



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 360
Monday, October 28, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 28, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1105)
[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of the motion, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of members to move up a few rows so we have the proper backdrop of those who knew the individual whom I am going to speak about.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged, yet saddened, to rise to honour my former boss, my mentor and my friend, Robert Sopuck. I thank all my colleagues for allowing me this opportunity to honour this great Canadian, the former member of Parliament for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Robert, or Bob as he was known by his many friends, passed away suddenly, but peacefully, last week in his home near Lake Audy, Manitoba. He is survived by his beloved wife, Caroline; two children, Tony, and his wife Laine, and his daughter, Marsha, and husband Graham; three grandchildren, who he simply loved to teach about the outdoors, Eden, Senon and Esmee; by his sister, Joyce, and brother, Tim; by many nieces and nephews; and by so many other loved ones across the country who simply cherished Bob.

I want to offer, on behalf of the Conservative Party, our appreciation to Bob's family for sharing him with us, particularly his beloved wife, who he often referred to so proudly as "the inestimable Caroline." His love for her serves as an inspiration for all of us who have been lucky enough to witness it.

Today I hope to do justice to a great parliamentarian, and a great man, and I apologize in advance as I may get emotional. I have

some family with us today. My wife and I were married, but we had our big wedding celebration on Saturday, and we were expecting Bob and Caroline to be with us.

Back in 2016, I was hired by Bob after a very robust interview process. I went to his office and we talked about life and politics for about two hours over a scotch. He cared about the person, not the résumé. Little did I know at that time the profound impact he would have on my life.

Bob was described by a newspaper he surely never read, the Toronto Star, as the "right-wing environmentalist", which is actually a very good way to describe him. However, he was not an environmentalist, he was a conservationist. He believed that those who lived, worked and played on the land were our best conservationists and the true environmentalists. He recognized the value of modern agriculture, of ranching, of natural resource development and all of the rural communities that those industries supported. He was an avid outdoorsman, a true conservationist himself, and perhaps the strongest advocate that hunters, anglers and trappers in Canada have ever had.

Bob was born to parents of eastern European descent and immigration, and while he was raised in the city, he spent his summers in Whiteshell, where he learned his love of the outdoors. He caught his first fish at the age of four with his father, which kicked off a life of outdoor pursuits.

Bob went on to receive an honours degree in science from the University of Manitoba, and then a Master of Fishery Science from an ivy league school, Cornell University, with a particular focus on rainbow trout. From there, he held a wide variety of careers in land, water and wildlife conservation. He worked as a fisheries biologist at both the provincial and federal levels before he decided he wanted to purchase a beautiful, sprawling piece of farmland near Lake Audy, just south of his beloved national park, Riding Mountain National Park, on which he built with his own hands a beautiful, secluded log home.

He spent a lot of time in the Arctic and did a lot of work there, focusing on Arctic char research, and had so many amazing stories. He had such respect for the people he had the chance to live with, the Inuit. He did some of the earliest environmental impact research on the long-proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and I think one of his greatest regrets is that pipeline never came to fruition.

Privilege

Bob was a farmer. He was a guide. He was an outfitter. He was the environmental adviser for the former premier of Manitoba, Gary Filmon. He went on to be the environmental director at the Pine Falls paper plant, improving water quality, quantitatively. He worked for Delta Waterfowl, and after retiring from this place, returned as a board member there. He did environmental monitoring in the oil sands. He understood policy, because his boots were on the ground.

He often joked, when somebody would introduce him to do a speech, that it was reasonable to think “Can this guy not keep a job?”, but those jobs and those experiences formed his views on conservation and on natural resource development and the rural way of life.

I list this depth of careers because it highlights that he earned his stripes, which allowed him to be an incredible advocate and an even better member of Parliament.

- (1110)

Bob was a brilliant communicator, and he knew how important effective communications were, that words mattered. He was brilliant not because he was suave, some fast-talking salesman-type guy, but because he was authentic, honest, thoughtful, direct, articulate and had a heck of a vocabulary on him. He was wicked smart, and he always preferred to stand up for the little guy. He was not willing to lay down to the mobs, to the loud minority that wanted to shout down views like his at times. It was an inspiration when he so proudly and so frequently stood up and bluntly said what needed to be said. He had been doing it for decades.

Starting back in 2001, Bob wrote a regular column with the Winnipeg Free Press, in which he refused to shy away from issues like hunting and angling. Those essays beautifully articulated the spirituality and connection to family and nature that so many millions of Canadians enjoy today. He explained why so many of us felt that it was vital to protect the rights of those people and their ability to take part in those traditional heritage activities.

He went on to compile these essays into a wonderful book, *A Life Outdoors*, which, looking back while I was reading it last night, I think is an unintentional biography, from catching that first fish with his dad at four years old to his life as that avid outdoorsman. It is a wonderful book. I would encourage people to pick it up, particularly if they enjoy outdoor activities. It also has some phenomenal recipes for wild game, which I have tasted and are very good.

Bob had the chance to elevate those communication skills and decided to run for office back in 2010. He ran because he knew he had something to offer. He wanted to make a difference and to fight for what he believed in. That is what he did in this place every single day of his nine years as a member of Parliament.

Bob had an incredible understanding, which I was so lucky to have witnessed, of what this job was. The first was, obviously, to represent our local communities, to fight and advocate for them, and try to get things done for them. This is something that each and every one of us in the House works to do. The second was to do what was right for Canada, the big-picture country that has diverse views and many challenges at times, to fight for what was right and

to fight with that same level of passion that he did for the communities he so proudly represented.

He knew his constituents. He knew their way of life, their values, their struggles, their challenges, their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations. He had the benefit that he had worked in politics in his early days with the Manitoba government, as had his wife, Caroline, which allowed him to be all the more effective. He knew when to be loud, when it made sense to pick a fight, and do it publicly, to try to move the needle on something. He also knew when it made more sense to keep it behind the scenes to try to quietly get things done. He knew to keep it on the ice, and that is why he was so respected and liked by colleagues from across party lines.

Locally, he was so proud to have helped deliver funding to pave Highway 10 through Riding Mountain National Park. Anybody who knows the area or lives in area and commutes through it knows how important it is. Anyone who has the chance to visit that beautiful national park will be a benefactor of the work he did lobbying to get that done, as has anyone who benefited from funding through the recreational fisheries conservation partnership program.

That program was launched back in 2013 and supported fisheries habitat restoