest were managed rather than outlawed. SDTC members began to award funds to companies where other board members held ownership. The following example is the one I love the most. If someone does something so audacious, maybe no one will suspect a thing. I think that is called hiding in plain sight. The founder and beneficial owner of Cycle Capital, Andrée-Lise Méthot, voted for Cycle Capital investments to receive a significant amount of green slush fund funding while she sat on the board of the Liberal green slush fund.

In fact, before and during her time on the green slush fund board, Ms. Méthot's companies received \$250 million. Cycle Capital's lobbyist, before he came to the House, was none other than the radical Minister of Environment. One might ask, "So what?" In the year before he joined the Liberal government, he lobbied 25 times, and the green slush fund board gave over \$100 million to the Cycle Capital companies. Then, when he was part of the government, he participated in talks that gave SDTC another \$750 million to deploy, of which 25% went to Cycle Capital. We do not know, but he may or may not still own shares in Cycle Capital. It is a really good trade where I come from.

### *Privilege*

I spoke earlier about my career as an environmental engineer, but I actually spent most of my career in finance. That is another reason the misappropriation of funds in this green slush fund scandal speaks to me. When I was in the financial and investment industry, fund managers were generally paid dependent upon how their funds performed. The better someone's fund did, the more they would get paid. The better their fund did, the more assets they would attract, and again, the more they would expect to be paid, all else being equal.

What I find peculiar about this fund and the way it paid its principals is that they were paid based on the dollar volume of grants they made. I swear I am not making that up. The more money that was allocated, the more that was spent, whether it went to a good project, a bad one, a medium one or some other, the more money that was paid to those individuals. Rather than scouring the country for the best projects, the easiest thing to do, the path of least resistance, was to allocate funds to projects that were already known to the board, regardless of the expected return to the taxpayer. We call that a fiduciary duty.

• (1350)

For a government that loves to virtue signal about its care and vision for the environment, its behaviour when it comes to deploying funds is contradictory, as I just detailed. The government says one thing and does another. This matters, and here is why: Instead of investing taxpayer dollars in the most promising projects and companies, the Liberals appointed a chair, and her board funnelled taxpayer dollars to projects and companies that were run by their friends or into companies where they had a financial interest. This is the kind of situation we are taught to avoid in a business education. This is why we have ethics classes in business and financial education. Perhaps the financial leaders on the other side of the House missed those classes.

The misallocation of money and capital leads to the destruction of capital in this country. This leads to a loss of Canadian competitiveness, a reduction in productivity and a decline in GDP. We are seeing all these economic measures play out now in our economy, and we are worse off as a country for it. The green slush fund is not responsible for all of that, but the green slush fund and its grant allocation principles are emblematic of the attitudes and principles of the Liberal government over the last nine years. Good money put toward programs with admirable goals is great, but lacking in the financial know-how and financial management expertise to succeed is a waste of taxpayer money.

*Statements by Members*

The reduction of our productivity and competitiveness in GDP is not an accident. This is the result of an overall mismanagement of the economy by the Liberal Prime Minister and the Liberal cabinet. At the heart of this issue is public trust. Canadians trust their government to act in their best interest, to steward public funds responsibly and be forthright about how decisions are made. When this trust is broken, it is incredibly difficult to rebuild, except perhaps with a new government. The refusal to release the green slush fund documents erodes this trust. It sends a message to the public that the government is not interested in being transparent and that accountability is a secondary concern.

• (1355)

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed that insightful speech by the member for Toronto—St. Paul's. Given his extensive business career, and his knowledge and study of this subject, I know he would be aware that the chair of the green slush fund, Annette Verschuren, said, when asked about all the money that went to their own companies, that this is what entrepreneurs do.

Does the member believe these nine directors named as having conflicts of interest by the Auditor General 186 times represent 82% of the green technology space? Was that a coincidence? Do they represent it, or did they get an oversized chunk of that money because of their insider status?

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Madam Speaker, the 186 companies would not represent 82% of the green technology space in Canada. We have a very large green technology space in this country, from coast to coast to coast, and it would be much more than 186. They did receive an oversized funding amount when 82% of that fund went to those 186 companies.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite, and many members opposite, have continually referred to the chair and board of SDTC as Liberal insiders. I am just wondering if the member opposite knows anything about Annette Verschuren. She was the past chair of the board, and she was an adviser to Harper, Flaherty and others in the Conservative Party, as well as a major donor to the Conservative Party.

If that is not a friend to the Conservatives, then I am wondering who the member considers to be a friend to the Conservatives.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the malfeasance in this fund started well after the Conservative Party left power. Whether the chair was friendly or not at that time to the Harper government is immaterial.

What matters here is that there was money misappropriated and money misallocated, and it did not go to the strongest projects out there. Now we are trying to get to the bottom of it, but we are being stymied. Parliament is being stymied. We are being stymied as a group, as an institution, from getting to the bottom of this through the prevention of the release of this documentation.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is the same question I have asked every Conservative in the House: Who stymies? Who are the ones behind the stymie? Who are the stymiers-in-chief in this entire circus show that is this fili-

buster on a motion that they put forward and yet refuse to put forward?

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, it is an important question, because here we are in Parliament asking for documentation, which is our privilege, that is not being produced. This could be over, as I said before, in 35 seconds by producing the documentation. All we need to happen here is for the will of Parliament to be honoured.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

### WORLD POLIO DAY

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is World Polio Day. Today, we renew our collective resolve for a world where no child suffers from this paralyzing and deadly disease.

Through efforts of organizations like Rotary International, we have successfully reduced polio cases by 99% since 1979, with three billion children vaccinated.

[*Translation*]

To guarantee that we meet the objective of completely eradicating polio, Canada has pledged an additional \$151 million to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

[*English*]

Let us honour the tireless efforts of the health workers and the 20 million volunteers who have journeyed to the most remote corners of the world, in 200 countries, delivering not just vaccines, but hope. Let the end of polio be not only a goal, but a legacy.

\* \* \*

### WORLD POLIO DAY

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is World Polio Day, a day to highlight global efforts to end polio.

In 1996, Nelson Mandela said, “our aim is not merely to reduce the numbers afflicted—it is to eliminate the disease completely. No country can be safe from this disease until the whole world is rid of it.”

Today, we are so close to that goal, with Canada consistently playing a leading role. Three Canadian prime ministers, including former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, have been recipients of the Rotary Foundation's Polio Eradication Champion Award.

Canadian Jennifer Jones, who recently served as Rotary International's first female president, relentlessly continued Canada's leadership in this fight, working with dedicated partners like UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, Global Citizen, RESULTS and many others.

Here in this House, members from all parties have, time and again, united around efforts of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and the world is better for it. Now we need to finish the job.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HATS FOR HOPE

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada asked the House of Commons to declare October 24, 2018, as the first Brain Cancer Awareness Day in Canada.

That year also marked the beginning of the Hats for Hope campaign. Canadians were invited to show their support by sharing photos of themselves wearing a hat on social media. Thanks to the Hats for Hope campaign, this date has become a symbol of solidarity in response to this devastating disease. I will wear my hat as I leave the House today in memory of my mother and in support of the 27 people diagnosed with a brain tumour every day in Canada. Will my colleagues wear their hat or hoodie for hope today?

I want to thank the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada for its tireless efforts to make a difference. I thank all those who will wear their hat today.

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### SALON DES MÉTIERS D'ART DE BOUCHERVILLE

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to highlight the 40th edition of the Salon des métiers d'art de Boucherville, an artisan market that will run from November 1 to 3, 2024.

With the exception of a two-year hiatus during the pandemic, this market has been held annually since its inaugural year in 1982. It is successful. Every year, thousands of visitors flock to find unique and original creations for their holiday gifts or for themselves.

This success is due in large part to its wonderful, dedicated and passionate volunteer president, who is celebrating 30 years at the helm. My warmest congratulations to Renée Lavoie. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the contribution of the committee members who support her in her mission, namely, Céline Lozeau, Suzanne Hindson, Isabell Ross and Nathalie Métivier.

I would like to thank them for promoting the talent of Quebec's artists and artisans, helping them shine and offering them such wonderful visibility.

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[English]

### EXTRAORDINARY LABRADORIAN

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an extraordinary Labradorian, William Larkham Jr.,

### Statements by Members

for his incredible achievement on season 11 of the reality show *Alone*, aired on the History channel.

William hails from the tiny outpost community of William's Harbour. His determination, resilience and unmatched survival skills were on full display as he spent 84 gruelling days north of the Arctic Circle near Inuvik in the Northwest Territories enduring the harsh environment of the Arctic on the series *Alone*. He was one of 10 contestants and was the last one standing. His triumph earned him the grand prize of \$500,000 U.S., and was a testament to his strength, knowledge of the land and spirit of survival.

William's journey not only brought Labradorians to the edge of their seats, but showcased the deep connection he has with the land and water, and the remarkable skills passed down through generations of culture in the region.

I congratulate William and ask all Labradorians and all parliamentarians to join me in offering him our very best wishes.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

### DOWN SYNDROME DAY

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, through my many years of volunteering with Creating Alternatives and the Down Syndrome Foundation, I have witnessed first-hand the profound impact of inclusion and the importance of celebrating each individual's unique abilities.

These experiences have deeply touched my heart and inspired me to put forward Motion No. 123, which calls on the government to recognize March 21 as national Down syndrome day. By doing so, we will align with the United Nations, but also honour and celebrate the incredible contributions that individuals with Down syndrome make to our communities. Their love, positivity and unwavering spirit enrich the lives of everyone around them.

I am confident that my colleagues on both sides of the House will join me in supporting this motion. Together, we can affirm our commitment to recognizing and celebrating the abilities and contributions of all Canadians, regardless of the challenges they may face.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ensuring the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec is a priority for our government. Immigration is an essential and powerful tool for achieving that goal.

*Statements by Members*

Thanks to the immigration targets planned for 2025-27, francophone permanent residents will account for 8.5% of all permanent residents admitted to Canada outside Quebec in 2025, 9.5% in 2026 and 10% in 2027. These targets reflect our commitment to ensuring the growth of francophone and Acadian minority communities and are consistent with our francophone immigration policy.

I am proud to be part of a government that helps our communities grow and prosper. This is good news.

\* \* \*

[English]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Immigration tabled the 2025-27 immigration levels plan, a plan that will pause population growth in the short term to achieve well-managed, sustainable growth in the long term.

Our government has been taking concrete action, including the recent reforms to the international student program to ensure system integrity, and the results are showing. Many university and college cities are experiencing rental downturns, at least partially due to the cap on international students. In Vancouver and Toronto, rent went down 11 % and 8.1 %, respectively.

We are committed to achieving long-term growth and ensuring a well-managed, sustainable immigration system where everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

\* \* \*

**ANTI-SEMITISM**

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government has allowed anti-Jewish hate crimes to increase by 400%. Members of the Jewish community make up just 1% of Canada's population, but are the targets of 70% of all religiously motivated hate crimes in Canada.

Synagogues have been firebombed, Jewish schools have been shot at, Jewish-owned businesses have been vandalized and Jewish-founded hospitals have been barricaded. Calls for death to Jews are coming from radical Hamas-loving, Jew-hating, terrorist sympathizers on the streets in front of Jewish seniors' homes. Jewish Canadians did not ask to be targeted with acts of hate and violence, and this escalation of hate and fear is just not the Canadian way. Enough is enough.

When will the Prime Minister finally stand up for Jewish Canadians and take this disgusting rise in anti-Semitism seriously so that every Jew, no matter where they live, work and go to school, can live safe and free from hate?

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**FOREIGN INTERFERENCE**

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am astonished by the blatant disregard the Leader of the Opposition has shown for the well-being of Canadians. His willful igno-

rance of critical security threats facing our nation is deeply concerning.

Recently, RCMP investigations have shown alarming evidence of agents from the Government of India engaging in serious criminal activity in Canada, including homicides, extortion and threats to the South Asian community. Our citizens are under credible and imminent threat, yet the Leader of the Opposition continues to peddle empty slogans, refusing to do the substantive work to address these threats. His dog whistle politics are putting Canadians at risk every single day.

Will the Leader of the Opposition put aside his selfish interests, obtain the necessary security clearance and protect the integrity not just of the democratic process but of his own party and all Canadians?

\* \* \*

**OPIOIDS**

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, the NDP-Liberal so-called safe supply fiasco has torn a hole in yet another Canadian community.

Hydromorphone seized by the Sarnia police has gone up by 170% in the first eight months of this year, and a local addictions doctor has said that diversion is to blame. The government talks about evidence, but when the evidence tells it something it does not want to hear, it just ignores it.

Every city touched by so-called safe supply has suffered. In Vancouver, 50% of all hydromorphone seizures were diverted from so-called safe supply. In London, the street price of hydromorphone dropped by 90%. In Port Coquitlam, children are accessing government-supplied opioids. This is homicidal humanitarianism. The evidence is right there, and the NDP-Liberals do not care.

Common-sense Conservatives want Canadians suffering from addiction to survive and thrive, not suffer and die. We will restore their dignity and bring them home drug-free.

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**INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and their time is up. The NDP-Liberal government is refusing to turn over documents to the RCMP showing that Liberal-appointed managers used the green slush fund to pay nearly \$400 million to companies that they themselves owned. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption.



*Statements by Members*

In northern B.C., residents are losing their logging, oil, gas, mining and other natural resource jobs because of the radical NDP-Liberal environment minister. Meanwhile, the same radical NDP-Liberal environment minister and the Prime Minister take \$400 million that they take from us in carbon tax and pay off their NDP-Liberal friends.

Why will NDP-Liberals not end the cover-up and give proof to police so that Parliament can get back to work for Canadians?

\* \* \*

**LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, national security should be the responsibility and the priority of every single member of the House.

We have seen over the last number of months and years the alarming rate with which foreign governments have sought to interfere with the democratic processes in our country and to damage our democracy. Every single one of us in the House bears a responsibility and obligation to ensure that we are well prepared and well-informed in the face of these threats. Canadians know that our leaders having a security clearance is table stakes, but apparently not the Leader of the Opposition.

I know first-hand that the top secret clearance process is detailed and precise. It is something that gives our national security agencies absolute confidence in our integrity and our ability to be trusted with sensible and sensitive information. I simply cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition refuses to get his security clearance.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, if he cares about our country and he cares about Canadians, he will get the clearance, take the briefing and protect the country. Why will he not?

\* \* \*

**LABOUR**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, at this very moment, there are thousands of workers rallying for respect and for their collective bargaining rights at the legislature in Alberta.

Members of CUPE local 3550 were stripped of their rights to strike by the Alberta government after they voted 97% in favour of job action.

Education assistance, administrative staff, librarians and student support staff are the backbone of our education system. They make our schools run; they support our teachers; and, most important, they help our children. However, they are not being treated with the respect they deserve. These workers, mostly women, as 94% of local 3550 members are women, work difficult, stressful jobs while making poverty wages. Now their most basic rights are being denied.

Workers are tired of subsidizing funding cuts with poverty wages. Today and every day, I stand with the dedicated workers of CUPE local 3550 and all workers across Canada and Alberta.

• (1415)

[Translation]

**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ÉCOLE DE TECHNOLOGIE SUPÉRIEURE**

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to mark the 50th anniversary of the École de technologie supérieure, or ÉTS for short, founded in Montreal back in 1974.

Over these many years, the school has become a trusted institution and alma mater to 25% of all of Quebec's engineers. It has taken the top spot in Quebec for the highest number of bachelor of engineering graduates. A member of the Université du Québec network, ÉTS now has over 11,000 students, 290 professors, and 77 chairs, groups, and research units. In short, it is an academic incubator of international renown. By training the future engineers destined to meet present and future technological challenges, the ÉTS is ensuring Quebec's prosperity.

The future looks bright for the ever-expanding engineering profession in Quebec. Imagine what lies ahead. I wish the École de technologie supérieure continued success and a joyful 50th anniversary.

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[English]

**CARBON TAX**

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, even Liberal MPs now acknowledge that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime, the corruption and, now, the chaos.

Instead of trying to fix their mess of doubling housing costs or the record number of food bank visits, Liberal MPs are in full panic mode trying to save their own jobs.

After 24 Liberal MPs told the Prime Minister yesterday that he had become so toxic that he needed to resign, the immigration minister called his own colleagues "garbage". It got so bad during the caucus meeting, Liberals were fleeing to the bathrooms to text journalists about how angry they were, yet the Prime Minister is completely out of touch and is still forging ahead with his plan to quadruple the carbon tax.

It is now clear that everything in the country is broken because the Liberal Party is broken. The solution is simple. If the Liberals cannot get their act together, just call a carbon tax election. The Conservatives on this side are fired up and ready to go.

*Oral Questions***LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know why the Leader of the Opposition will not get his security clearance.

Why does he not want to learn about ways that governments like India work to disrupt our institutions? It cannot be those weak excuses that he would be muzzled, because every other leader in the House has received their clearance and has not been prevented from speaking on the matter at hand.

The Leader of the Opposition has a choice. He can get the clearance, take the briefings and protect the country or he can turn a blind eye to the actions of governments like India, which try to undermine our democracy.

Will he stand up for Canadians or will he stand with governments like India? The Leader of the Opposition has choice, party over country. Canadians want to know.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister, it is clear that he is not worth the cost, the crime, the corruption or chaos.

The Liberal caucus is revolting, because even in once-safe Liberal seats voters are angry. They are angry that the Prime Minister raised their prices and devalued their paycheques with his inflation. They are angry that their grocery and home heating costs keep going up because of his carbon tax. They are angry that their cars keep getting stolen, their parks are full of dirty needles and homeless encampments now line their streets.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister put an end to the anger, spread some much-needed joy and call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide?

• (1420)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians have had a tough couple of years as a result of the rising cost of living and global inflation. However, Canadian households are right to ask who is actually fighting for them.

I can tell them that it is not the Conservative caucus members who do not want to forgive interest on student loans. It is not the Conservative leader who wants to take away the Canada child benefit. If they do not believe me, then they should look at his voting record. It is not the Conservative caucus members who want to make sure that Canadian women do not have access to free birth control.

In the next election, people are going to ask themselves: Do they want a Liberal government who cares about them or a Conservative leader who cares about himself?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has not been a tough couple of years, it has been a tough nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister. Now taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

It is not just Conservatives saying that; it is Liberal MPs too. They cannot do it anymore. They cannot convince voters that taxes are going down when in fact they are going up. They cannot convince their voters that home prices are becoming more affordable when they keep getting more expensive. They cannot convince their voters that crime is down when it just keeps getting worse. Now they are trying to convince the Prime Minister to resign.

However, since he will not, will he do the next best thing and call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide?

**Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some facts. I stand here as the Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth and I wonder if this ministry will even exist if the Conservatives were to gain power.

Here are the facts. The Conservatives will cut services to survivors of gender-based violence. They will cut critical supports for women entrepreneurs. They will cut life-saving support for grassroots organizations. They will cut pharmacare and contraceptives for women.

We on this side of the House stand for women and gender-diverse people. They do not. Those are straight facts.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is baseless and false. We are going to cut the carbon tax, eliminate it, and defund the CBC and put that savings back into the pockets of taxpayers.

However, consider where we are. It is actually kind of amazing. Liberal MPs are so frustrated that they are not allowed to speak in caucus that they are actually confiding in Conservatives. They have to sneak out to the bathroom to have therapy text sessions with journalists, and cabinet ministers call their own colleagues garbage because they are speaking out against the Prime Minister's terrible record.

He is losing control. He is losing confidence. He lost the plot a long time ago. Therefore, for the love of all that is holy, will he finally call a carbon tax election?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what would the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Conservatives, do if he was the prime minister? He would cut things like the Canada summer jobs program, something that exists in every one of our communities, which is so important to employers and so important to kids. Do members think that we would be able to maintain our progress on clean water? He would cut funding to first nations dependent on a real, fair and equitable solution.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** We just have to take a little break so that everyone can reflect on the fact that no one is permitted to speak without first being recognized by the Speaker.

The member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know why the Prime Minister was all smiles yesterday as he was leaving his chaotic caucus meeting, where 24 members called on him to step down. It is simple. It is because the Prime Minister knows he can count on the support of the 33 Bloc Québécois members to keep him in office. The Bloc has been supporting this Prime Minister even though he has doubled the cost of housing, inflated the cost of food, caused an increase in violent crime and created the worst immigration crisis in the history of Canada.

Will the Prime Minister turn around and look behind him, hear the message from his backbenchers and Quebeckers, and call an election now?

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the depths to which the Conservative Party will sink and its hypocrisy are immeasurable. Members will recall that, during his first term in office, the leader of the Conservative Party got all worked up here in the House about people with diabetes. However, he voted against the bill to provide free medication to people with diabetes. The Conservatives are the masters of talking out of both sides of their mouths.

● (1425)

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should take a look around. Twenty-four Liberal members called on the Prime Minister to step down this week. This Prime Minister doubled the national debt, the cost of housing and mortgage payments, and he has allowed crime to spiral out of control.

The incompetence of the Prime Minister, who is supported by the Bloc Québécois, is ringing alarm bells for Liberal supporters, who want a change of leadership. The Prime Minister even sent one of his ministers to say that the opponents within the party, his own MPs, are garbage. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the garbage. When will he call an election? We want one now.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our colleague is talking about housing and incompetence. One, two, three, four, five, six: that is the number of affordable housing units that the Conservative leader

built across Canada in his entire term as minister responsible for housing.

He is looking for those six affordable housing units and he cannot find them. He is trying to figure out where else he can look. Can he appropriate some from a property owner, entrepreneur or this government? No, there are just six affordable housing units. It is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

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**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for years now, the Bloc Québécois has been the lone voice in Ottawa pointing out that federal immigration targets were steering us right into a wall. For years, the government has been lecturing us, saying that there is no such thing as integration capacity and that to claim otherwise amounts to immigrant-bashing, that Quebec has not exhausted its integration capacity, it is just not willing to accept immigrants.

Today, the government has finally done a spectacular about-face and dropped its immigration targets. Why did it wait until all of Canada was in a full-blown crisis before finally listening to Quebeckers?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is being proposed today is a reasonable immigration plan that lowers the targets for permanent and temporary residents. The plan is reasonable and carefully crafted. It takes account of contributions by people across the country who have spoken up and asked us to lower the numbers. I think that Canadians have a lot to be proud of. The reduction is not drastic. It is the same plan we proposed back in 2020. I think this will be good for Canadians and Quebeckers.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, not only is the federal government finally agreeing with us on integration capacity, but it is also recognizing the Bloc Québécois's demand for successful immigration. I will quote a report on immigration that says, "successful immigration requires that housing, education, healthcare, childcare services and other key services keep pace with projected population growth".

The Liberals finally seem to get it. Quebeckers have been saying this for years, but it was not until the Liberals heard it from Canadians that they finally listened. Why did the Liberals not listen to Quebeckers before, instead of lecturing us?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois for once again contributing to national unity.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, abortion is health care, but under the Liberal government, so many Canadians still do not have access to reproductive health care. For those who live outside of larger urban centres, it is almost impossible.

### Oral Questions

The anti-choice Conservatives would only make this worse. The Trump-lite leader and his extremist caucus have voted five times to restrict abortions, and while the Prime Minister talks a good game, he has not done enough to ensure that Canadians get the care they deserve.

Why has the government not taken access to reproductive health care seriously?

**Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her advocacy, but the right to an abortion and access to it go hand in hand. Through the \$45-million sexual and reproductive health fund, we are addressing that. We are making sure that Canadians facing obstacles in accessing reproductive health care are supported financially and that organizations providing those essential services have capacity funding.

While Conservative MPs try to limit a woman's right to choose, we will continue to work hard at opening every possible door to increase access.

• (1430)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have heard that Liberal rhetoric before, but the point here is that abortion care and access are not good enough. Women and gender-diverse Canadians are scared. They know that rights are under attack, and they have seen far-right movements and politicians in Canada emboldened. The Conservatives continue to side with anti-choice movements and believe that Canada is a “lawless state of fetal killing”, but we know abortion is health care.

Will the Liberal government use the Canada Health Act to make sure that all Canadians have full access to abortion?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that abortion is health care. It is absolutely essential that every woman in every part of this country has access not only to abortion, but to the reproductive tools that she needs to have control and autonomy over her own body. We are making remarkable progress on that, signing agreements with every province and every territory, having indicators common on health standards across the country and making sure for the first time that every woman everywhere has access to the contraceptives she needs.

That is what freedom looks like. That is what we are delivering.

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### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and now even excuses are up. The Prime Minister now admits that he destroyed Canada's immigration system and the 150-year immigration consensus. He cannot fix what he broke. He cannot fix immigration. He cannot fix housing or anything else right now because he is fighting his own caucus.

Instead of blaming everyone else, including immigrants like me, will he just admit that he shattered the immigration system and caused lasting damage to Canada's housing market, health care and jobs?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was flabbergasted to hear the Leader of the Opposition's answer today, the most immature answer on immigration that I have ever heard. He is late to the game. He is so late to the game that he has not even come up with a slogan yet. When he comes up with a slogan, perhaps we will take the chance to respond, but what we propose is a plan for controlled migration. We are proud of it. It serves Canadians well.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from the minister, who called 24 Liberal MPs “garbage” because they are looking after their own careers and are worried they are not going to be here after the next election because their constituents are going to send them to the unemployment line.

The Prime Minister is reckless, and he even said himself that he did not get it right. He said it during his own press conference. He did not get it right on immigration. He did not get it right on housing. He cannot get it right on the carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister just admit that his flip-flop has destroyed the immigration system and accept his own personal failure?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I said is that it is garbage to focus on anything other than the circus clown the member is supporting.

**The Speaker:** I will invite the hon. minister to please withdraw that comment. It was unparliamentary toward another member of Parliament.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and chaos in our immigration system is also up. The Liberal-NDP government has broken our world-class immigration system with its reckless policies, and today's immigration flip-flop is a massive admission of its failures. The Prime Minister said that he “didn't get the balance quite right”. That is clearly obvious with the state of our country today.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he broke Canada's consensus on immigration and call a carbon tax election now?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader will have to put forward a plan instead of slogans. I have not even heard the slogan on this because he has been so delinquent on coming up with any valid points to make on the immigration system, the consensus of which is challenged. Let us hear him. Let us hear his plan. Let us even start hearing the slogan, because we have not heard it yet.

*Oral Questions*

• (1435)

**Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are trying to be firefighters when they are the ones causing the fires in the first place.

We had a consensus on immigration in this country, and the incompetent Prime Minister broke it. The Liberals ignored warnings from their own officials. They dropped police clearance certificates from their own background checks for temporary residents. They even told their own officials to skip vetting for temporary foreign workers.

There is no doubt that after nine years, they have broken the consensus on immigration. Will they call a carbon tax election now so common-sense Conservatives can clean up their mess?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite thinks that security certificates from the Modi government are reliable, he needs a little clearance too, on top of his leader, who should probably get a better briefing on the national security of this country.

The Conservative leader should get the clearance, get the briefing, stop being a baby and be responsible.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, immigration is in chaos and so is the Liberal caucus. This government broke the immigration system with the help of the Bloc Québécois, who voted nearly 200 times to keep the government in power.

Let us not forget that this coalition kept Roxham Road open one year after the United States offered to close it themselves. Governing means looking ahead. A Conservative government will bring consistency, planning and most of all a common-sense prime minister.

People want an election.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everything I have been hearing from the opposition leader so far has been totally inconsistent.

I would like the member's opinion on our francophone strategy outside Quebec. For the first time, we have reached the 6% target of francophone permanent residents outside Quebec. We want to get to 10%. That will be the first time in our history.

She should be proud and she should support us.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, everything is broken with this government. The Bloc Québécois voted nearly 200 times to keep it in power. It bears repeating.

Today we are seeing a desperate attempt by the Prime Minister to fix what he has broken. The immigration changes that were announced are totally confusing. They are full of inconsistencies and are a product of pure Liberal improvisation. Only a Conservative government can fix the immigration system.

The message is clear: People want an election. Is the Prime Minister ready to call one?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I see the member continued reading from her paper instead of answering my question.

I would like to see the Conservative Party's plan. The Conservatives are not mature enough. They have not even put any thought into their next slogan.

I would like to hear their plan because our plan is reasonable. It provides for controlled immigration for Canada and Quebec over the next three years.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have finally started listening to the message passed on from Quebecers by the Bloc Québécois. Instead of raising their immigration target to 500,000 people a year, they are going to lower it to 365,000 by 2027.

If Quebec were to accept the federal government's new target, it would have to welcome more than 80,000 immigrants a year. That is more than the target set by Quebec and all its political parties. No one is proposing more than 80,000 immigrants per year.

How can the federal government determine that Quebec has the capacity to welcome more immigrants than the target set by all of Quebec's parties?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware that, since the Canada-Quebec accord, the Government of Quebec has set its own targets. That is within its jurisdiction. It also has 50% control over temporary residents. We are waiting for the Government of Quebec's plan. We have proposed a Canada-wide plan, and we are waiting for its response. This is entirely within its jurisdiction, and it has the power to do this itself as per the Canada-Quebec accord. We are giving Quebec \$6 billion for this purpose, to cover things like francization. We will make sure we work with Quebec.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the proposed new thresholds are a step in the right direction, but they still force Quebec to choose between accepting more immigrants or losing political weight within Canada. That being said, Quebec's main concern is still temporary immigration and, above all, asylum seekers. There is still no plan for distributing asylum seekers among the provinces, and Quebec is still taking on nearly half of all asylum seekers in Canada. It is the federal government's responsibility to convince reluctant provinces to do their part.

What is the government waiting for?

*Oral Questions*

• (1440)

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no truth to the claim that Quebec is taking in 50% of asylum seekers. My colleague can simply check the documents that we give him, or the documents from Statistics Canada. With the decrease in arrivals, particularly at the Montreal-Trudeau airport, the percentage stands at 29%. It is quite clear that the member opposite is trying to mislead the House.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since we still have no migrant distribution breakdown for the provinces, we run a real risk of seeing migration skyrocket following the U.S. election in 12 days' time. Without presuming to know the outcome, we are aware that Donald Trump plans to deport 11 million people. Our agencies have told us that, if he wins, they expect a lot of people to pack their bags and head for Canada. The last time that Trump threatened to deport people, Roxham Road happened.

If the minister is so smart, I guess he has a plan ready in case of a Trump victory. The election is 12 days from now.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I honestly did not hear a question in there.

[*English*]

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the former immigration minister and MP for Central Nova oversaw the population growth in this country of 200% over the past several years. He lost track of the people he let in. Worse, he saw international students living in homeless shelters or with 14 roommates in a basement, all while he ignored his department's advice that it was too much, too fast. Watching the impact of these failed policies on housing, the Prime Minister said that was his guy for housing.

Why did the Prime Minister promote this guy instead of firing him?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition members would like to distract from the issues that matter most to Canadians. They focus these days on caucus unity. I would point out the member sits just a few seats down from a colleague she criticized just a few years ago for casting aspersions on the LGBTQ2+ community.

When it comes to the work we are doing to get homes built, we are doing everything we can to build more affordable housing. When the Conservative leader was in the position of housing minister, he got only six affordable housing units built across the entire country.

We are going to focus on what matters to Canadians, not the distractions the Conservatives try to put on the floor of the House of Commons.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 195,000 was the number, and that is a number the minister would only dream of building, because some people fail upwards. Even Canada's current immigration minister said, "It's really a system that has gotten out of control." He was talking about the same immigration system controlled by the new housing guy, who lost track

of the people he let in and is now laughably in charge of fuelling the housing crisis the Prime Minister created.

The Prime Minister cannot possibly fix housing, immigration or anything else because he is fighting his own caucus, so if the Prime Minister will not fire this guy, will he resign in disgrace?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are going to be disappointed to know that I spend no time or energy thinking about the insults they hurl at me. What concerns me is the insults they hurl at Canadians.

I have news for the hon. member, because she stated a fact that needs to be dispelled. Six is the number of affordable housing units the Conservative government helped build. The Conservatives are trying to take credit for the number of homes Canadians built. Here is the kicker: That number, if we accept it as the right metric, is the worst record of any housing minister in the last 10 years.

If they want a prize for their leaders' efforts, it is the prize for biggest loser.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

The former minister of immigration and MP for Central Nova has been responsible for the population growth of 200% in the past several years. Worse, he saw international students living in homeless shelters and cramped quarters while ignoring departmental warnings that immigration levels were rising too fast. Watching the impact of these failed policies on housing, the Prime Minister sat back and proudly said that that was his guy; that was his housing minister.

Why did the Prime Minister promote this minister instead of simply firing him? Are the two of them waiting to get a pink slip from the Liberal caucus?

• (1445)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they want to talk about immigration as failure. I am surprised they call it a failure that we provided refuge to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Ukrainians who fled a war of aggression. I am surprised they think it is a failure to have made good on our commitment to welcome 40,000 Afghan refugees, including those who fought alongside the Canadian Forces.

I should not be surprised, because they have opposed our support for Ukraine every step of the way. They campaigned on a commitment to welcome precisely zero Afghan refugees. Immigration in this country is not a failure; it is a strength.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 10 million Canadians will not have a family doctor by the end of the decade. With an aging population, this is unacceptable. The Liberals have been dragging their feet for years on health care, while the Conservatives' answer is to make people pay for that care.

Despite the Liberals' announcements, the pan-Canadian licensure for doctors is still not a reality. It would get more people connected with a doctor. Why are the Liberals dragging their feet on this simple health solution?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that was an absolutely critical point of conversation at the last health ministers' meeting, where we committed to doing that. In fact, if we look at what was done in the Atlantic provinces, we are moving forward with exactly that. The agreements we have signed with every province and every territory are for \$200 billion. Just today, we got baseline data showing that for surgical wait times and making sure surgeries are provided, we are ahead of where we were prior to the pandemic. There are also more doctors and nurses in virtually every province and every territory. We are making important progress.

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**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are worried about massive flooding and wildfires, the Conservatives are rubbing elbows with the same CEOs who are fuelling the climate crisis. The Conservative leader spent a night schmoozing with these executives at his \$1,600-a-plate fundraiser. He is not listening to hard-working Canadians. However, the Liberals are no better. They met with oil and gas lobbyists five times a day.

Canadians should come first, not CEOs, so why are the Liberals ripping a page from the Conservative playbook and putting CEOs ahead of people?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the Conservative leader, I can assure the member opposite that no oil lobbyists have organized fundraisers for me.

I would like to quote a colleague from her own party, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who said, “as New Democrats, as progressives, as environmentalists, we are in favour of putting a price on pollution.” Well, it looks like, under pressure from the Conservatives, the NDP is no longer conservative, no longer progressive and no longer environmentalist.

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**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is a big day. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship just tabled the immigration levels plan for 2025-27. This is a comprehensive plan that will align the number of newcomers to the supports available in the country. As immigration is essential to Canada from an economic, social and cultural perspective, a well-managed, robust immigration system is vital.

Could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship provide an update on our government's efforts toward ensuring a sustainable immigration system where everyone has a fair chance to succeed?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to personally thank the member for her contribution on this matter. She knows, on this side of the House, how important immigration is to this country, its past and its future.

We need a manageable system that is controllable. That is what we are doing today with the levels plan. The reductions we have proposed would alleviate the impacts on infrastructure and housing. It is something that Canadians can be immensely proud of. We should be very proud of the immigrants who continue to build this country and will make it better than what it is today.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, violent crime is up and police have had enough. Frontline officers in Toronto, York, Vancouver and Surrey are all slamming the Prime Minister for his self-congratulatory social media campaign where he promoted his failed handgun policy that has done nothing to stop violent gun crime, which is up, in fact, by 116% since the Liberals took power nine years ago.

When is the Prime Minister going to stop patting himself on the back for his failures and start listening to police?

● (1450)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one important difference between our government and the Conservative Party is that we do not believe that assault-style military firearms have a place on Canadian streets. We have made those firearms illegal. We are taking steps to compensate law-abiding gun owners who purchased these rifles, particularly so we can remove them from the streets. That is something that police officers, in conversations with me, have been very supportive of. They are very worried that the Conservative Party has plans to evacuate all those important measures. That is not in the interests of public safety.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to let the police associations speak for themselves to the Liberal minister and to the Liberal Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

This is from Surrey, B.C.: “The federal handgun freeze fails to address the real issue: the surge of illegal firearms coming across our borders and ending up in the hands of violent criminals.” This is from Vancouver, B.C.: “Stopping legal sales won't stop criminals from getting guns illegally. You're only restricting law-abiding citizens while doing little to address actual...[gun] violence.”

When is the Prime Minister going to stop working against police, stop going after law-abiding citizens, and start going after the real problem: criminals?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was surprised that our colleague raised the issue of border security. Our government, unlike the previous Conservative government, has invested precisely so that the Canada Border Services Agency would be able to interdict the illegal firearms crossing our borders.

We work with the RCMP, its policing partners and border services. The Conservatives cut the funding to these agencies, laid off hundreds of border services agents, and had plans to cut another 800. The good news is that the Conservatives lost the 2015 election. Liberals reinvested in those important priorities for Canadians, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, crime is up because the Prime Minister's policies are failing. The Toronto Police Association says that violent crime is up 78% since the Liberals came into power. Shootings are up 45% since last year. Gun-related homicides are up 62% since last year.

When will the Prime Minister start listening to police associations across Canada and admit he is adding to the crime wave, not fighting it?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contributions to the House; I just do not appreciate the hypocrisy.

What I would say is that assault-style rifles are not used for hunting deer. That is why we are taking them out of circulation. What I would also say with respect to guns and gangs is that if we do not want guns in our society, then we need to regulate the border. That is why we have invested over \$390 million into CBSA, the exact amount of money cut by the Conservative Party. The member was not here yet, so I cannot fault him in particular, but I will fault his party for not doing anything to keep our borders safe and to keep guns out of our country.

**Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Minister of Justice continues to reveal just how out of touch the government is. We have real-time evidence of it. Less than three hours ago, there was a shooting in Toronto near Sheppard and Yonge, not far from the Minister of Justice's riding. As a result of that situation, a person is now lying in the hospital in life-threatening condition.

When will the government actually take responsibility for the crime it is causing and listen to the police?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that I listen to the police all the time.

They tell me that when guns are taken out of circulation, it helps keep things like gender-based violence and domestic violence from occurring. Women are getting killed because guns are in homes. When we pass a bill like Bill C-21, we disable that from happening and ensure that we are keeping women in this country safe. That is a priority or should be a priority for the entire Parliament. It is just really shocking that that member does not get it.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question from the Bloc Québécois leader, the Prime Minister said that what is happening at Bedford school is justified by the teachers' freedom of expression.

Imposing religion in the classroom is not freedom of expression. That is precisely why we need secularism. Secularism allows everyone to believe, or not believe, in what they want, according to their conscience, freely.

Do the Liberals realize that they are attacking Quebecers' freedom of conscience?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, what he just said is revolting. The Prime Minister never said that.

Yesterday, on several occasions, the Prime Minister said that it was unacceptable for children in Quebec to be treated in this way. He also said that it was the responsibility of the Quebec government to deal with this problem as it falls under their jurisdiction.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when we talk to the Prime Minister about religious intransigence, he responds by telling us that the Liberals are always there to defend freedom of expression.

First off, let us be clear: There are better examples of freedom of expression than religion. When an adult imposes his religious beliefs in class on children, there is no room for freedom in any of that. Religion must remain in the private domain, not the public domain. That is the principle of state secularism and neutrality, and that is what the Liberals want to challenge in court.

Can the Liberal government agree, once and for all, not to directly or indirectly challenge Bill 21?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I am deeply disappointed in the questionable connotations being made in these matters by my esteemed colleague.



*Oral Questions*

The first important thing for everyone in the House to keep in mind, including the people listening to us, is that respect for the dignity and safety of children is everyone's responsibility. As far as jurisdiction over education is concerned, it is the Government of Quebec's responsibility.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Violent gun crime is up 116% in Canada in just nine years.

Following the Prime Minister's out-of-touch comments, the Vancouver Police Union stated that the Prime Minister is “not aware of the ongoing gang war here in B.C. which is putting both our members and public at risk on a daily basis.”

Will the NDP-Liberals listen to police and finally admit that their soft-on-crime policies are leading to the crime wave in Canada?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one thing that is definitely up is slogans in the House of Commons.

We have said clearly that we will support law enforcement both at the RCMP and in terms of their partners in policing, including municipal police in British Columbia. That is why we renewed the guns and gangs program that precisely puts money in the hands of these brave women and men who serve in municipal and provincial police forces, so they can do the exact work that my colleague pretends she wants them to be able to do.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the police themselves who are saying that the policies of the Liberal government are a failure. Conservatives are listening to police who know the facts about gun violence, public safety and the real impact in our communities.

Following the Prime Minister's out-of-touch comments, the Surrey Police Union stated, “The federal handgun freeze fails to address the real issue: the surge of illegal firearms coming across our borders and ending up in the hands of violent criminals.”

Eighty-five per cent of seized firearms are traced back to the United States, so why does the Prime Minister not listen to our law enforcement agents by starting to crack down on smuggled guns from the U.S.?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government did precisely that. It listened to law enforcement professionals who asked us to reverse the cuts of the previous Harper government to the women and men who serve in our Border Services Agency and who do that excellent work at border crossings across the country. We also invested in the RCMP, which has responsibility between border crossings and works with American partners on organized crime.

We are doing the very work that our colleague on the other side pretends that she thinks is important. Why does she not support our government in removing assault-style firearms from the streets of Canada?

• (1500)

**Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The Prime Minister wants to pat himself on the back, but the data and the Toronto Police Association say he is out of touch.

Last year in Toronto, there was a 45% increase in shootings and a 62% increase in gun-related homicides. In St. Paul's, two people were murdered in Oakwood, a police officer was shot near Yonge and Eglinton, and armed home invasions happen every day. The Liberals make life easy for career criminals with their catch-and-release bail policies.

When will the government finally come up with a plan to stop the crime and bring home safe streets?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the member expects us to apologize for taking assault-style weapons off of the streets, he is not going to get that apology. If the member thinks we are going to apologize for keeping women safe from domestic violence by implementing a handgun freeze, he is not going to get that apology. If the member thinks we are not going to take seriously the mental health impacts of suicides that are related to guns being in homes, he is not going to get that apology.

What he should do is actually think about what the police are asking for. They are asking for help with keeping Canadians safe. That is what we do every day on this side of the House.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservatives has continued his party's tradition of inaction and negligence by refusing to get a security clearance. He chooses to play political games instead of working for Canadians to combat foreign interference. That is not common sense; that is nonsense.

Can the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada tell Canadians how our government has taken historic action on foreign interference?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader continues to ignore national security. Instead of protecting Canadians, he prioritizes his partisan interests. That is not serious leadership.

*Oral Questions*

I will explain it in three-word slogans just so the Conservative leader gets it: It is time to get the clearance, take the briefing and protect the country. It is that simple.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up and now corruption is up. GC Strategies, a two-person company working from a basement, started scooping up government contracts like candy just weeks after the Prime Minister took office: \$20 million for doing nothing on the failed arrive scam and \$100 million in total in government contracts. If that does not scream corruption, I do not know what does.

Will the Liberals get our money back?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement has the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you also could have said it in French, because I am going to say something in French that my colleague has already heard several times in English.

He knows perfectly well that the Auditor General is independent, that the RCMP is also independent, that both of those organizations are doing their job, and that we will always be there to help them do it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is in English, but I digress.

Liberal corruption is on rinse and repeat. The Auditor General is investigating \$100 million in contracts awarded to GC Strategies, a two-person IT company that did no IT work—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order.

It is a very important and basic fact here that questions can be asked in English or in French and that questions can be answered in English or in French.

I am going to ask the hon. member to start from the top.

• (1505)

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, Liberal corruption is on rinse and repeat. The Auditor General is investigating \$100 million in contracts awarded to GC Strategies, a two-person IT company that did no IT work on the failed arrive scam app. The RCMP has already raided the home of GC Strategies founder Kristian Firth as part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Will the Liberals cut the corruption and, again, get taxpayers their money back?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we just heard is an insult to all francophone members of the House, including the Conservative

members opposite. If he wants to tell me that I do not have the right to answer a question in French in the House, he should rise and say it again.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals continue to obstruct Parliament by refusing to hand over the unredacted documents, they have also been caught red-handed awarding a \$20-million contract to GC Strategies to develop the ArriveCAN app. That company has only two employees. That is quite the hourly rate.

At a time when two million people are lining up at food banks, how many Liberal friends have lined their pockets by emptying the pockets of Canadian families?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on asking his question in French. He could have asked it in English because in the House we are free to speak either of the two official languages. I would like to invite his colleague to apologize for asking me to answer his question in English.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, foreign interference is an issue that is detrimental to our national security and to the safety of Canadians. We now know that agents of the Government of India have targeted Sikh and South Asian Canadians.

National security experts, including two former directors of CSIS, have emphasized how important it is for all party leaders to get the security clearance to view and act on intelligence.

Could the government House leader explain how crucial it is for party leaders to get the clearance to protect Canada's democratic institutions?

**The Speaker:** I am going to ask the hon. member for Niagara Falls to not take the floor unless he is being recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a question that is on the mind of many Canadians. Why will the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada not get his security clearance?

It is interesting to note that his Conservative members of Parliament would rather put our national security, our allies, our intelligence allyships and, quite frankly, the lives of Canadians at risk rather than have their leader get his security clearance. The question is, why? What is he hiding and what is he trying to protect?

• (1510)

### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this week, the Liberals are de-staffing two lighthouses along the coast of Vancouver Island without consultation. This jeopardizes emergency response, search and rescue, navigation and more.

Instead of supporting lightkeepers and the safety of our communities, the Liberals are choosing automated navigation systems. These cannot replace skilled people and surely do not hear distress cries. This move is dangerous.

Will the Liberals halt this decision immediately and stop putting our coasts at risk?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the cultural and historical significance of the Carmanah Point and Pachena Point lighthouses along the West Coast Trail.

After a technical investigation and assessment, the Canadian Coast Guard determined that the lighthouses were no longer suitable for its personnel to operate safely. The safety and well-being of Canadian Coast Guard personnel is our top priority, and I want to assure my colleagues that the navigational aids in these areas remain functional to continue to protect mariners and coastal communities.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration who intervened to stop a deportation order issued by his own department and upheld by a federal court to protect a five-time criminally convicted foreign national. Is it his latest scheme to protect the IRGC is by allowing them to falsely claim they are refugees?

Global News reported that refugee privacy is being exploited to hide behind closed-door proceedings. Why is the government continuing to make a mockery of Canada's legal and immigration systems? Is he the Minister of IRCC or the minister for the IRGC?

**The Speaker:** On at least three occasions, the Chair has made rulings regarding associating members with odious regimes. This has happened on all sides of the House, and now with an independent member.

I am going to ask the hon member for Spadina—Fort York to withdraw those words from the last part of that question.

The hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speak-

### Oral Questions

er, our colleague raised the IRGC. Our government has been very clear. The Iranian government is a state sponsor of terrorism. We have said that consistently, and our government took the unprecedented step to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Our colleague understands very well that nobody in this House is going to discuss specific immigration cases, but he should have been happy that we listed that odious organization as a terrorist regime in Canada.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, with regard to the 2024 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration that was tabled earlier this day, I would like clarification from the Chair. In the information that was tabled, the printed version does not have annex 4. However, a last-minute photocopy seems to be inserted.

I would like to know which version of the report the parliamentary secretary tabled earlier today. Does the one that was tabled have this last-minute photocopy with the numbers in it?

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising this issue. The Chair will look into it and get back to the House.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault:** Mr. Speaker, I think that it is very important to note that we have seen a blatant lack of respect in the House for our—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order.

[*English*]

The Chair has already made a statement on this matter during question period.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in relation to the introduction of my second question, the question was originally in English. I was unable to hear the minister's response because of commotion in the House. My volume was not working correctly on my earpiece. That is why I made the reference.

Clearly, I recognize that every member in this House is entitled to ask questions and respond to questions in both official languages.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Brantford—Brant raises a very interesting point, which is that when people take the floor, referring to the conversation that is happening right now between the member for Pickering—Uxbridge and the member for Lakeland, we cannot hear what is going on if there is too much ambient noise caused by people speaking out of turn. This is a very important point.

*Business of the House**[Translation]*

I have raised this point several times, primarily in the interest of those listening to the debates here in the House in the other official language through interpretation.

It is very important that no one speak so everyone can listen and understand what is happening here in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Joël Lightbound:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The member for Brantford—Brant is clearly trying to deny what he did, but everyone in the House knew what he was trying to do. He intimated that the member for Québec should not answer in French. He should apologize. That is the kind of condescension that—

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** The Chair has heard enough on this matter.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

*[Translation]*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:18 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, the electronic voting period has ended, but there seems to be a problem with the application itself.

The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie is rising on a point of order.

*[English]*

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to proceed to a voice vote.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to revert back to the Routine Proceedings rubric of presenting reports from committees.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the 71st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

There has been consultation among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to concur in the 71st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

• (1535)

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

*[Translation]*

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for several days now, the government has been stubbornly refusing to disclose the documents that were requested in the House. As a result, our work is paralyzed. Unfortunately, the government's legislative agenda is short on substance.

We all know there is an easy way to do this. There is one way to get back to the normal business of the House immediately, and that is for the government to table the documents that were requested by the House, by a majority of parliamentarians.

My question for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is this: Will we get access to the documents and a legislative agenda, yes or no?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as my colleague is well aware, we are complying with the ruling of the Speaker of the House, which indicated that this matter must be referred to committee. As the Speaker said, the Conservatives are obstructing their own obstruction. I cannot help but think that that is because they do not want to know the truth. Doing what they are asking would be an abuse of the House's power. We will always stand up for Canadians' rights and freedoms.

*[English]*

I also want to illustrate the fact that his question is totally fake, much like the tacky slogans Conservatives hide behind because they have no actual ideas or policies for the country. That is probably why they continue to filibuster their own motion: to distract Canadians from the fact that they are nothing more than an empty shell. It must be pretty embarrassing for Conservative MPs, having to filibuster their own motion day after day to protect their leader from any real accountability. It must also be kind of embarrassing for Conservative MPs to sit in a caucus with a leader who refuses to get a security clearance, because he clearly has something to hide. It is expected of a leader of a political party to do this, but beyond his little performances in the House, their leader does very little that comes close to leadership.

Despite the games being played by the Conservatives, on this side of the House, we are going to continue to work hard for Canadians. When the House does get back to debating legislation, the priorities will be Bill C-71 on citizenship, Bill C-66 on military justice, Bill C-63 on online harms and the ways and means motion related to capital gains.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Speaker, after hearing the comments of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, I can say that there are two very simple things that can be done so that we can move forward quickly. First, the government needs to produce the documents. Second, the Prime Minister needs to release the names.

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## 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. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak on behalf of the residents of the beautiful riding of Simcoe—Grey.

As members know, last week was a riding week, and there were couple of celebrations that I was fortunate to attend. The first was the 40th anniversary of Jan Trude's first Tim Hortons. Jan owns all the Tim Hortons's in the Collingwood catchment area. It was a great anniversary. Forty years is pretty incredible, as is what Jan does for the local community, whether it is the hospice, the hospital or the Georgian Triangle. She also donates money every year for golf tournaments and is always there with products when people need them.

The other celebration I would like to highlight quickly was for Honorary Colonel Rory MacKinnon. I am fortunate to have Canadian Forces Base Borden in my riding, and he is now the honorary colonel for 16 Wing. I went to the change of appointment ceremony and I congratulate Rory. He will do a great job and will represent the people in our armed forces very well.

If I asked someone back in my riding of Simcoe—Grey if they had heard about the Liberal scandal in which the Liberals gave hundreds of millions of dollars to friends and insiders, the one with all sorts of conflicts of interest, the one in which Liberal cronies figured the rules did not apply to them, the one that produced perks and profits for Liberals and their friends while many Canadians struggle just to put food on the table, do members think that person might be able to guess which one it was? I suspect they would ask which of the many Liberal scandals I was talking about. That is because for nine years, we have seen this behaviour time and time again. Canadians are finding it harder to get by, but for Liberals and their insider friends, the times have never been so good. Through scandals, mismanagement and insider deals, Liberal friends have enjoyed an endless buffet of Canadian tax dollars.

### *Privilege*

Maybe my constituent would have guessed I was talking about WE Charity. We all remember WE Charity. Sometimes it feels like forever ago when it comes to Liberal scandals. However, WE Charity almost got \$1 billion from the Liberals, untendered, to administer the short-lived Canada student service grant program. The Prime Minister himself stated that WE was the only possible option to administer such a program, despite the number of public service executives growing by 42% since the Liberals took power and 50,000 new bureaucrats being hired just from 2015 to 2020. Now it is more than 100,000 new hires since the Liberals took office.

Despite 50,000 new people on the public payroll, somehow only an organization that had spent almost half a million dollars to hire the Prime Minister's own mother and brother, not to mention prominently featuring the Prime Minister at events targeting youth, could handle this billion-dollar program with almost no strings attached. One can spend half a million dollars and get a billion-dollar return. Only friends of the Liberal Party would get that type of return on investment.

“What about SNC-Lavalin?” my constituent might ask. It is another classic case of Liberal corruption for our feminist Prime Minister.

Members will recall that SNC-Lavalin spent \$1.9 million to host Muammar Gaddafi's son on a visit to Canada in 2008. The RCMP were watching, and it turns out that was just small potatoes. By February 2015, the RCMP pressed charges alleging that between 2001 and 2011, SNC-Lavalin had paid \$48 million in bribes to government officials in Libya. The charges also alleged that the company defrauded Libyan organizations of \$130 million. However, luck, once again, was on SNC-Lavalin's side, because shortly after all of these charges were pressed, the Liberals came to power.

● (1540)

After 51 meetings with senior officials and \$110,000 in donations to the Liberal Party later, the Prime Minister agreed to change the Criminal Code to allow SNC-Lavalin to get away with fraud and bribery charges. Here we go again: only \$100,000 in donations to make almost \$200 million in corruption disappear. That is a great return on investment for friends of the Liberal Party.

It was not the WE Charity scandal and it was not the SNC-Lavalin scandal. What about the Aga Khan? That was one of our first reminders that the rules the rest of us follow do not apply to the Prime Minister.

*Privilege*

On December 26, 2016, while most of us were dealing with food hangovers from Christmas dinner the night before, the Prime Minister and his family hopped on his jet and headed down to Nassau, Bahamas. Then they got a lift from there in the Aga Khan's private helicopter over to his private island so they could have a bit of rest and relaxation. Conveniently enough, a few Liberal friends were also visiting. The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount and her husband, who is a childhood friend of the Prime Minister, were there, as were the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, a groomsman at the Prime Minister's wedding, and his husband.

What did this quaint New Year's getaway for a few old Liberals cost? It cost \$271,000, almost five years of salary for the average Canadian. That is not to mention the \$50 million of federal funding given to the Aga Khan Foundation, a registered lobby group, in just the previous year.

We would think that for that kind of donation, the vacation would have been for free, but I guess for the Prime Minister and the few Liberal friends who attended, it was. Imagine spending 50 million tax dollars for the invite and another 271,000 tax dollars for a vacation that regular Canadians can barely ever dream of. It is another great return on investment for the Liberals who were lucky enough to get the invite.

Incredibly, though, the present scandal we are talking about is not WE Charity, SNC-Lavalin or the Aga Khan's private island getaway. My constituents may guess it must be the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation scandal. That one almost slipped my mind. There seem to be so many that it is hard to keep track. Let us recall it.

In 2015, if a billionaire and adviser to the government of the Prime Minister's favourite basic dictatorship were asked to get in the good books of the Liberal Party, what would they do? They know the Prime Minister's father had an admiration for Communist dictators like Fidel Castro and Mao, and they know there is a foundation named after the former prime minister that is actively seeking donations, since the previous Liberal government gave it a generous \$125-million endowment. They also know that the foundation is stacked with Liberal cronies and regularly meets in the Prime Minister's Office. Conveniently enough, they know that the Chinese Business Chamber of Canada is hosting a posh fundraiser in Toronto, where they might be able to get some face time with the Prime Minister and his brother. What would they do? They would hop on a jet from Beijing to Toronto and commit to dropping \$1 million in exchange for future considerations. That means \$200,000 for the foundation, \$750,000 to Pierre Trudeau's favourite alma mater and \$50,000 on a statue of the elder Trudeau himself.

CSIS says that China interfered in the 2019 and 2021 elections, both taking place after the donation was made. It could be a coincidence, but what if it was not? Taking \$1 million in donations to help sway two elections in one's favour seems like a good return on investment that I think even the Liberals would be truly impressed with.

• (1545)

Amazingly, though, this is not even the scandal we are here to talk about today. Nor is it about former Liberal MP Frank Baylis, whose consortium got \$237 million to build ventilators that may or

may not have been delivered. Nor is it about GC Strategies, which the Auditor General has announced she is investigating for more than \$100 million in often sole-source contracts it received from the Liberal government. Members may remember that for the arrive scam app alone, GC Strategies pocketed \$20 million, and that was for no work. That was for an app that was supposed to cost only \$80,000. It is certainly nice work for those who can get it.

Today, I am here to talk about what may be the dooziest of all Liberal scandals, which is saying something. I am here to talk about Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Maybe members know it better by its unofficial name, the Liberal billion-dollar green slush fund. They may have heard something about the green slush fund recently, but in case they have not, let me provide a bit of background.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada is a federally funded not-for-profit that approved and disbursed over \$100 million in funds annually to clean technology companies. It was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada through the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act. It supported projects that develop and demonstrate new technologies that address issues related to climate change, air quality, clean water and clean soil. It was an arm's-length organization from the government.

By all accounts, SDTC was doing good work for its first few years under its Stephen Harper-appointed chair, the Canadian technology leader Jim Balsillie. However, in 2018, former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains had concerns regarding Mr. Balsillie's public criticism of the Liberals' privacy legislation. Those concerns continue to be shared by many Canadians and many in the House.

Now we know that the Liberals do not tolerate dissenting opinions, so Bains manoeuvred to put Annette Verschuren in as CEO, even though she was already receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies and in an immediate conflict of interest. In fact, the minister, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council were warned of what risks would be associated with appointing somebody who was already in a conflict. They were told that the fund had never had a chair with interest in companies receiving funding from SDTC. Bains appointed her anyway. He also appointed two other very controversial board members who went on to engage in unethical behaviour in breach of the Conflict of Interest Act by approving funding to companies in which they held ownership stakes.

It is said that the new chair and board members began to oversee an environment where conflicts of interest were tolerated and managed, not avoided, as they be. Board members regularly awarded SDTC funding to companies in which they themselves either held stocks or positions. It really was corruption on a staggering level.

By January 2021, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry was appointed after Navdeep Bains declined to run for re-election. In November 2022, whistle-blowers raised internal concerns with the Auditor General about unethical practices at SDTC. The Privy Council was briefed by these whistle-blowers about the allegations shortly thereafter and commissioned two independent reports. In September 2023, the whistle-blowers took the allegations public and the industry minister finally agreed to suspend SDTC funding.

- (1550)

This was followed shortly thereafter in November 2023 by an audit of SDTC by the Auditor General. Fast-forward to June 2024, and the Auditor General's report was released. It claimed severe governance failures at SDTC. Just what did the Auditor General's report find? Are members ready for this? It found that SDTC gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that did not even produce green technology or contribute to emission reductions and \$334 million, over 186 cases, to projects for which board members held a direct conflict of interest. There were 186 cases, and no one flagged that there were that many conflicts of interest. It is unbelievable.

SDTC gave \$58 million to projects without ensuring that contribution agreement terms were even met at all. The Auditor General also made it clear that the blame for the scandal falls on the industry minister who "did not sufficiently...monitor" the contracts that were given to Liberal insiders. I am wondering if perhaps the industry minister was maybe too busy organizing his own leadership campaign to keep an eye on the money or the department that he was giving money to. That is certainly not very responsible.

Let us dig a little deeper. There is the Minister of the Environment, who, after being arrested by Toronto police but before joining the Liberal cabinet, served as a strategic adviser for a venture capital firm called Cycle Capital from 2009 to 2018. The founder and owner of Cycle Capital, Andr ee-Lise M ethot, sat on the board of the green slush fund. While she was on the board, she helped give \$114 million to companies that she herself had invested in. Thanks to her strategic voting and the hard work of her strategic adviser, who had 25 meetings with the Prime Minister's Office and

### *Privilege*

the industry department, the value of Cycle Capital strangely tripled.

When she finally left SDTC in 2022, M ethot was awarded for her great work and went on to join the Canada Infrastructure Bank's board, another Liberal debacle. While there, she helped get \$170 million of infrastructure bank money for a company owned by the chair of the green slush fund, the aforementioned Annette Verschuren. We really cannot make this stuff up. We could make a movie about all this corruption. I should add that, according to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Minister of the Environment still has a passive interest in Cycle Capital. We do not know how much he owns, but we do know, whatever he does own, the company tripled. That is a really good Liberal return on investment, if members ask me.

Not to be outdone, green slush fund board member Guy Ouimet admitted in committee that \$17 million of green slush money went to companies he himself had a financial interest in. He said that this is a small amount of money. It might be for Guy, but for the residents in my riding, that is a lot of money.

How about those who are actively being punished by the government, which is desperate to raise revenue to pay for all of this corruption? These are people like Katie, a farmer in my riding, whose family also runs a grain drying and storage operation used by other local grain growers. She got a hold of me this week, actually. Her family, so far, has paid a total of \$151,781.02 in carbon tax, plus \$19,731.53 in HST, for a total of \$171,512.55. The Liberals like to say that most Canadians get back more than they pay in carbon tax. If that is the case, Katie is still waiting for her \$200,000 cheque.

That is what angers people about these scandals. In just this speech today, I have highlighted over two billion dollars' worth of Liberal corruption and mismanagement. Those are tax dollars for hard-working Canadians. We need to find where this money went. People deserve answers and need to be held accountable. That is why, on June 10, we asked for the production of various documents related to SDTC—

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• (1555)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member's time is up.

We will move on to questions and comments with the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that we are here because the Conservatives moved a motion that would send this issue to a standing committee. Instead of allowing that to be voted upon, now they are filibustering, believing we should just release all the information unredacted to the RCMP directly. The RCMP commissioner said, on that issue, "There is significant risk that the Motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections."

Conservatives want us to listen to the Conservative Party over the RCMP. I say no, that would be a stupid thing to do. This is not the first time. We then have another issue that has come up. An article from iPolitics reads:

Wesley Wark, who has advised both Liberal and Conservative governments on national security issues, said the Tory leader is knowingly misleading the public by claiming he doesn't need the clearance because his chief of staff has received briefings.

"[The leader]'s idea that it's sufficient for his chief of staff to be briefed for him and for his chief of staff to share that information with him is complete nonsense," Wark told iPolitics.

Why does the Conservative leader not respect what the RCMP is saying about today and the security clearance issue?

• (1600)

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, I just want to begin by saying that this is my first time speaking to the motion. The residents of Simcoe—Grey want to hear from me. To me, this is not a filibuster. I would actually almost want an apology for him thinking that that is what I am trying to do here.

I would like to add, quite frankly, that it is quite simple if he would like to move along. The only people who are holding this up are from the Liberal Party. All the Liberals need to do is produce the documents. That is what we have been asking for. We are not the only people asking for it. It is not only the opposition asking for it. Obviously, there is something to hide. Show us the documents.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives talk a lot about Liberal corruption, but there was also a lot of corruption when they were in office. There is an old saying that "opportunity makes the thief". Often, corruption occurs because the system allows that to happen.

I would like to know what the Conservatives are committed to doing to eliminate corruption.

[*English*]

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is important. I think it starts from the top. If we had a government that was looking out for the dollars of Canadians and understood how hard it is to make a dollar, it would probably make sure that mes-

sage would get to the individuals who are involved in these offshoot companies.

No one from the government spoke after there were 186 conflicts of interest. We might see one, two or perhaps three. I come from a municipal background. I just cannot imagine 186 conflicts of interest and nobody speaking up. The 186 conflicts would not have taken place in a day, so this was a process. Quite frankly, it starts with the top leadership, and that is why I am very proud to be supporting our leader.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, workers in Alberta are uniting. They are uniting against low wages. They are uniting against a provincial government that is dead set on destroying the ability of workers to bargain collectively. On top of all this, there is a solution. Workers right across the province right now, today, are gathering at the Alberta legislature to demand justice for workers in the face of an affordability crisis. These workers are so important and so critical to our movement of making sure we have an affordable economy and good union jobs. These people are uniting right now in Alberta in the face of the evil backstepping on rights that is taking place in Alberta.

Does my hon. colleague support workers and their ability to collectively bargain in the face of an affordability crisis, largely brought on by the lack of initiative and the lack of support by the government?

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, first of all, in the House today we are talking about documents. I do not know if the member saw we are talking about the documents, so I am looking for questions about the documents. A lot of the questions we seem to be getting from the NDP are provincial ones, so I do not know if the members would like to perhaps run as MLAs. That might be a good idea so they could get those ideas out.

However, I want to work for the people in Simcoe—Grey here today, and what I want to do is get those documents released. Let us move on. Let us get the House going. All the government needs to do is show us the documents.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I was very intrigued by my friend and learned colleague's long list of corruption scandals he indicated had happened over the last nine years.

I know him to be a strong local representative for the people of Simcoe—Grey. I am curious to know if he can tell the House what he has been hearing from his constituents in Simcoe—Grey over the last number of weeks about the challenges they are facing as a result of nine years of the Liberal government.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, I go to many events, and the frustration is terrible. People are hurting financially and emotionally. What is going on in this country is shocking to people. It is unfortunate that people have a bad view of politicians. What has happened after nine years of the Liberal government is that people's perception and mistrust are at an unbelievable level. It is like never before.



They tell me, quite frankly, that they want to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. They want a carbon tax election, and I can say that the good people of Simcoe—Grey will hopefully get their wish.

• (1605)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am wondering if my hon. colleague would say yes if the government were to say, “Here are all of the documents that have been asked for. Let us send them to PROC and let PROC dive into the details” because I understand that was the original motion from the Conservative Party.

Would that be acceptable to the Conservatives, given that it was their original motion?

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, the idea behind what we are debating is that we want the documents to go to the RCMP. That is what the majority of the House has stated. It is a shame that is not what is happening. Obviously, there is some contempt of the House, and I think some real soul-searching should be done to see why the Liberals would not release those documents to the RCMP.

It is an outside force. Let it deal with the documents. There is something wrong.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the importance of trust. I want to talk about the importance of our role as MPs. Our role is to ensure that what happens in government and in the machinery of government is fair, equitable, proper and ethical. The role of a committee is to assess how things are done and make sure they are done right. Its role is to offer suggestions for modifications and changes, so that processes are better applied.

In this case, what is the point of the Liberals holding on to information instead of working with all parliamentarians to improve processes? Does my esteemed colleague have an idea to explain their interest in withholding information?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Madam Speaker, I do not know why the Liberals would not want to be open and transparent and let this go to the RCMP. It is not like we are sending documents to one of our parties. We would be taking them to an outside authority. If there is nothing to hide, why would the government not want to do it?

This whole issue and delay is because of that one simple process. I have faith in our committees when we are there studying it, but that is not what we are debating here today and it is not what the House wanted to do. It is the same thing as the Winnipeg lab.

The House has spoken. Let us respect democracy and do the right thing.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame has the floor. I can tell the hon. member he does not need his own timer. I am going to do it very well.

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I figured you would just let me go on and on. I have ensured no harm can be done with that thing. If it rings,

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you can toss me, as you should have done with many members who have been out of line here today, especially on that side of the House.

It is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the great people of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame to speak on this privilege motion on the failure to produce documents pertaining to funds delivered inappropriately by Sustainable Development Technology Canada. This is just another reason Canadians have lost faith in the corrupt NDP-Liberal government. It is one of the reasons 24 of the very people connected to this Liberal slush fund have decided to sign a letter asking the Prime Minister to quit, which is what 40% plus of Canadians want him to do.

The government has become so corrupt that the business of the House has ground to a halt. This is the place where we represent the people who elected us and work on issues that are important to them, but no, the work has stopped. We have to debate this question of privilege until the corrupt entity across the way decides it has had enough and produces those documents, which the Chair of this House has demanded that it do.

There is quite a simple remedy. On June 10, a motion was adopted calling for the production of documents related to SDTC to the law clerk. What happened over the summer? Very little. The documents were either redacted on the order of the corrupt Prime Minister or simply not produced at all. The common-sense Conservative House leader raised a question of privilege because of the failure to comply with the order of this House.

On September 26, the Chair ruled that this House privilege had in fact been breached, so here we are debating and begging for accountability, once again, from the corrupt government that Canadians have had enough of. It is just another attempt to cover up Liberal corruption.

One might ask what is so corrupt about the green slush fund. The Auditor General sampled a five-year period of SDTC transactions and found that 82% were in conflict. Is anyone shocked? I doubt it. Twenty-four MPs just signed a document and presented it in caucus to the Prime Minister, demanding that he step down. They are demanding that he leave because his corruption and his cronies are taking away their chance of re-election, taking away their chance to sit in this place representing the people they love.

What does 82% of these SDTC transactions look like? It looks like \$330 million that was found to have been granted to Liberal insiders in conflicts of interest. It was found by investigating only 226 of the 405 transactions approved by the board over that five-year period, so no doubt it is just the tip of the iceberg.

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• (1610)

The board was headed by a close friend of the Prime Minister, Andrée-Lise Méthot, appointed in 2016. That chair received \$250 million for her very own venture capital firm, Cycle Capital, in the form of grants from the board that she became chair of. We cannot make this up. Before Méthot joined the board, a radical jumpsuit environmentalist lobbied for her, before he became the radical Minister of Environment. He lobbied his crooked pals and the Prime Minister, and secured \$111 million for her. Over Méthot's time on that board, a further \$114 million went to so-called green companies she was invested in.

All together, so far, it is looking like around \$390 million was dished out to Liberal insiders through just this one crooked slush fund. I will speak about another slush fund a little further along. This one is called the green one, and I will refer to the other one as the blue slush fund.

Let us get a little context here. The Chrétien sponsorship scandal was all over \$42 million of taxpayer money that went to further the Liberal Party's cause at the time. That pales in comparison to the nearly \$400 million represented in the green slush fund cover-up scandal.

Scandals are nothing new. We can look at the WE Charity. The Liberal government blew nearly \$1 billion of taxpayers' money and passed it on to Liberal friends. This is nothing new. It is a continuation of a trend: SNC-Lavalin, the Aga Khan, the arrive scam, and it goes on and on. If the NDP-Liberal government is not removed from this place, it will continue.

This privilege debate over the green slush fund could come to an end very quickly. All the Prime Minister has to do is follow the orders of the Chair, produce the documents, unredacted, and the privilege debate would come to an end. It would be all over. We could get back to the business of the House, working on trying to fix the country. It is impossible to get through to the people who sit across the way and to the crooked Prime Minister. However, it is not just him.

There is something I am going to refer to as the blue slush fund, known to others as small craft harbours. It is going to be a real shocker. Would anyone be surprised to know that one member of the House, who just so happens to be the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, who administers the small craft harbours program, delivered 20% of the projects in this program to her very own riding this year?

• (1615)

Really, does that add up? There are 338 members in this House and one of them gets 20% of the small craft harbours budget for her own riding, and signs off on it herself. We have East Pubnico and West Pubnico, two harbours where the landed value of the catch is higher than the entire Pacific catch in the commercial fisheries, and they did not get a nickel. Vessels are four abreast and wharves are condemned and falling apart. The fish harvesters cannot even receive fuel shipments because the wharves are not safe enough for the fuel trucks to pass over. There are hazards to anyone who uses those wharves. They could fall through broken planks or whatnot. Ladders are missing.

What is happening is unbelievable. There are a whole bunch of ridings in Atlantic Canada where a disproportionate amount of catch is being landed compared with the funding they receive from small craft harbours, while the minister uses the program as her very own slush fund.

A few other things do not add up. I am not sure if members are aware that the oyster industry in P.E.I. is in great peril. In mid-July, it was discovered that the MSX parasite had been detected in three areas of P.E.I. By mid-August, the minister declared she is going to invest \$500,000 a year in the P.E.I. oyster industry and have a summit this fall with industry experts to try to figure out what is going on. There have been no talks at a summit so far, but \$500,000 this year and \$500,000 next year have been committed to try to save an industry that means about \$100 million to that small island economy.

A report that came out a couple of weeks ago from the CFIA says it thinks MSX has spread all over P.E.I. Everywhere that virus has shown up, it has completely decimated oyster populations. If the oyster industry gets wiped out, it will take a minimum of three generations, or nine years, to start to rebuild. Those in the oyster industry in Prince Edward Island reached out and asked me to go to P.E.I. to see them. They said they had to explain it. I went to P.E.I. in August to meet with the stakeholders in the oyster industry and hear their pleas. All these pleas were being made to save a \$100-million industry, and the minister offered \$500,000.

At the same time, the Atlantic healthy oceans initiative, or the AHOI group, an outfit that has five employees and three board members, one of whom works for two Liberal senators, received \$1.8 million in grants. When I questioned the minister yesterday in the fisheries committee, she had no idea who they were, and neither did her deputies. No one knew who they were, but everyone knows of the oyster industry in Prince Edward Island and how much it means to the economy, cultural fabric and even the tourism industry in the province.

• (1620)

Everyone has heard of the Malpeque oyster, which, in 1905, was named the number one oyster in the world in a Paris competition. This is very serious. There was \$500,000 for a \$100-million industry, including spinoffs, and \$1.8 million for an ENGO that has five employees. It just does not make sense. Where are the Liberals' priorities?

It is no surprise that Canadians are disgusted with the priorities of the government. It is no surprise that 24 backbenchers signed their names to have the Prime Minister take a walk. Canadians have suffered long enough. They have suffered through a record cost of living rise and record food bank usage. Most of this is driven by the carbon tax.

If the Liberal-NDP government stays in power long enough, and if common-sense Conservatives do not come to the rescue, Canadians are going to be paying 61¢ a litre for gasoline, for diesel and for any kind of energy that is petroleum-based that moves goods around the country.

Crime is out of control, both metro and rural. This country is broken. I stood in this House not long ago and I spoke about rural crime in my riding, which the media downplayed and said I was exaggerating. The RCMP also said that I was exaggerating and that it was not aware of a crime issue like what I laid out in this place.

However, people are living in fear. Our senior citizens have to sleep with a baseball bat or a gun next to their bed. The people who built this country, paid taxes, worked hard and raised families have now retired and are not able to sleep at night. They are afraid their homes are going to be broken into and robbed by someone who needs to feed a crack or a meth addiction. It has gone too far.

Canadians want an election. This country needs to heal. It needs to mend. It needs to go back to where it was before everything was broken. We are not going to deal with any of those things while we have to stand here day after day and debate this privilege motion. The Prime Minister is using it to deflect while he tries to get his infighting under control.

As long as we are debating this motion, we are not finding new ways in which the country has been broken and we are not putting forward the confidence motions that the people who sent us here dearly want. It is time to give the people what they want. They want an election. It is time for this debate to be over. It is time for the Prime Minister to produce the papers that he was told to produce.

• (1625)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Atlantic for his discussion this afternoon. He certainly took us on a journey and covered a lot of different topics. I am going to use that same latitude and take this opportunity to highlight a very important and exciting event that happened in the Atlantic.

On October 21, New Brunswick elected its very first female premier. We are so excited. As an advocate for women's rights, for trans and queer youth, for health care reform, for positive and meaningful engagement with indigenous communities, and moving forward on reconciliation, I am so proud of Premier-elect Holt. I invite my colleague, and everyone in this House, to share that congratulations.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, if the provincial election had been a little bit later on, like a little while down the road after the next federal election, maybe she would have been able to run

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provincially and pick up a seat down there, so I do not know. It is hard for me to say.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, for once, I agree with a Conservative MP. At the end of his speech, my colleague said that it is high time for this debate to end. I could not agree more.

Moreover, having listened to him make his speech, I am now convinced that they have been told to read their speeches slowly so that we all fall sleep in the House. I am absolutely convinced of that.

Since they will not let us do our job as an opposition party—which would be to ask questions of the government—we have been racking our brains for the past three weeks trying to come up with questions.

I have an excellent question for him, which has nothing to do with the debate. Does he think that Quebec's desire for independence is legitimate, yes or no?

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I know that he said I read my speech. I read some of it, and I tried to go as slow as I could. Of course, being from Newfoundland and Labrador, if I went really fast, nobody would understand what I was saying, the interpreters might not be able to keep up and then my good friend from la belle province would not be able to get the true interpretation of my words.

However, I appreciate his enthusiasm for his cause, and I congratulate him on being able to hang on to all the royalties that are coming in from oil-producing provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador in the way of transfer funds.

If I had a chance to ask him a question back, I would ask how his province would survive without all those transfers. If they left Canada, they would not have access to Newfoundland's oil—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We really are straying off subject.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith has the floor.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, first I just want to say that I do genuinely enjoy my time sitting on the fisheries committee with my colleague.

I have noticed the Conservatives and the Liberals pointing fingers at one another. I have heard the Conservatives talk over and over about the Liberal insiders, and one thing that I would love to be able to get some insights from the member about is the fact that we know that SDTC's Annette Verschuren was donating tens of thousands of dollars to both the Conservatives and the Liberal government. I also believe that she was an adviser to Harper, but correct me if I am wrong on that, and Brian Mulroney, I am being told.

Although I want to get to the bottom of this, I want to understand what the facts are here. As such, my question to the member is this: Why are the Conservatives not taking accountability for their part in this inside work that is happening here?

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**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate working with my colleague on the fisheries committee.

I think she should be with us over here, though. Because she has such strong Conservative values, I do not think she is in the right place

However, the lady that she mentioned was hand-picked by the Prime Minister against his adviser's wishes. He was told she was in a conflict. He knew she was in a conflict, and because corruption does not faze him at all, he went ahead and appointed her anyway.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my friend from Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame has entertained the House as he always does with a very thoughtful and entertaining speech, and maybe I could also help our friend, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The member questioned why we just do not let this go to committee, and I would argue that the filibuster is a filibuster by the Liberal government, which is filibustering against releasing the documents the House ordered. I would ask the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame whether he thinks that this delay by the government of releasing documents that are not covered up and are not edited is because it is hiding something.

• (1635)

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my mentor, my guru, the MP for South Shore—St. Margarets for working so diligently on this file, for the people of South Shore—St. Margarets, who cannot get a nickel from the blue slush fund, known as small craft harbours.

I would like to thank my colleague for his hard work, for what he has highlighted in this scandal, and how bad and just how deep this scandal runs, this green slush fund. My colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets knows exactly what Liberals are covering up, what everyone on this side knows that they are covering up. The cover-up needs to end, and we need a carbon tax election now.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the answer the member gave to my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. My colleague asked whether he agreed with the legitimacy of Quebec's independence. The member across the way said he was worried about what we would do without oil from Labrador.

Is he telling us that he agrees that Labrador should never have been taken from Quebec and that Quebec is entitled to it?

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I am here in the House of Commons of Canada. This is the Parliament of Canada. I am here to represent Newfoundland and Labrador in the House of Commons. Our members down to the left, my very good friends, the Bloc Québécois, are here to represent the ridings that elected them to Parliament. Why would we come to a place to advocate not to come back here again? Does that make sense? I cannot answer that. Of course I am not for Quebec independence. I challenge them to go out and campaign on that, and they will see where they are. We will take all that row of seats down there as well.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member can just expand in regard to the issue of the filibuster. I think it is important that what is being asked is for this report to go to the procedure and House affairs committee. That is what the Speaker's ruling is. The Conservatives, on the other hand, continue to not only filibuster the main motion but also the amendment, and the amendment to the amendment. They are the ones who are actually filibustering and they are trying to get the Liberal government to say no to the RCMP, the Auditor General of Canada and the former law clerk when it comes to directly collecting documents and handing them directly to the RCMP.

That is wrong yet the Conservatives believe it is right. Can the member indicate why they are filibustering?

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, the Chair ruled that there has been a breach in the House. That member should convince his costly coalition Prime Minister to produce the documents. This—

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Electoral Reform; the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, Emergency Preparedness; the member for Langley—Aldergrove, Carbon Pricing.

• (1640)

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Madam Speaker, at a time when Canadians are struggling to put food on their table; when the dream of home ownership in Canada is just that, a dream for many young Canadians; and when our country is plagued by so many other serious challenges brought upon us by the failed policies of the incompetent and reckless government, we are here this afternoon continuing debate on the government's failure to live up to its responsibilities in your order to produce important documents pertaining to the Sustainable Development Technology Canada green slush fund scandal.

SDTC was established by the Government of Canada in 2001. As a federally funded foundation, it was responsible for the approval and disbursement of over \$100 million annually in taxpayer funds to help Canadian companies develop and deploy sustainable technologies. For many years, SDTC operated responsibly and earned a generally good reputation for its work. However, that all changed in 2019, when former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains appointed Annette Verschuren as chair of SDTC.

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The issue at hand was conflict of interest. Verschuren was an entrepreneur who was already receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies, but then she was appointed by the Liberal government to hold responsibilities overseeing the very same funds her company was receiving. That fact alone should have sounded alarm bells and set off red flashing lights to alert everyone in the government to the obvious conflict of interest at hand.

In fact, it was no secret. The minister, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office all knew and were warned of the risks associated with appointing a conflicted chair. However, the warnings all fell on deaf ears and indifference, as Verschuren was appointed by the Liberal minister anyway. How can we tell that a government has lost its moral compass? It is when it makes poor decisions like this one without concern for doing the right thing and without fear of consequences.

Only two years later, Minister Bains announced in January 2021 that he had decided to step away from politics and not run again in the upcoming federal election. That same year, SDTC entered into a five-year, \$1-billion agreement with the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Fast-forward to Fall 2024, and it is clear that the Liberals are trying desperately to run away and wash their hands of this mess, which they laid the foundation for through their own actions, especially after the Auditor General released a scathing report about SDTC in June 2024. The AG found massive issues at SDTC, which resulted in the current Minister of Industry, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, abolishing the SDTC and immediately transferring its funds to the National Research Council Canada. These are truly astonishing developments in just three years for something the Liberal government does not want to talk about anymore.

What did the AG find that was so bad as to cause all this carnage? In June 2024, she found that SDTC had demonstrated “significant lapses in governance and stewardship of public funds”. Nearly 20% of the SDTC projects examined by the AG were in fact ineligible, based on the government's own rules for funding, for a total price tag of \$59 million. There were also 90 instances when the SDTC ignored conflict of interest provisions while awarding \$76 million to various projects. The AG found 63 cases where the SDTC directors voted in favour of payment to companies in which they had declared conflicts.

The AG report concluded, “Not managing conflicts of interest—whether real, perceived, or potential—increases the risk that an individual's duty to act in the best interests of the foundation is affected, particularly when making decisions to award funding.” It also blamed the government's Minister of Industry, whose ministry or department did not sufficiently monitor the contribution agreements with SDTC.

• (1645)

Believe it or not, it gets far worse. Since June, the Auditor General has found that directors had awarded funding to projects that were ineligible and where conflicts of interest existed. She found that over \$300 million in taxpayers' money was paid out in over 180 cases where there were potential conflicts of interests, where

Liberal-appointed directors funnelled money to companies they owned.

Time after time, the Liberal government and its Prime Minister have shown total contempt for Canada's ethic laws. In fact the Prime Minister himself has been found the subject of three ethics investigations and has been found guilty of breaking ethics laws twice. The Liberal government allows the culture of law-breaking to persist, as six Liberals have been found guilty of breaking ethics laws. The Liberals have gone through ethical scandals before; that is why they are withholding the documents, breaching parliamentary privilege and trying desperately to sweep the mess under the rug and move on to the next thing.

However, the common-sense Conservatives are not going to let the Liberals get away with it. We are holding the corrupt Liberal government to account. It will be held responsible for its carelessness, recklessness and, indeed, corruption. That is why on June 10 the House of Commons adopted the following motion proposed by common-sense Conservatives on this important matter:

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 14 days of the adoption of this order, the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control...

The motion then detailed what documents were to be supplied, and then directed that “the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police”.

The common-sense Conservative motion passed with the support of the New Democrats, the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois. Only the Liberals opposed it. To be clear, nothing in the motion orders the RCMP to conduct an investigation. The House is simply asking that the documents be turned over to the RCMP.

Fourteen days came and went, and instead of complying with the adopted motion, federal departments outright refused the House order or provided heavily redacted documents, citing provisions in the Privacy Act or the Access to Information Act. This is not a good look.

Further, nothing in the House order contemplated redactions to documents being made by the government. That is because the House of Commons enjoys the absolute and unfettered power to order the production of documents. That is not limited by statute; the powers are rooted in the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

### *Privilege*

In response to the Liberal government's failure to produce the documents, the Conservative House leader rightly raised a question of privilege, arguing that a House privilege had been breached due to the failure to comply with the House order. On September 26, you issued a ruling on the question of privilege raised, and you found that the privileges of the House had in fact been breached. Today, nearly a month later, we continue our important debate on the matter and continue our demands for the Liberal government to provide the RCMP with the unredacted SDTC documents.

You have ruled that the government has violated a House order to turn over evidence to the RCMP in the latest Liberal scandal, the \$400-million green slush fund scandal. The Liberal government's refusal to respect your ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all other work to address issues such as the cruel and crippling carbon tax, the cost of living crisis Canadians face for food and shelter, and the increasing crime, disorder and chaos in our streets, our communities and cities. This is happening at a time when the cost of food, fuel and shelter are all up and millions of Canadians are having to line up outside food banks just to survive. Sadly, as Canadians continue to struggle, life for well-connected Liberal insiders has never been so good.

One of the drivers of this hardship is the cruel NDP-Liberal carbon tax. In fact the carbon tax will cost the average Ontarian \$903 this year. This is completely unacceptable to the constituents in my communities of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, who work hard for their money, who save carefully for their future and who dream of a better tomorrow. Instead of doing anything about climate change, the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is impoverishing Canadians.

• (1650)

Recently the PBO confirmed that Canadians will suffer a net cost, paying more in the carbon tax than they will ever get back in rebates. Unfortunately the NDP-Liberal government does not care. Instead of giving Canadians the tax relief they deserve, the government hiked the carbon tax by 23% last year as part of its plan to actually quadruple the carbon tax by 2030.

It turns out that the carbon tax is not a tool to fight climate change like the Prime Minister argues; it is just another tax grab. Canadians can add it to the long list of growing NDP-Liberal taxes they already pay, including income tax, sales tax, excise tax, under-utilized housing tax, property tax, capital gains tax and more. After listing all those taxes, it is easy to see why Canadians are getting poor. It is because the government is taking more of their hard-earned money away.

The STDC scandal is also happening at a time when costs are up for food. In fact food will cost families \$700 more this year than it did in 2023. That is because when the government taxes the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who ships the food and the store that stocks, stores and sells the food, it ends up taxing the family that buys the food. As Sylvain Charlebois, the "food professor" and director of Dalhousie University Agri-Food Analytics Labs, has said, the costly NDP-Liberal "carbon tax likely adds a significant cost burden to the Canadian food industry".

Canadians are going hungry. That is evident by the massive surge in demand and need at food banks. Food bank usage has increased

every year the NDP-Liberal government has been in office, because its inflationary spending and punishing carbon tax have hiked up the price of groceries, causing Canadians to skip meals, eat less healthy food and rely on food banks to survive.

This was confirmed recently by Feed Ontario, which revealed that a record one million people visited a food bank in Ontario in 2024. That is a dramatic increase of 25% from the previous year. In fact Feed Ontario's CEO told media that she never thought she would see this day. She has been with the organization 15 years and never thought it would see this level of demand. She cannot believe it has reached a point where numbers are so drastically high.

Food Banks Canada reported earlier this year that it had seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021, with food banks handling a record two million visits in a single month in 2023. Of the people visiting food banks in Ontario, one in three visitors is a child. Only one in six adults visiting food banks is unemployed; the NDP-Liberal government's cost of living crisis has become so severe that even working Canadians are having to depend on food banks to get by.

The numbers reflect what is happening across Niagara too. Let us try to wrap our heads around the following statistics from Project Share, which serves vulnerable residents in Niagara Falls. Last year Project Share saw a 20% increase in people served, compared to the previous year, and 4,740 people accessed its services for the first time. On average, 120 families per day accessed its essential support services. In total, 13,995 people were served last year, which equates to one in seven residents in Niagara Falls having accessed its essential support services just last year.

We should be debating these issues, and we could if the government simply abided by the Speaker's ruling and provided the documents the House has requested. Why are the Liberals so hesitant to do what is right? Is it that they do not want to speak to the situation facing young Canadians and first-time homebuyers, which is so bad that the Canadian dream of home ownership is dying? Two-thirds of young people believe they will never be able to afford a home. Canadians see the housing crisis most tragically in our streets, where there are now 1,800 homeless encampments across Ontario and thousands more across the country.

• (1655)

Time after time, the NDP-Liberal government has promised to fix the housing crisis, but the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been clear that the number of new homes being built is not enough to reduce the existing supply gap and improve affordability for Canadians.

Crime is also getting worse under the watch of the NDP-Liberal government. Again, perhaps that is why they refuse to hand over these documents: so we cannot debate these issues, which are so important to all of our constituents. Since 2015, when the Liberals formed government, the number of auto thefts has skyrocketed by 45%, violent crime has increased by 50% and hate crimes have increased by 251%. In addition, just recently, the Toronto Police Association had to come out publicly and fact-check the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister attempted to brag about banning firearms for law-abiding firearms owners while continuing to ignore the crime wave he has unleashed across the country, the Toronto Police Association reminded him that, in just the last year, shootings have gone up 45% and gun-related homicides have gone up 62% in Toronto.

The reality is that the Liberals' soft-on-crime approach is making life easier for violent criminals by repealing mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes with Bill C-5 and making it easier to get bail with Bill C-75. Meanwhile, it is failing to stop the flow of illegal guns across the U.S. border. The issues I noted are all pressing, and parliamentarians should be debating them. However, the House of Commons has seized because the government is refusing to comply with the House order to hand over SDTC documents to the RCMP.

Canadians are suffering great hardship after nine years of the NDP-Liberal coalition. The country is headed in the wrong direction, and we are all worse off than we were about 10 years ago. The Speaker ruled that the government has violated a House order to turn over evidence to the RCMP about the latest Liberal scandal, the \$400-million green slush fund. The Liberal government's refusal to respect the Speaker's ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all other debate. It is time for the Liberals to end their corrupt cover-up and provide the ordered documents to the police so that Parliament can get back to work and Canadians can have the accountability they so rightly deserve.

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just need to see if history has been revised a little bit by my hon. colleague. My understanding is that the original motion called for the documents to be provided to a standing committee. In fact, the Speaker had questioned the wisdom of providing documents to the RCMP, which said it probably could not use them. The RCMP had the documents it needed, and it was able to go after more documents if it saw fit.

I would ask the hon. member just to go back in history and recount the original motion and where those documents were really supposed to go.

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, in fact, I quoted the actual motion in my remarks. It indicated that the Auditor General of Canada and SDTC were “each to deposit with the Law Clerk...documents”. The motion also stated that “the Law Clerk and Parlia-

### *Privilege*

mentary Counsel shall provide forthwith any documents received by him, pursuant to this order, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.”

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is Small Business Week. I just want to take the opportunity to thank the small businesses in Port Moody—Coquitlam, as well as home businesses in Anmore and Belcarra, and to recognize a couple of our key community and business groups. We have Austin Heights BIA, Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce, the Koreatown association and the Iranian professional network. They are all so important to our community. I thank them so much for everything they do.

My question for the member relates to these small businesses: Why is it that Conservatives and Liberals continue to award contracts to the largest corporations, to the largest companies, while they ignore the small business owners with brick and mortar businesses in the community?

• (1700)

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate all the small business owners and operators in my community, in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. As the member probably knows, we are a tourism community. Those tourism businesses employ over 40,000 workers. Prior to COVID, our community generated \$2.4 billion in tourism receipts, and those 40,000 employees depend on international and domestic visitors to come to our community. A lot of local business owners currently benefit from our tourism economy, and our hope is to grow that. We should be talking about that. We should be talking about how we go about growing our tourism sector, as well as all our economic sectors, but we are precluded from doing that because the Liberal government does not want to produce those documents. Why is that?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, apart from the unredacted documents that we requested for analysis, the situation we are currently facing stems from the fact that the government delegated some of its management authority to a fund that hands out money. Everything worked well for a while, but things seem to have broken down during the pandemic, with everything everyone was going through. Authorities were delegated, but it seems that the need for audits was overlooked.

My question is this. When authority is delegated, is it relinquished entirely, or is it still necessary to conduct audits? Is the approach that needs to change instead?

*Privilege**[English]*

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, delegating power does not delegate one's overall responsibility to ensure that these foundations, these agencies, operate to the mandate they were given. In fact, at the time of the appointment of Ms. Verschuren, the CEO indicated to the government that there was a conflict of interest and that it should not proceed with this appointment. The government knew about it. The Privy Council advised the government of the fact, yet it decided to proceed anyway, and we can see what happened. Ultimately, no one is to blame but the Liberal government.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion in the debate on this privilege motion about the ruling of the Speaker and the motion going to the procedure committee. Why do we not just let it go there and let the committee determine whether there was a procedure breach? We heard the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader say this many times. In fact, I do not think he or the government understands what the motion says. The motion does not say to refer it to the committee to determine a breach; the Speaker already determined that. The motion is about going to the committee to determine what to do about the government's failure to abide by the motion passed by the House and the reluctance to do that.

Could the member tell me why he thinks the Liberals are trying to divert the purpose of the motion and why they would have an interpretation that is actually different from what the motion would do?

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, ultimately, it is about what the Liberals have been doing in the House all along. It is all about disinformation. It is about changing the channel with regard to what has happened here. It is about getting this off our television screens and out of the media. I can promise the ladies and gentlemen here, and my constituents at home, that the people on this side of the House are going to keep raising the issue of the \$400-million green slush fund. Can we imagine what that \$400 million would have meant for people in my community? Again, one in seven residents had to visit a food bank in the past year. That is unacceptable. We should all be charged with that issue and looking at that; however, because of the Liberals' incompetence and corruption, we are here arguing this instead.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member speaks to the importance of food security and poverty elimination in Canada, which is a very valuable debate and something we should make time for in the House. He talked about Feed Ontario and various food security organizations and food banks. Then he immediately launched into his typical slogans on carbon pricing, although none of those food security organizations have mentioned carbon pricing or the elimination of a so-called carbon tax in their advocacy. They want more poverty reduction strategies. They have all acknowledged that the Canada carbon rebate reduces poverty; they also recognize that carbon emissions and climate change itself have an impact on food prices.

When will the Conservatives recognize that the Canada carbon rebate is supporting families in need? It is eliminating food security

challenges in Canada. We need to fight climate change and lower emissions in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of food prices in Canada and around the world. If Conservatives are going to quote food banks and food security organizations, they ought to listen to what they are advocating for, which is poverty elimination, not carbon taxing.

• (1705)

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, in my remarks, I also quoted the PBO. The PBO's report on the carbon tax actually showed that, for Canadians and people in Ontario such as my constituents, there is a net cost because of the carbon tax. In Ontario itself, I think it is \$1,400 for every Ontarian. Therefore, the PBO is speaking to this issue as well. That is causing the unaffordability that Canadians are facing.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I asked the question a few times and so far, I have had no answer.

My colleague talks a lot about the Liberals and their corruption. However, examples of corruption involving Conservative governments also exist. Does my colleague have any ideas on ways to prevent this kind of corruption?

*[English]*

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Speaker, perhaps they should have started with listening to the CEO of the SDTC foundation, who actually recommended not proceeding with the hiring of Ms. Verschuren at SDTC. If that had taken place, they would have identified the conflict of interest that existed and all of this could have been avoided.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon as the member of Parliament for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

In most offices on Parliament Hill, there is, perched upon a bookshelf, an unassuming little book, about an inch wide, and if a member or a staffer has been here for some time, it is likely collecting a fair amount of dust. Outside of a House leader's office, there is not too much need for this book, with its greyish-blue hard cover, inlaid in faux gold with the mace of the House of Commons. I certainly never thought I would ever have the need for it when I started my parliamentary career three years ago.

However, thanks to the government and the hard work of one of its former colleagues, it became incredibly valuable in the preparation of my remarks this afternoon. I am, of course, talking about *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to Send for Persons, Papers and Records: A Sourcebook on the Law and Precedent of Parliamentary Subpoena Powers for Canadian and Other Houses*, a book by former Liberal MP Derek Lee. To Mr. Lee, I send my thanks.



The reason I want to bring up this authority is because it is my firm belief that Canadians need to know why opposition parties, both past and present, take such umbrage with what is currently happening in this place. Far too often, we as members can get lost in the ebb and flow of the internal machinations of the House of Commons, or perhaps take it for granted that people who are tuning in are as knowledgeable in procedure as some of us may be.

If members will indulge me, I would like to first talk about the how. One of Parliament's privileges, the power to send for persons, papers and records, is a cornerstone of the functions of every legislative responsibility and every legislative assembly. It is important to note that this power, to send for persons, papers and records, as a law of Parliament, is constitutional in nature. It is so fundamental that it has scarcely been altered over the centuries, and as a matter of law, cannot be altered except by the express will of Parliament itself.

The power of a House of Parliament to send for persons, papers and records is an essential element of a democratic legislative function founded on the rule of law. One of the cornerstone privileges of both historic and modern Parliaments and other assemblies, the term is often better understood when restated in more contemporary language. Based on principles firmly established in constitutional and parliamentary law, a House of Parliament has the full authority to summon and compel the attendance and testimony of any person and to summon and compel the production of any document.

I think this section is very straightforward. The House has the power to compel documents. This is the overarching umbrella under which we are now operating. It stands to reason that the next question would be if this authority extend to ministers, and if so, if there are limitations on what they can do. Mr. Lee writes that, under the law, ministers of the Crown enjoy no special status of privilege before the House or a committee. Any difference in treatment is either for political reasons or because the minister is a member of a House. In other words, legally speaking, a minister who is not a member of a House may be treated like any other member of the public.

He further writes that, when the House orders a return from the government without a deadline specified, it is the government's bounden duty to bring it down to the House as quickly as possible. This Canadian reference is one of those cited by Bourinot, the third clerk of the House of Commons, for his statement that, if a person neglects to furnish a return or frames it so as knowingly to mislead the House, it will be considered a breach of privilege, and he will be liable to reprimand or punishment.

● (1710)

When a deadline is imposed, therefore, and a minister fails to comply, he or she may be found in contempt and punished by the House or other powers used to coerce the minister to comply.

Again, it is pretty clear that, if the House asks, the government must comply.

Now we have two very important pieces to explain the how. First, Parliament has the power to compel the production of documents. Second, it is allowed to compel documentation from ministers and the government, and they must comply. From the words of

### *Privilege*

the Speaker, it very much appears that the government failed to comply with the lawful order of the House, which leads us to the why.

In 2001, the government of the day established an arm's-length organization, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, for which the stated aim was to demonstrate new technologies to promote sustainable development, including technologies to address issues related to climate change and the quality of air, water and soil. There was no issue with this organization during its first governance period, and that is a fairly impressive statement.

The Jean Chrétien Liberals managed to not abuse the program. The Paul Martin Liberals managed to not line the pockets of their lackeys. The Stephen Harper Conservatives fought off the urge to swindle the taxpayers. The Liberals, enter the scene, far left, were ready to put the gift in grift. There was 400 million in taxpayer dollars stolen out of the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and funnelled into the silk-lined jackets of Liberal Party insiders. Members need not take my word for it. The non-partisan Auditor General has much to say on the matter.

The Auditor General released a scathing report with such headers as: "The Foundation awarded funding to ineligible projects"; "The foundation's records showed that the conflict-of-interest policies were not followed in 90 cases"; "The Foundation did not report conflicts of interest to the department"; "Legal requirements for the number of the foundation's members were not met"; and my personal favourite, "The department did not monitor conflicts of interest at the foundation".

In the report, the Auditor General states:

...we found 90 cases where, according to the foundation's own records, its conflict-of-interest policies were not followed:

According to the meeting minutes, the official corporate records, in 25 cases, directors participated in discussions and voted to approve funding to ultimate recipients despite having previously declared conflicts of interest. For about half these situations, directors informed us that either there was an error in the corporate records and they did not have a conflict of interest, or when they did have a conflict, they recused themselves from voting. While directors had the opportunity to correct the board's meeting minutes prior to their approval at a subsequent meeting, such corrections were not made.

Additionally, when news started breaking out about the improprieties, the organization decided to take action. What did it decide to do? Well, I will let the Auditor General tell us:

Soon after the board received allegations about financial mismanagement and poor human resources practices at the foundation in January 2023, a special committee of the board was struck. The special committee hand-selected the same law firm to which the foundation's external general counsel belonged to investigate and produce a report that the board received in May 2023. This could create the appearance that the investigation was not independent.

*Privilege*

Earlier today, I rose in the House to speak about the dangers of rotten, self-serving institutions. It is clear that this is another example of a decrepit, broken organization. It clearly always has been this way, surviving over successive governments. The only difference is that the current administration was the only one out of four that looked at it and thought to itself, "Let's abuse it." Considering that the Chrétien and Martin governments, which were run by two individuals who were heavily involved in the ad scam scandal, gave this grift a pass, I would wager to say that the current government opting to siphon funds from this particular program is bordering on profound.

• (1715)

We have the ability to call an election over this. It has been done before, and we do not even need to try to score bonus points by couching it under auspices of contempt of Parliament, primarily because this is an actual breach, something far worse than the contempt charge. Judging by the past rhetoric of other parties in the House, particularly in 2011, we would not think so.

When it was politically expedient, the Liberals, New Democrats and Bloc members decided that they could not bear the thought of a government's using redactions in documents and decided to find it in contempt and force an election, even though that backfired cartoonishly on two of the three parties. However, today, the Liberals suddenly seem perfectly fine with it, going so far as to accuse the Conservatives of slowing down Parliament. I keep hearing about the millions of dollars a day being spent on holding the government to account, yet the Liberals are suspiciously quiet on the \$400 million that was funnelled into the pockets of Liberal insiders.

Let us take a step back. I would like to go back to a better time. Food costs were less. Housing was much more affordable. Canadians could heat their homes for the winter and put gas in their cars for an upcoming trip to see nana and papa with the kids. Working Canadian families were seized with the decision of where to go on their summer vacation instead of which food bank to rotate into to put food on their tables. It was a better time. It was the tail end of the Harper minority years.

However, there was an issue brewing in the House of Commons. There was a new hockey arena to be built in Quebec. The federal government had decided that it would not support the project unless there was more private sector buy-in. There was a request for documents, and the government of the day provided redacted paperwork. This was particularly upsetting to one first-term MP, an up-and-comer from Quebec. On March 11, 2011, this young MP got up and said the following:

Mr. Speaker, North Africa is going after tyrants and fighting for democracy, but here in Canada, it is the Conservatives who are attacking our democracy. They continue to refuse to be held accountable by covering up anything that could enable Canadians to judge their actions.

The latest example we have is the document on the financing of the Quebec City arena with page after page blacked out. There are no state secrets here. They are only hiding the dangerous incompetence of this irresponsible government.

Why are the Conservatives so afraid of transparency?

To be clear, this young MP decided to compare documentation over a hockey arena to the brutal regime of Muammar Gaddafi. In his mind, this was an apt comparison, or at least something he thought worth putting on the parliamentary record. Of course, the

documentation that was handed over was subject to revision and redaction by the public service at the time, under the sets of rules then instituted, which this person was not happy with.

To wit, he continued:

In order for members of the House to do our jobs and make informed decisions on behalf of Canadians, we need to pry scraps of relevant information out of the Conservatives' clenched fists and drag it out of them as they kick and scream....

Clearly, this member took the production of papers to Parliament extremely seriously.

In any event, we know how that failed NDP-Liberal-Bloc attempt to discredit the Conservative Party ended up. Their gamble with contempt of Parliament failed miserably. The Liberals got relegated to the political hinterland. The NDP saw a massive surge in Quebec, becoming the official opposition, and Stephen Harper finally got his strong, stable, national Conservative majority government.

• (1720)

However, what of our young first-term MP who found the concept of withholding documents so morally repulsive, so disgusting, that he likened the government of the day to a literal Libyan dictator who was, at that very moment, engaged in the brutal suppression of his people? Well, he managed to be one of the very few Liberal MPs who got re-elected. In fact, he is still a member of this place.

The member, representing a small riding on the island of Montreal, actually found great successes in the ashes of the Liberal Party. The member for Papineau is the Prime Minister, the very same member who now, 13 years later, refuses to table documents ordered by the House, not over a sporting complex but over \$400 million of taxpayer money being siphoned from the pockets of hard-working Canadians and into the trust funds of Liberal insiders.

It is extremely interesting what 13 years in politics can do to how one views the role of government and how power can change and affect one's morals. In any event, it certainly is an interesting thought experiment to think what the hopeful and beaming newly minted member for Papineau would think of the Prime Minister and his government today.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there is one fundamental flaw when we look at the order and what is being requested of the government. The Conservatives are saying we should collect the documents, unredacted, and hand them directly to the RCMP. The RCMP has said no. The Auditor General has said no. The former law clerk has said no.

What the member missed saying is that the only prime minister in the history of Canada to ever be held in contempt of Parliament was Stephen Harper. Who was his parliamentary secretary? It was the leader of the Conservative Party.

*Privilege*

Nothing has changed. The leader of the Conservative Party today, for example, refuses to get the security clearance so he can be informed about foreign interference. It is a serious issue. On the one hand, Conservatives play games on the floor of the chamber and exaggerate and mislead on many fronts, including many of the statements the member just put on the record; then, on the other hand, they ignore the important issue of foreign interference.

Why will the leader of the Conservative Party not get his security clearance?

• (1725)

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, might I suggest that, through my lens, the Prime Minister is a feckless man who has lost the moral authority to govern? I truly feel we are on a path of abject failure with the Liberals continuing to flagrantly dismiss the people of Canada and the procedures of the House.

To answer the member's question directly, the moment the Conservative leader chooses to take the briefing, he can no longer speak openly about this. I would encourage the Prime Minister to provide the Leader of the Opposition with the same briefing he provided The Washington Post.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech on what has become absurdity in the House, as the Liberals and the Prime Minister feel they do not owe taxpayers any explanation. Meanwhile, if they owed the CRA money, they would be dragged by handcuffs out of their homes and put in jail, but they are allowed to do whatever they feel.

The story the member told about how the Prime Minister rose and has changed his feelings on parliamentary procedures is very interesting. There is a quote, and I cannot remember who said it, but it is something like this: "Power and money do not change who you are; they reveal who you are."

I am curious to hear my colleague's point of view on what she has witnessed in her familial experience in politics in regard to what the Prime Minister was and what he has become.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, the most important values Canadians look for in someone who is serving them in the House of the common people, the House of Commons here in Ottawa, are trust, leadership and respect.

Continually, when I speak with constituents, the common questions I hear are, first of all, "When is the next election?" but more importantly, "What is going on in Ottawa?"

The basic principle of the Conservative Party is that people need to take responsibility for their actions. Maybe, just maybe, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, the current Prime Minister should start owning his errors, step back and consider the impact he is having on all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, there is something I do not understand. All the opposition parties agree that we need the documents, but there is one question we always ask Conservative members, and they never answer it: Why do we not vote on it? I get the impres-

sion that the Conservative Party is working very hard to get a prorogation.

Here is my question for my colleague: What does she think about the rumours of prorogation we are hearing these days and the consequences this could have for our democracy?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, I can confidently say the current Prime Minister has lost control. He is losing confidence, and he has clearly lost the plot. He is not listening to advice from his colleagues about resigning. Why would he not just call a carbon tax election?

• (1730)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, to respond to what the member said, the Liberal leader does not need to get the security clearance, even though the NDP leader, the Bloc leader and the Green Party leader already have it.

This was in iPolitics, and it is really something: The leader of the Conservative Party's "approach to national security is 'complete nonsense,' says expert".

Wesley Wark, who has advised both Liberal and Conservative governments on national security issues, said the Tory leader is knowingly misleading the public by claiming he doesn't need the clearance because his chief of staff has received briefings—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, this is not relevant to the subamendment and amendment to the motion that we are debating, which is the privilege motion.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There is a lot of latitude, and as the hon. member knows, members on both sides have weighed in on different topics within this debate.

I will let the hon. member finish.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I am not too sure where I was when I was interrupted. This is only about the tenth time I've made reference to it.

Anyway, I would suggest to the member opposite that she really think about her answer. When other leaders of political parties and experts are saying that her leader's arguments are absolutely nonsense, it is a reflection on the member's arguments. It makes no sense unless, of course, the leader of the Conservative Party has something to hide, something he is not telling Canadians, something that would not allow him to get the security clearance. I believe that is the case.

Why will the leader not do what other leaders have done and get the security clearance? Does he not think the issue is serious enough?

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, I find this quite rich coming from the member across the aisle.

Nonetheless, as a collective, let us step back in time to when the Liberals promised Canadians an open, transparent government, "open by default". Continually, however, we have scandal after scandal. I could list a few: SNC-Lavalin, ArriveCAN, WE Charity, McKinsey, blackface and the list goes on.

*Privilege*

They must end the cover-up and release the documents.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** If it helps the member, I would ask for unanimous consent to table a document, a list of—

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, it is a simple ask: end the cover-up and release the documents.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, that was an excellent speech quoting former MP Derek Lee about the purpose and the powers of the House to command documents. In this case, we have a situation where 82% of the money that went out the door, according to the Auditor General, was conflicted, and that was just in a sample. Nineteen government departments have redacted documents, that is, censored them; nine government departments have put them in. It seems the only government departments that redacted them are the ones that actually have the names connected with what was going on, like the industry department and the Privy Council Office.

Can the member please share with the House her thoughts on why nine government departments have complied and why some of the others that are more directly involved have not?

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman:** Madam Speaker, it would be safe to say that the member of Parliament who posed the question would find interest in the speech. He and I have a lot of political history together, over the years, and I think it is easy for us to acknowledge that the cover-up of the \$400-million slush fund scandal is clearly paralyzing Parliament.

The Prime Minister of the day has certainly lost control. The House is at a complete standstill. The government still needs to produce the documents. Every single day, in every single way, I will continue to ask if we will receive the documents. Yes or no?

• (1735)

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in this very interesting discussion we are having. For those just joining us or those watching on social media, I will give a bit of background before I really get into things.

On June 10, the House of Commons adopted a motion demanding the production of various documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada. I will refer to it as SDTC. All those documents were for review by the RCMP. However, in response, several departments of the federal government either outright refused to comply with the House order or redacted the documents provided. Some excuses cited the Access to Information Act.

Notably, the House order did not allow for any redactions. It was a straightforward motion on the production of documents. Parliament does have the power to do that, and we have that power because Parliament holds the government, the executive branch, to account. That is a very important part of our parliamentary democracy. For additional context, the House's absolute and unfettered power to order documents is in our Constitution and has been a major part of Parliament's history.

Considering the failure to produce the documents, the Conservative House leader raised a question of privilege asserting that a

breach of House privilege had occurred, a point confirmed by the Speaker's ruling that the privileges of the House had been violated.

The green slush fund scandal began late in 2018 when the former Liberal industry minister, Navdeep Bains, raised concerns about Jim Balsillie, the Harper-era chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, due to his public criticism of the government's privacy legislation. The minister's office requested that Jim Balsillie cease his criticisms, prompting the Liberal minister to propose two alternative chairs to the CEO of SDTC, one of whom was an entrepreneur receiving funding through SDTC. That is very important to remember.

Despite the warnings about the risks of appointing a conflicted chair, given that SDTC had never had a chair with vested interests in funded companies, the minister knew better and proceeded with the appointment in the summer of 2019 anyway. This decision then led to an environment where conflicts of interest were tolerated, as board members awarded funding to companies in which they held stakes. Despite witnessing 186 conflicts at the board level, officials at ISED, Innovation, Science and Economic Development, took no action. They witnessed potential wrongdoing and did nothing about it.

In January 2021, the current Minister of Industry succeeded Minister Bains, but he did nothing to correct the obvious conflict of interest taking place right under his nose. A year later, whistle-blowers reported unethical practices at SDTC to the Auditor General, and following these revelations, the Privy Council was briefed and two independent reports were commissioned. Another year passed, and in September 2023, the whistle-blowers made their allegations public, prompting the Liberal minister to finally take action and suspend SDTC funding. Two months later, the Auditor General announced an audit of SDTC, which culminated in a damning report, released in June 2024, revealing a complete breakdown of governance and accountability by the minister.

Unfortunately, nothing seems to shock Canadians anymore about the Liberal government. My constituents are quite frustrated, but mostly they have come to unfortunately expect this level of corruption and incompetence. I really cannot blame Canadians, though. We have to look at the Liberals' substantial and abysmal record on these scandals. Perhaps a brief overview of some of the many scandals would help to put this latest one into perspective.

• (1740)

The SNC-Lavalin scandal unfolded in 2019 when it was revealed that senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office had pressured then attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould to intervene in a criminal case against SNC-Lavalin, a major engineering firm facing bribery and fraud charges related to contracts in Libya. She resisted those pressures, leading to her demotion and eventual resignation, as well as the resignation of several other officials, including another cabinet minister. The controversy ignited a national debate over political interference in the judicial process, raising questions about the integrity of the government decision-making and the rule of law. An ethics investigation later concluded that the Prime Minister had violated the Conflict of Interest Act, further intensifying public scrutiny and leading to significant political fallout for the Liberal Party. The scandal underscored the challenges of balancing economic interests with ethical governance in Canada.

The WE scandal emerged in 2020 when it was revealed that the Liberal government awarded a multi-million dollar contract to the WE Charity to administer a student grant program, despite the organization's close ties to the Prime Minister and his then finance minister Bill Morneau. Does that sound familiar? As in the current scandal, critics raised concerns about conflicts of interest, as both the Prime Minister and then finance minister Morneau had personal connections to the charity.

Public outcry intensified when it was disclosed that the charity was planning to pay large sums to the Prime Minister's family for speaking engagements, leading to allegations of favouritism, a lack of transparency and much more. The scandal prompted multiple parliamentary investigations and led to the resignation of the finance minister, while the Prime Minister faced significant scrutiny over his government's decision-making process. Ultimately, the controversy highlighted issues of accountability and ethics within the federal government, leading to calls for greater oversight of public contracts and lobbying activities.

The ArriveCAN scandal emerged in 2022 when it was revealed that the government had spent over \$54 million on a mobile app designed to facilitate border crossings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Critics argued that the app was overly complicated and ineffective and imposed unnecessary burdens on travellers, leading to significant frustration. Allegations surfaced regarding the government's failure to adequately test the app and the lack of clarity on its effectiveness in managing public health.

The controversy further intensified when it was disclosed that the app collected personal, sensitive data, raising privacy concerns among Canadians. This situation sparked widespread criticism from opposition parties and led to calls for accountability and transparency regarding the government's pandemic response strategies. The scandal highlighted issues of mismanagement and raised questions about the efficiency of government initiatives during a crisis.

More recently, and still unfolding, we have two more scandals worth mentioning. First is the indigenous procurement scandal, which has revealed that the government made significant missteps in its efforts to boost indigenous participation in federal procurement. Critics highlighted instances where contracts meant to benefit indigenous businesses were awarded to non-indigenous firms, un-

### *Privilege*

dermining the intent of initiatives aimed at fostering economic development for indigenous communities.

There were allegations of mismanagement and a lack of oversight. Indeed, one need only upload a picture of a cute mammal to qualify. This sums the whole debate up. It is about trust. It undermines the trust of indigenous people, who are trying to take the government at its word. The documents issue we have here is about the trust in Parliament and government that Canadians must have. Of course, as expected, the ongoing scandal has prompted calls for reform in procurement to ensure that contracts genuinely serve indigenous interests and has raised broader questions about the government's commitment to reconciliation and equitable economic opportunities for indigenous people. As a result, there were increased demands for transparency and adherence to commitments made to indigenous communities in federal policies.

• (1745)

Then there is the ongoing foreign interference scandal, highlighting that foreign entities, particularly from China, had attempted to influence Canadian elections and politics. Reports indicated that foreign agents engaged in tactics such as the intimidation and harassment of Canadian citizens and attempted to manipulate electoral outcomes by funnelling money to candidates. The scandal escalated when security agencies, including CSIS, revealed that it had warned certain members of Parliament about threats to their safety stemming from foreign interference.

This revelation has led to widespread public concern and outrage over the integrity of Canadian democracy. The Liberal government continues to face criticism for its inaction and lack of transparency regarding these threats, prompting calls from the Conservatives to release the names of the compromised parliamentarians in the CSIS report and for stronger measures to protect national sovereignty and enhance accountability.

This Liberal scandal has highlighted the failures of the Liberal government and the urgent need for reforms to safeguard against foreign interference. The lack of transparency, ethics, accountability and safeguarding of the interests of Canadians is a pattern that is consistent throughout all Liberal scandals.

### *Privilege*

Let us now turn to yet another one, the one we are talking about today. Sustainable Development Technology Canada, for those wondering, was a federally funded non-profit organization established in 2021 to support the development of clean technologies aimed at addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development. With a mandate to disburse over \$100 million, SDTC administered the SD tech fund to finance innovative projects related to air quality, clean water and soil health.

However, significant governance issues emerged, particularly following the appointment of conflicted executives by former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains in 2019. Under the new chair appointed by the minister, the board began approving funding for projects where executives had direct conflicts of interest, resulting in over \$390 million being awarded improperly. Whistle-blowers raised concerns about financial mismanagement, prompting investigations by the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner that revealed severe lapses in governance and compliance standards at SDTC.

Here is just some of the damning testimony from the SDTC whistle-blowers:

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

Here is another quote:

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.

This is exactly what Parliament is asking for.

Here is another quote:

The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference. It should never have taken two years for the issues to reach this point. What should have been a straightforward process turned into a bureaucratic nightmare that allowed SDTC to continue wasting millions of dollars and abusing countless employees over the last year.

Here is another one:

...I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.

The green slush fund scandal is yet another chapter in a troubling narrative of mismanagement, conflicts of interest and a lack of accountability under the Prime Minister and the current Liberal government.

• (1750)

Time and time again, we have seen the patterns of behaviour that prioritize political protection over the principles of transparency and good governance. The testimonials from whistle-blowers underscore the urgency of a thorough investigation and the need for reforms to restore public trust. Canadians deserve a government that prioritizes their interests, safeguards public funds and upholds

the integrity of our democratic institutions. As we move forward, let us demand accountability from those who have failed in their duties, ensuring that scandals become a relic of the past rather than a reoccurring theme of our nation.

I hope I have laid out an argument that not only describes the current situation but actually continues this call for the production of documents, unredacted, so that the RCMP can have a look at them and determine if there is any potential wrongdoing through an investigation.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, perhaps the member could help me to understand. This would be unprecedented, the House ordering documents to give to a third party. Who might the House want to give the documents to next? This is a problem. This precedent-setting part of the motion is a problem. The RCMP has said it does not want the documents because if the documents land in the RCMP's lap they could compromise the investigation.

Why would the Conservative Party want to compromise an investigation that is in the best interests of Canadians?

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, our job as legislators, elected by our constituents, is to question the government, to keep an eye on the government, the executive branch, and what it does. Parliament, therefore, does have the power to demand certain documents. That is what the democratically elected representatives here voted for. The government continues to obstruct that.

As I mentioned, democracy is based on trust. The government has repeatedly demonstrated that the people should not trust its work. I laid out scandal after scandal, issue after issue, in my 20-minute speech. That is why Parliament demanded these documents, so that they can be turned over to the RCMP for potential investigation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in the last part of his speech, my colleague talked about the importance of restoring public trust. I cannot believe he said that. I want to know if he really thinks that what we have been doing these past three weeks here in the House is going to restore public trust. We are stuck on this one issue when there are a number of crises going on right now.

We learned today, for example, that global greenhouse gas emissions have risen to a level that is dangerous for humanity. No one is talking about that. We are in the midst of a housing crisis. No one is talking about that. There is a language crisis, and French is disappearing in Canada. No one is talking about that.

I really wonder if the member truly thinks, deep down in his soul, that what we have been doing here these past three weeks is going to restore public trust.

*Privilege*

[English]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, I honestly believe that the Liberals have destroyed the trust after nine years in power. How many scandals have we gone through? How many conflicts of interest? How many investigations by the Ethics Commissioner?

I think Canadians deserve good government. They are not getting it from that side of the House. Let us call a carbon tax election and find out what Canadians have to say.

• (1755)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am different from the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, although we are the ones who are usually making a quip to the Speaker.

I wanted to ask the member about a common argument being made by Liberal members of Parliament that it is unwise to hand over the documents to the law clerk. Multiple departments continue to refuse to do so, or are redacting the documents they give to the law clerk. The law clerk would then give them to the RCMP and the RCMP could do with them whatever it wants. That argument should have been made in June when the majority of the members of Parliament in this House voted to get those documents handed over handed over to the law clerk. What the Liberal MPs are trying to do is to rehash the same argument we have already had in the chamber. A majority of this chamber, which was made up of all of the opposition parties, voted against Liberal MPs to get the release of these much-needed documents, which would show off the corruption in the Liberal government.

I would like the member to perhaps think back to the original question that was put before the House, the vote that we held, and the decision that was made then to get the full release of these documents, so that the public would know how deep the corruption actually runs.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, actually, my friend brings up a very good point. It also highlights exactly how the Liberals tend to deal with pretty much everything. It is basically to deny. They say something is not happening, then they say that maybe it is happening a little, but we should not look that way. Then it is happening, but they are not going to deal with it or will try to memory-hole it somehow. With the Liberal government, this happens every single time. After scandal upon scandal, after hundreds of millions of dollars of mismanagement, Canadians are hurting. Food bank usage is at record levels. We have a housing crisis, which is something caused by the Liberal government. Canadians deserve better.

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would ask this of my hon. colleague and his hon. colleague sitting behind him to his broadcast left: Why do they not trust the RCMP? If it saw evidence that crimes had been committed, it has more than enough power, authority and opportunity to go after the material it needs to perform an investigation. The RCMP does not need the House of Commons to do its work.

Why do you not trust them?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member has been in the House long enough to know he is to address questions and comments through the Chair, not directly to the members.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has the floor.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, I do trust the RCMP. I outlined in my speech that I trust the Auditor General and the RCMP; I trust those institutions. What I do not trust is the Liberal government. The RCMP cannot ask for documents if it does not know they exist. That is why we, as parliamentarians, have voted to produce the documents, unredacted, so that the RCMP can see everything that is available. This can potentially lead to some answers about what happened to some of this money.

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, during the investigation, there was a whistleblower who exposed information about the slush fund. They stated at committee, “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.”

To the member, why do you think the Liberals are hiding these documents, and why will they not just come clean and hand them over to the—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just called out another member for directing questions to the member who is answering, so I want to remind members to please direct their questions through the Speaker.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has the floor.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. That is the great mystery we are here to solve: Why do the government members continue to refuse to produce these unredacted documents? It certainly gives the impression that there is something to hide. In my speech, I outlined some pretty questionable acts. One involved the former minister, who did not like what the current chair was saying publicly about some Liberal policies and was then replaced by two individuals, one of whom had a company that was receiving funding from that organization. The person who was co-chairing it was actively a participant in receiving funds for whatever projects they applied. There was then a cascade of questionable events witnessed by department officials, yet nothing was done by the minister in charge, either the former one or the current minister. It was only the act of whistle-blowers that actually finally started to bring this to light. Everything should be produced so that the RCMP can have a full look.

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• (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague. I will repeat it again. We tried hard to get an answer out of the Conservative members, but they never gave one. When is this all going to end? We agree that we need the documents. We do not need to be convinced. When are we going to vote? Can the Conservatives give us a date?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, I think that is easy. It will be when the government produces the documents.

**Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today I will speak about the production of documents ordered by the House regarding the latest Liberal scandal, the billion-dollar green slush fund.

I have the honour and privilege of being a member of the public accounts committee. We received a damning report from the Auditor General last June when she found that the Liberal government had turned the once-legitimate Sustainable Development Technology Canada into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. The Auditor General found that the Liberal-appointed SDTC board gave \$330 million of taxpayer money to companies where the board members who voted to give out that money had a conflict of interest.

In addition, the Auditor General found that the same Liberal-appointed board approved another \$59 million in projects that were not eligible for funding because they were outside the SDTC foundation's mandate. The Auditor General said that at least 10 of those projects did not even produce green technology or contribute anything whatsoever to emissions reduction. What a mess that was, and what a joke too, but what a farce and what a sad day it was for Canadians.

At the public accounts committee, we have been diligently trying to get to the bottom of the \$400-million Liberal scandal since the Auditor General submitted her disturbing report, but we are being stonewalled by every single witness. Just yesterday, a senior official from the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's own department, testified as we were trying to seek clarity on Annette Verschuren's appointment as SDTC chairperson in 2019. The lack of consistency in witness testimony certainly looks like a cover-up at the highest levels of the Liberal government.

Ms. Verschuren has testified that she did not apply for the chairperson role but had been called two or three times by former industry minister Navdeep Bains, asking her to take the job. This was after a year-long selection process that had already produced a short list of names for former minister Bains, but then suddenly Ms. Verschuren's name was suspiciously added.

Everyone whom we have had the luxury of talking to has given a different account. Some would say that the opposition is skeptical. Well, of course we are. Everybody is telling a different story. We have not been able to find out why there was a last-minute addition. It certainly was the beginning of the culture of corruption at the Liberals' green slush fund.

At the public accounts committee, we received the following information this week. Ms. Verschuren submitted an application to the selection process for the role of chairperson of SDTC on April 30, 2019. She was then interviewed by the selection committee as part of the selection process on May 14, 2019. Her application, interview and references were assessed by the selection committee. She was found to have met the selection criteria for the position. She was then identified as a qualified candidate for the role in an advice letter to then minister Bains dated May 21, 2019. She was appointed chairperson of SDTC on June 19, 2019.

My question for PCO officials was regarding their belief that Ms. Verschuren had applied for the position of chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada through the Privy Council portal. However, as I said earlier, she testified at the industry committee on September 16 that she had not applied for the chair position. She said that the former Liberal industry minister Bains approached her two or three times to take the position of the chair of the Liberals' green slush fund.

In his testimony to the public accounts committee on October 9, the former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains stated that he could not recall asking her to take the position. Perhaps he had amnesia. Perhaps he misremembered. In the end, we know the truth. If it walks like a duck and looks like a duck, it must be a duck. I mean, this is our job; this is what we have to do.

• (1805)

Something smells awfully fishy here, and I know the smell of fish because I represent lobster fishermen and I am a salmon fisherman.

Yesterday, we tried to understand how there could be such a discrepancy between Ms. Verschuren's testimony and Mr. Bains' recollection. The PCO officials had testified before that a formal letter of advice would have been provided to the former industry minister containing a list of names of qualified candidates. At that point, it would have been up to the minister working with his office to determine the choice of candidate for chair he would recommend for cabinet's approval. PCO officials also testified that they would have undertaken a full assessment process for suitable candidates who would have been eligible for the position. We can see the trend, and it is very alarming.

Considering both the Auditor General's June report and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's Verschuren report in July 2024, we are perplexed and find it strange as to why, and I am repeating what a member of the bureaucracy we met this week said, such a merit-based process would not have uncovered the serious conflicts of interest Ms. Verschuren brought to the job as SDTC chair.



Also, the former CEO of SDTC had also raised serious concerns with the minister's office and elsewhere about the new chair's conflict of interest. The former CEO of SDTC told the industry committee that:

My employee in the government relations lead told the minister's office.

Yes, I expressed concern, and I did it at multiple levels. That's my duty, and that's what I did.

When the minister then decides to not accept that advice, I have to accept that too.

So, in this case, we have one individual who simply tried to do their job, and tried to do it ethically, morally, the right way, and we have a cabinet minister who did not take that advice and brought in somebody with serious conflicts of interest. We will continue to try to find the truth about why the former minister, Mr. Bains, thought it so necessary to appoint a chair with such blatant conflicts of interest despite repeated warnings from the organization's CEO not to do it.

The Auditor General's June report found, according to the minutes of the meetings of the board of directors, 90 cases that were connected to approval decisions representing \$76 million in funding awarded to projects where the foundation's conflict of interest policies were not even remotely followed. The board of the green slush fund did not ensure that the foundation complied with its enabling legislation. That is alarming. SDTC is entirely funded through public money. The Auditor General stated, "With that comes an expectation that it holds the highest standards for ethical practices."

Conflicts of interest that are not disclosed or managed call into question the objectivity and impartiality of the foundation and its directors. In light of these damning reports, we have tried to get the former Liberal industry minister, Mr. Bains, to answer questions about Ms. Verschuren's questionable appointment as chair and why he was convinced she was the right person for the position even with all of her conflicts of interest. Unfortunately, he has not been willing to answer our questions so far and has been called back next week.

We have also asked if it is not the role of the Privy Council Office to ensure that all proposed appointments meet all requirements. However, once again, we have been stonewalled at public accounts; normal and typical behaviour. Yesterday, my colleague, the member for Edmonton West, asked the PCO officials a simple question: Who ordered the documents to be redacted before they were submitted to Parliament? He did not get an answer.

It is important to point out that the Privy Council Office is the Prime Minister's personal department. It takes its marching orders directly from the Prime Minister's Office. Some people say that there must be a nefarious reason that the Prime Minister's own department continues to block access to thousands of documents related to the Liberals' green slush fund.

• (1810)

As part of her investigation, the Auditor General conducted a governance audit of SDTC. She did not conduct a criminal investigation. A whistle-blower told the public accounts committee that he is confident criminal intent will be identified if the documents in question are turned over to the RCMP. Could this be the reason the

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department officials have redacted and refused to turn over the documents, to prevent criminal intent from being identified?

The PCO's telling departments to send in redacted documents has resulted in the Speaker's ruling that they are in breach of members' privilege because the order from the House of Commons did not say "redact". Because the Speaker has ruled that the NDP-Liberals violated a House order to turn over unredacted documents and did not co-operate with the production order, we continue to talk about the green slush fund scandal today.

It is important to note something. I remember the sponsorship scandal of the 1990s well. I was much younger then, and I followed politics a little, from a distance. I was in junior high or high school; I may be dating myself a bit. If we can imagine it, that was the big scandal of the day in my youth. That is the first one that I remember. I am sure there were many others. I know there were, historically, but this is the one that stands out to me.

I hope people are watching because there is an interesting aspect to this. The sponsorship scandal was only one-eighth the size of the green slush fund scandal. Can we imagine that? We are talking about \$400 million in taxpayers' money, given to friends fraught with conflicts of interest.

I know it bothers the member for Winnipeg North. I know it bothers everybody in here from these other parties. They are not getting up today to speak, because they would sooner ask me questions about why I care and why the Conservative Party cares about \$400 million that went missing and where it is. The Conservative Party is doing the good work for the people of Canada.

At the public accounts committee, we ask questions to provide oversight of taxpayers' dollars, to check for value for money and whether programs have achieved value. Members have privileges at public accounts. One of those privileges is that, when witnesses come into hearings, they are not there to evade. There are no bonus points for trying not to answer the questions. They are called in as witnesses to public hearings. They are there to answer those very important questions, and it is our job to ask those questions.

The Auditor General found 186 conflicts of interest. In just a sampling of the SDTC board decisions, with a five-year sample period, the Auditor General actually found that 82% of funding transactions that she looked at were conflicted. Eighty-two per cent had conflicts of interest. We can let that sink in.

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The sponsorship scandal was one-eighth the size of this, and that dominated headlines every day for years of my childhood. This is \$400 million. The taxpayers deserve clarity. They deserve accountability. That is the oversight we try to provide at the public accounts committee and here in the House of Commons.

It is alarming and deeply disappointing to me that the Liberal government members on the public accounts committee do not want to simply find the truth for Canadians. They do not call out witnesses who evade questions at committee hearings. They actually defend them over and over again, and they bring up continuous points of order.

As I stated, when former Liberal industry minister Bains testified earlier this month, he would not answer our questions. That is why he is being called back. Mr. Bains knows the political process. He knows what is acceptable and what is not. He would know what it means to be held accountable and to be transparent with taxpayers' dollars. As a former cabinet minister and member of the Privy Council, he must be held to a higher standard.

When discussing the appointment of Ms. Verschuren, Mr. Bains told the president of SDTC, who questioned her conflict issues, that they would manage her conflicts as they appointed her the chair. Who is this referring to? Could it be the PMO? Who said, "Oh, don't worry; we'll manage all the conflicts. There are only 186 of them so far. We will look after them. We will look after them for the people. We are going to do a good job here."

• (1815)

Though former minister Bains is not a politician today, there are no points for evading or refusing to answer the questions posed by the public accounts committee members. Regardless of the party they represent at the table, they represent Canadians. Mr. Bains is, however, accountable for his time in public office. He was and will always be a member of the Privy Council, forever bound by those rules

Four hundred million dollars is a lot of taxpayer dollars. It was a lot of money for the Prime Minister's hand-picked appointees, the chair and others, who got themselves into a position to benefit their own companies. It is deeply shameful, discouraging and disappointing, and it is pathetic too.

The \$400 million may not seem like a lot of money to some Liberal members, but there are record numbers of people at food banks. There are punishing carbon taxes and spiking grocery prices, and people in the constituency of Miramichi—Grand Lake call me daily and say they are choosing between medications and groceries, or sometimes between fuel and groceries. Rent is way up. All of these affordability problems are on the watch of the current government, which has inflated prices. The cost of living crisis has been created by the Prime Minister and his colleagues.

The reason we are here today in the House of Commons is to talk about the privilege around the production of documents because questions have not been answered. We watched earlier this year what happens when people do not answer questions; they get hauled right in here to answer questions. Maybe that is not far off, because we are going to get the answers no matter what it takes.

I will say this: When the questions are not answered by the individuals who have the answers, like the officials from PCO yesterday at the public accounts committee, it is our privilege to get those answers to the Canadian public. That is how our democracy works. We are doing the right thing right now.

It is deeply disappointing that we are still here today talking about the Liberal green slush fund scandal of \$400 million. The Auditor General made it clear that the blame for the scandal falls squarely on the then Liberal industry minister and the current industry minister who did not sufficiently monitor the contracts being given to Liberal insiders.

The Speaker has ruled that the government violated a House order to turn evidence on the \$400-million green slush fund over to the RCMP. The NDP-Liberal government's refusal to respect the ruling has paralyzed Parliament, pushing aside all other work to address the doubling of housing costs, food inflation and the crime, corruption and chaos that we see in our streets because of its policies. Why will the NDP-Liberals not end their green slush fund cover-up and provide the ordered documents so Canadians can have the accountability and transparency they so rightly deserve?

It is only my common-sense Conservative colleagues who will end the corruption, end the chaos, find out what happened to the \$400 million and get some clarity and justice for the people of this country.

• (1820)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I need some clarification from the member. It seems that we are debating a motion to send the matter to PROC. It is a Conservative motion. Why are the Conservatives not allowing us to vote on the motion to send the matter to PROC? Why are they filibustering their own motion so they do not get what they want?

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, the member should have answered with this: "Here are the documents that we failed to provide." That would have been the end of the debate.

The Liberals should turn over the documents and do their job.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am wearing some earrings today that I have received quite a few compliments about. I wanted to share that these are earrings I purchased at a disability entrepreneurs' trade show. We know that entrepreneurs with disabilities are not receiving specific funding. Small business owners find it very difficult to break into the market. I would like to ask the member how he thinks persons with disabilities are benefiting from the current debate.

*Privilege*

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, the member opposite did not have the courage to stand with her party and request the documents from the very government it has been propping up for the last three years, supporting every single thing it did. What she should be asking herself is why she keeps voting with the Liberals if they are not doing anything on this issue.

She should have spoken to the question at hand. We are looking for the documents, we know there is criminal intent and we want to find it for the Canadian public. They need to do their job.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about it at length. Whistle-blowers started speaking up back in 2022, but it took quite a while for things to get to this point.

Given everything he studied, does he see any way to make the process more efficient and enable a faster response in the future? Does he see any way to prevent this type of situation from happening again?

[English]

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, I know from being in three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, that often the process of bureaucracy is slow. I do not disagree with the member. I wish it was faster. Are there ways to improve it? Yes, and I will support them, but I think the quickest way we can speed it up at this juncture is simply for those documents to be presented so we can get on with the rest of the business and we can find out if there was criminal intent for this file we are dealing with here today.

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague referred to whistle-blowers, so I am going to read more of a whistle-blower's testimony in committee:

I think the current government is more interested in protecting themselves and protecting the situation from being a public nightmare. They would rather protect wrongdoers and financial mismanagement than have to deal with a situation like SDTC in the public sphere.

I wonder what the member has to say about that.

• (1825)

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, this is really it: Some Liberal members are not going to speak on this motion because they are the ones in the wrong. They have a choice here today. If I truly trusted a former colleague, I would just give the documents up. The Liberals are proving to Canadians that they do not trust the judgment of former minister Bains.

This is a man they worked with, who was on the executive council and was a member of their team. This is a guy they had dinner with, had lunch with and went to retreats with; they know him personally and they know him well. They should have the wherewithal to know what type of individual this man is. Now, I do not know him personally, but they should be able to stand up and defend him and give the documents up. They will not give the documents up because (a) clearly they do not trust their colleague, and (b) there was likely criminal intent.

What are they doing? They are choosing to protect their colleague rather than support him.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, while the member was having some flashbacks to the Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien eras, he missed the Stephen Harper era. That is an important era because the leader of the Conservative Party today was the parliamentary secretary to and a minister for prime minister Stephen Harper.

I have a document that shows over 70 scandals, and it does not include another \$400-million scandal that I am aware of, the ETS scandal. Members can look it up with a Google search.

The bottom line is that the past behaviour of the current Conservative leader demonstrates very clearly why he continues to thumb his nose at Canadians when it comes to getting the security clearance. It is a very serious issue. Every other leader has gotten the security clearance. He talks about foreign interference. There are serious allegations of foreign interference relating to the Conservative leadership. There are Conservative parliamentarians that we should know about, according to the leader of the Conservative Party.

Why does the leader of the Conservative Party not get the security clearance? What has he got to hide? What is in his past that we do not know? Canadians have a right to know.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, we are talking about a former minister of the Privy Council, a guy who clearly had whatever clearance was necessary.

I was thinking about this on this side of the floor. Do members know how times have changed? I will tell them how times have changed. I was not here 10, 15 or 20 years ago, however long this goes back, but I know that the party I am in had a minister resign over the cost of a glass of orange juice. Do members remember this? This is before my time, and I am not talking badly about this colleague—

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Another one went away in handcuffs.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** I would like the floor right now. I know you are a nasty individual, but I want the floor—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is not parliamentary. I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, I withdraw it.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members that if they have anything else to contribute, they should wait until the appropriate time. I would also ask members who have the floor to respond to the question that was asked as opposed to responding to other comments being made across the way.

If the hon. member can wrap up right now, we have time for one more question.

The hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, I apologize for that.

A minister resigned because they spent too much money on a glass of orange juice. That probably dominated headlines for weeks back in the day. Here we are talking about \$400 million.

*Privilege*

The member wants to talk about foreign interference. He should release the names. My conscience is clear. We are all clear over here—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, is corruption an option for a federal government? We know that some very serious scandals were uncovered during the Harper government, too. They are all cut from the same cloth, I have to say.

Yes, the government must hand over the documents, but do people realize that we are not fulfilling our role as legislators right now? On top of that, Parliament is being paralyzed. This is costing taxpayers a lot of money. What are the hon. member's thoughts on that?

• (1830)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, here is how I feel about that. Of the \$400 million, 82% is fraught with scandal, corruption and probably criminal activity. My job as a parliamentarian is to care about finding out whether we are getting value for money.

I am on the public accounts committee. We did not get value for money here, and Canadian taxpayers paid for it. No one can afford that. Who can afford \$400 million? Our country does not have \$400 million to give out so the Liberals can have play money. They need to produce the documents, come clean and show some respect for their former minister if they trust him at all.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the Westman residents. Today, as in past weeks, we are once again seeking clarity on why the Liberal government has refused to comply with a binding House order to produce documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, better known now as SDTC, and perhaps better known to Canadians as the Liberal green slush fund.

Let us take a moment to recap what we already know. The Auditor General conducted a thorough investigation into SDTC's governance after a whistle-blower came forward. What she uncovered was shocking. As my colleagues have stated, nearly 400 million dollars' worth of contracts were inappropriately awarded by the board of directors, all of whom had multiple conflicts of interest.

As reported by *The Globe and Mail*:

Some of the complaints alleged SDTC had made grants to startups and technology accelerators with ties to its own senior management, or to companies or technology accelerators that were ineligible because they were too established. The complainants also alleged a volatile workplace under [the CEO of Sustainable Development Technology Canada] Ms. Lawrence, marked by high staff turnover rates and stress-related leaves.

The Auditor General determined these complaints were rooted in serious issues within SDTC. Ultimately at issue is the Auditor General's finding that Liberal appointees gave nearly 400 million tax dollars to their own companies, which involved 186 conflicts of interest. That is nearly \$400 million wasted, or stolen tax dollars,

while so many of our fellow Canadians cannot afford the cost of gas, groceries and home heating.

After nine years, Canadians are yet again reminded that the Liberal government is not worth the cost, not worth the crime and certainly not worth the corruption. SDTC was a Crown corporation fully funded by Canadian taxpayers. Every member of its board of directors, including the CEO, was appointed by the Liberal government.

When the Auditor General began her review, she found that \$58 million had been awarded to 10 ineligible projects. Furthermore, an additional \$334 million was linked to 186 projects for which the nine board members had conflicts of interest and failed to recuse themselves from the decision-making process. In fact, nearly 59 million dollars' worth of projects had no contribution agreements, nor were the terms of those agreements met.

The Auditor General made it abundantly clear that this failure lies squarely at the feet of the Liberal minister of industry, who failed to ensure proper oversight or governance. Instead, he turned a blind eye when it was revealed that public money was being funnelled to Liberal insiders.

We now know that the RCMP has launched an investigation into the nine directors identified by the Auditor General in the SDTC green slush fund scandal. The RCMP has also confirmed it is using some of the documents turned over by the parliamentary law clerk. However, this raises serious questions. Why is the government willing to provide only some documents while other departments have outright refused? Even more absurdly, some departments have claimed they are not even part of the government.

To give Canadians a sense of just how bizarre this situation is, here are a few departments that refused to produce documents: the Department of Justice, of all places; the Canada Revenue Agency; the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency; Global Affairs; the department of housing; the Department of National Defence; and Natural Resources Canada. The list goes on.

The question is simple: Why will these Liberal ministers not turn over the documents to the police? What is so damning in them that, while the RCMP confirms it has some documents, the Liberals and their co-conspirators refuse to hand over the rest? Canadians have a right to know what is in those documents.

• (1835)

The House of Commons has spoken on the matter. The Speaker has ruled that the Liberals violated a House order to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation. That is pretty serious. Moreover, the decision to refuse to turn over the documents has left the House paralyzed as day after day the Speaker's ruling is not adhered to by the government.

We cannot and should not let the corruption slide. The Liberals keep saying that we should move on and look away. "There is nothing here to see", they say. If there is one thing we can all agree on, it is that no one wants to spend their time talking about this kind of gross mismanagement and corruption.

It just plain should not have happened, but it did, and now it has become impossible for the House to focus its full attention on the needs of Canadians. We should be addressing the doubling of housing costs. We should be addressing the Liberal government's policies that have resulted in inflation and higher prices for gas and groceries. We should be addressing rising crime and chaos in our cities and rural crime outside our urban centres. We could be having a very different debate right now if the Liberals ended the cover-up and provided the evidence to the RCMP. That is all it would take to get this place focused on the priorities to which we need to return our attention.

Should we really be surprised by any of this? After all, the current Liberal government has been ethically challenged every step of the way during its years in power. It has been plagued by scandals and continues to demonstrate a culture of corruption. We only need to look back at its history.

Let us begin with the SNC-Lavalin scandal in 2019. In that case, the Prime Minister pressured his then justice minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to approve contracts for SNC-Lavalin and grant it a pardon, allowing it to bid on government contracts again. However, when she refused to comply, the Prime Minister removed her from her position.

Next there was the WE Charity scandal in 2020, in which the Liberals attempted to funnel over half a billion dollars, so this was not just a wee scandal, to their associates at the WE Charity. Fortunately this was halted, but not before it was revealed that former finance minister Bill Morneau had close ties to WE. His daughter worked for the organization, and he advocated for it without recusing himself from the decision-making process. Although the Ethics Commissioner cleared the Prime Minister, that does not erase the fact that his close family members have received nearly \$500,000 from WE Charity since he took office.

Foreign interference is yet another issue where the Liberals not only turned a blind eye but also appointed two individuals with close connections to the Trudeau Foundation to investigate how the government might have benefited from such interference. It is not a surprise that the investigation went nowhere.

Then there is the ArriveCAN app scandal, in which tens of millions of dollars were funnelled into the pockets of Liberal insiders. It was later revealed that the ArriveCAN app could have been developed for around \$80,000. Instead, \$60 million of taxpayer mon-

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ey was used to enrich a couple of individuals working out of their basement.

We must not forget the issue of the Winnipeg lab documents, from 2021. The House of Commons requested and ordered the production of the documents, but the government stalled and blocked the process at every turn. It even took its own Speaker of the House to court to prevent the documents from being released. When they were finally made public this year, they revealed that two scientists involved were operatives for the People's Liberation Army in Beijing.

The documents also showed that viruses and intelligence on various vaccines were sent to China, raising serious concerns about other potential security breaches at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. The Liberals were so determined to keep the documents from the public that instead of complying with the House's order, they called an election in 2021, effectively breaking Parliament and halting that process as well.

• (1840)

Moreover, the public safety minister has been found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner on two separate occasions. These violations include awarding contracts to family members through a Crown corporation and appointing his sister-in-law as interim ethics commissioner. How can the public expect him to remain impartial when family members are directly involved?

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### ELECTORAL REFORM

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I rise virtually this evening to pursue a question that I asked in the House some months ago. It was on the occasion of a wonderful conference that took place in Ottawa, called Vote16. There are movements across this country of people who want to see the voting age lowered to 16 years old. I am going to canvass very quickly why that is because the response I received that day from the parliamentary secretary was not about the issue of why it would help make our democracy more vibrant if we were to change the voting age, as some jurisdictions have. For instance, on the occasion of the referendum in Scotland, the voting age was 16 years old.

The problem we have in Canada with voter turnout, and it is a significant problem, is that it tends to go down over the years. The voter turnout that scandalized me was in the most recent Ontario provincial election. The last one had something like 46% voter turnout, so fewer than half of the people who were able to vote actually voted. That really is a blow to democracy.

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The demographic group that votes the least in our country is the group that has, if we will forgive the expression, the most skin in the game: young people. The decisions we make in the House in 2024, in this Parliament, are going to significantly affect 16-year-olds for the rest of their lives. For people my age and older, there is relatively less of a long-term impact. However, young people vote the least.

When we look at the research, one of the reasons for that is as follows: At 18 years old, many Canadian youth are away from home for the first time. They may be away at university or off trying to find a job, making their own way in the world. They end up feeling they are not sure they know enough about the community in the new place they live. It is not where they are from. That tends to reduce voter turnout.

We also know from the research that, if young people do not vote at their first opportunity at 18 years old, they are quite unlikely to start voting when they are 25, 30 or 35. We put in place patterns of nonengagement and non-involvement. We add to that the general disgust of the public at political partisan games, and we end up having a very real risk of voter turnout continuing to go down.

I imagine turning that around, which we could still do before the next election, and saying that voting is now legal at 16 years old. Sixteen-year-olds can drive and pay taxes; 16-year-olds can risk their lives in many ways, and we accept that. Why could we not allow young people to vote at 16 when they are in their home community, when they have the support of peer groups and the potential for beefed-up civics classes? I have heard from many retired schoolteachers that they feel teaching democracy in schools has gone downhill in civics classes. Of course, this is in the provincial jurisdiction.

In the time remaining, I just want to say this: Let us seize the opportunity while we have time to increase the engagement of Canadian youth in the future of our country and to ask young people to step up and start voting at 16. I think we would see a positive impact for all of us, including seniors.

• (1845)

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today in the chamber to talk about the opportunities for youth engagement in our democracy, particularly voting in federal elections. I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising the important issue of Canada's voting age.

Section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedom states, “Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote”, and all citizens do eventually. The Canada Elections Act qualifies this right by adding the age requirement that citizens must be 18 years old. This is consistent with the voting age for provincial and territorial elections and most jurisdictions around the world.

The federal voting age has not always been set at 18. In 1970, it was lowered from age 21, which had been the voting age since Confederation. Since then, Parliament has often reflected on the voting age. Indeed, this very Parliament debated the idea of lowering the voting age to 16 a few years ago. While Parliament did not

agree to lower the voting age, our government and the Prime Minister in particular have made very significant efforts to ensure young people continue to have a voice in our parliamentary democracy.

I would like to highlight a few of the many opportunities available to youth for engaging in democratic life at all levels of government. For example, they can become an active member of political parties, and they can join or even launch social movements on issues of importance to them, as well as advocate for public policies.

Our government recognizes that youth participation in our democracy, which is not limited to voting, makes it healthier. This is why we have taken important steps to provide youth opportunities to participate in our democracy in recent years. For example, in 2018, the government passed Bill C-76, the Elections Modernization Act, which created a voluntary register of future electors, providing Canadians between the ages of 14 to 17 who wish to vote with the option to register early with Elections Canada. If they choose to sign up early, these youth are automatically included in the National Register of Electors upon turning 18, as well as the list of electors, so they are registered to vote and will receive their voter information card. The Elections Modernization Act also facilitated the ability of Elections Canada to hire 16- and 17-year-olds to work as election officers, giving young people an opportunity to be at the front lines of Canada's electoral process.

Our youth can and do participate in our democracy and continue to make a valuable contribution in a variety of ways. At the same time, our government recognizes that it is important that we continue to support ways to encourage participation. All of us here can and should do more to encourage the turnout of all electors. We need to be an example for our youth.

In March of this year, our government introduced Bill C-65, the electoral participation act, which seeks to enhance voter participation for all electors, including youth and students—

• (1850)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry, but the hon. member's time is up. He will be able to finish up during his one-minute response.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that the hon. parliamentary secretary made those points. Clearly, I appreciate the changes to the Elections Act to allow 16-year-olds to pre-register. However, nothing is going to have an impact on youth voting like moving the voting age to 16.

I hear from 16-year-olds sometimes who say, “Maybe we don't know enough yet.” However, I would remind all colleagues here that we do not cut off the ability to vote based on intellectual capacities. If we happen to be in a long-term care home with dementia, we have the right to vote.

Canadian youth have a right to say what needs to be done so that the climate of the future is livable and that they have a livable world and a chance to die of old age, a right that we rarely embrace but one that our kids may be denied.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Madam Speaker, our government recognizes that a healthy democracy requires youth engagement. Parliament has continued to support the current voting age of 18 for a variety of reasons. At the same time, important actions have been taken to further foster youth participation by the government and stakeholders, as well as youth-led organizations and initiatives. However, I would note that voters aged 18 to 24 continue to have much lower turnout than the national average. Our government believes more can be done to make voting easier for these electors, many of whom are post-secondary students. That is why the government's proposal to make voting on campus permanent through Bill C-65 is so important.

I want to thank Canadian youth for their continued engagement in our democratic institutions.

#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my question is very simple: How many hectares of dead pine remain standing in Jasper National Park? I ask the member to provide just the number.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have been in committee talking about these issues over the last couple of weeks. Jasperites have written to me. They have sent messages to me, and they have asked us to tone down the political rhetoric on this because it is reopening old wounds. Instead of trying to estimate the number of trees that still stand in Jasper, I know there are very many trees that still stand, thankfully, as the fires in Jasper did not consume the whole park. It is an extremely large park. It did consume a third of the town, and it was a great tragedy. However, the politicization of this wildfire by the Conservatives has been disgusting. That notion is shared by Jasperites.

I would like to read from a local Jasper newspaper called the Jasper Local. The article is called "Recipe for Disaster: Misinformation and wildfire", and it reads:

Record dryness, extreme heat, high winds, and a lightning storm. This summer in Jasper National Park, all of the ingredients of a recipe for disaster were in place.

Now, two and a half months after that disaster came to pass, another set of circumstances—misinformation, toxic politics and facts-starved social media blowhards, desperately looking to pin blame—have lined up to wreak havoc.

On July 22, 2024, after bolts of lightning ignited three sparks which blew up into fast-moving wildfires 30km south of Jasper, Initial Attack firefighting crews radioed Parks Canada Incident Command.

On top of another fire that sprang to life north of town, the news from the south wasn't good.

"All three fires were already well into the crowns," Parks Canada fire specialist Landon Shepherd learned...

Meanwhile, tornados were being reported all over B.C. and Alberta.

"Conditions were unprecedented," Shepherd said.

What wasn't unprecedented, was collaborating with his fellow wildfire specialists. And so as soon as he had a handle on the gravity of the wildfire situation, Shepherd picked up the phone and called Gord Glover.

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Gord Glover isn't a federal official. He's not an Ottawa bureaucrat, nor a politician. Glover is an Operations Officer with Alberta Wildfire, based out of Edson.

Last year, when Edson was under threat of being impinged by fast-running wildfires south of the community, Shepherd was one of Glover's first calls.

"They know to call us when their backs are up against the wall.... Alberta was overwhelmed," Shepherd said.

Even so, Alberta Wildfire sent what they could. Parkland and Yellowhead Counties roared in to help. Banff showed up. Ontario was sending teams. Yukon sent ignition specialists. From B.C., Quesnel was on their way. Valemount, Tete Jaune and McBride—who were under an evacuation alert of their own—sent engines. And many private contractors—running helicopters and heavy equipment—were used.

Jasper said yes. To resources. To help. They said yes early and they said yes often. They said yes to wildland teams and they said yes to municipal departments.

"We kept saying yes," Shepherd said.

But they didn't say yes to everyone.

Unified Command did not immediately say yes to an independent fire fighting businesses seeking to access Jasper to perform structural protection services for a private company.

They did not say yes to a group of trucks and personnel who—while having had been deployed by the Government of Alberta—did not have prior arrangements for access.

They did not say yes to a self-dispatching team who had not signed an agreement to abide by the ICT's rules of engagement.

And they did not say yes to a crew of mercenaries known as Arctic Fire Safety Services, the bulk of whose resources arrived the day after 350 structures burned in Jasper.

"We can't just have rogue agents patrolling around," Shepherd explained. "It's too dangerous. What if they get in the way of wildfire operations we're doing?"

Recently, those rogue agents have popped back up. And although the fires in Jasper have long been put out, the hyperbole that these hired guns are now spewing is once again putting people in harm's way.

This week, dressed in the shiny-buttoned, double-breasted uniform of a fire chief or high-ranking officer, Arctic Fire Safety Services president Kris Liivam complained to a parliamentary committee that his crews were obstructed from doing their jobs by Jasper's Unified Command. That testimony, lapped up like fresh milk by hungry alley cats, is being weaponized by opposition MPs and social media warriors alike.

Fanning the flames of these politically-driven comments sows division, mistrust and hard feelings amongst Canadians in general, but among Jasperites in particular. The negative rhetoric is wearing on locals, many of whom were involved in the incident, and many others who lost their homes and livelihoods to fire and desperately want fact-based answers.

Even Jasper's Mayor, now well-known to Canadians for his diplomacy, fortitude and tact, weighed in on the scuttlebutt.

"The present atmosphere of finger pointing, blaming and misinformation—"

• (1855)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Sorry, the hon. member's time is up as well.

The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Madam Speaker, the Jasper wildfire investigation has proved that the Liberals were negligent in protecting Jasper. If they are so proud of their record, why can they not answer a simple question? I will ask the question again: How many hectares of dead pine are still standing in Jasper National Park?

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**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Madam Speaker, I will continue with the quote from Jasper's mayor:

The present atmosphere of finger pointing, blaming and misinformation is beyond merely an annoying distraction, it delays healing," Richard Ireland said on Thursday, October 10. "It introduces fresh wounds at a time when we need recovery and unity.

Facts matter. What Arctic Fire Safety Services have said about their involvement in the Jasper Wildfire Complex is not accurate.

I would add as an addendum, that was the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa's witness at that committee meeting. The article continues:

Unified Command should not have to explain why they were not prepared to upend their established processes of deploying resources safely and effectively because some cowboys with big trucks wanted to act on "instinct."

Extreme atmospheric conditions and instability, combined with unprecedented dry fuel conditions, meant that Jasper wildfires were not in a fair fight on July 22.

But the people authorized to be involved in the battle gave it everything they had.

Jasper has taken some big punches, but if we are going to get up from the mat, we first need to know that we are in each other's corner.

The final line in this article is:

But if we can put politics aside and filter out good information from bad, Jasper—the town and the park—has all the right ingredients to make its rebuild unprecedented, too.

I wish the Conservatives would get on board.

CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I asked a question during question period about the possibility of the Prime Minister's calling a carbon tax election. This was an important question for me and it was based on conversations that I had with many people in my home riding of Langley over the summer months, people who are deeply concerned about the ever-rising cost of living. We hear the Minister of Finance saying that we should be celebrating that inflation is coming down to the Bank of Canada's target of around 2%, but I am saying that celebrations might be a bit premature and certainly offensive to people who are struggling to put food on the table.

A recently retired couple explained it to me like this. Groceries that cost \$100 when they first retired four years ago, today are costing \$175 for the same food and that is week after week. Even though inflation might be down, the price of groceries is still sky high. Government-induced inflation is a tax on people on fixed income. Add to that the Liberals' ever-increasing carbon tax, which drives up the cost of everything, including groceries, and is driving a record number of people to food banks.

The Liberals say, yes, they realize that the carbon tax is going up and they realize it is inflationary, but that taxpayers are better off with this carbon tax because taxpayers get some of that money back. In support of that audacious claim, the Liberals highlight the fiscal-impact-only table of the recent Parliamentary Budget Officer report, while conveniently ignoring that same report's broader economic analysis saying that the carbon tax deals a sharp blow to our national economy and to our per capita income. In other words, we are all poorer, on account of the carbon tax and that is why my question was timely and important. Many Canadians feel that. They know it when they are out buying groceries.

I will acknowledge that we have been asking variations of that question for some time and perhaps the minister, or the government House leader who answered the question, was tired of the repetition, but I asked the question in good faith. It was important for my constituents. It was important for me. That is why it was so disappointing to receive a flippant answer to my question about the carbon tax from the government House leader.

She said something to the effect, "Oh, the House has lost confidence in the Leader of the Opposition." Well, she knows the rules as well as everybody and that it is the Prime Minister's job to earn the confidence of the House and it is the opposition's job to test that confidence from time to time when it is appropriate to do so. We have been doing that very effectively since Parliament resumed again after the summer break. We have posed several appropriately placed non-confidence votes. Unfortunately, with the ongoing support of the NDP, the government still stands to continue wreaking economic havoc on our people.

The minister knows how this all works and maybe she is anticipating already what it is going to feel like to be on this side of the House. She is going to have her chance soon enough, but for now, we are asking the questions and I am hoping for a more serious answer to a legitimate question. Why is the Prime Minister afraid of a carbon tax election? Why not let Canadians decide?

• (1900)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite is from Langley—Aldergrove. That constituency is in British Columbia. British Columbia does not utilize the federal backstop system, so there is no federal carbon tax, as he calls it, in British Columbia. Every time he stands up in the House and says that he wants a carbon tax election for his constituents in British Columbia, in Langley—Aldergrove, what he is doing is continuing to try to impress upon his constituents that the federal carbon tax even applies in his constituency, but it does not.

Either he is unaware of that fact or he is intentionally trying to mislead his constituents; I do not know which one it is. I will not hazard to guess or even hazard to suggest that he is trying to intentionally mislead his constituents into thinking that a federal carbon tax is applied to any amount of fuel in British Columbia, because it simply is not and never has been.

We have had the conversation before and have repeated it enough times that every member of the House knows that the federal carbon tax does not apply in British Columbia. If he would like to talk about carbon pricing, there was just a provincial election in British Columbia. He can talk to the future premier of British Columbia about carbon pricing, because British Columbia is a leader on carbon pricing. It always has been.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

In fact, it was a government in which many of the member's colleagues served that brought in this country's first-ever carbon pricing program, which is a provincial one. It has had its own system since 2008, more than 10 years before the Government of Canada implemented carbon pricing across the country. One of the reasons we did it across the country is that it was working. The emissions per capita were dropping in British Columbia. British Columbia's economy continued to grow as now Canada's emissions have gone down and Canada's economy continues to grow.

If the member opposite would like to talk about carbon pricing, then what we should also talk about is the cost of climate change itself. The Insurance Bureau of Canada reports that, for a second year in a row, Canada exceeded \$7 billion in insured damage from severe weather and events linked to climate change. It is a scientific fact that climate change increases the severity and frequency of extreme weather events and many of those have affected my colleague's riding. Certainly his province, even just during the provincial election, received an extreme amount of precipitation in a very short period of time, constituting extreme weather.

Without significant additional actions to reduce emissions, these costs are projected to balloon to \$35 billion in 2030 and to between \$80 billion and \$103 billion in 2055. The cost of inaction is far too great to bear. What we need to do is join countries like those in Europe; states like California, New York and New Jersey; and countries around the world that are determined to lower their emissions. The Conservatives are continually demonstrating not just their climate denial but also the fact that they are literally in the pockets of big oil and gas. It is as if their statements in the House were written by oil and gas lobbyists.

On the other hand, our government is taking serious and ambitious climate action. It includes using all of the tools in our tool box, which includes putting a price on pollution, and it also includes an industrial pricing system, widely recognized as the most cost-effective way of combatting climate change. Just today, industry called the provinces to work together to strengthen the industrial price on pollution.

Once again, if my colleague from British Columbia would like to talk about carbon pricing in Canada, that is great. If he would like it removed in British Columbia, he needs to talk to provincial politicians because there is no carbon tax in British Columbia from the federal government.

• (1905)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for highlighting the fact that there has been a provincial election recently in British Columbia. He might not be aware that both parties said in their electioneering that if the federal government drops the carbon tax, they will too. There are different variations of it but, effectively, they are responding to calls from their constituents who do not like the federal carbon tax.

The provincial carbon tax arguably was accepted by most British Columbians, but the federal carbon tax backstop has been driving that tax to a level that is inflationary and that is unacceptable to British Columbians. Yes, I do know what I am talking about, and I also want to highlight the 81% increase in food bank usage in British Columbia. If the Liberals are so confident that their policies are good, why not call the carbon tax election?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Madam Speaker, this is simply astonishing. The member just did it again. He suggested that there is a federal carbon tax in British Columbia. He said the provincial price on pollution in B.C., the provincial carbon tax, was widely regarded as a good measure, but then he said the federal one was driving up inflation. They are very similar. One cannot be good and effective while the other drives up inflation. What we have seen is a decline in inflation. Inflation is at 1.6%. We saw a 0.5% cut in interest rates just this week.

As the carbon tax has gone up in Canada, as it does every year, year after year, the Canada carbon rebate has also gone up. What we have seen is that eight out of 10 families get more money back through the Canada carbon rebate than they pay in the climate action incentive or the price on pollution. I would just remind Canadians and British Columbians that that does not apply in British Columbia because British Columbia has been pricing carbon for over a decade.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:09 p.m.)



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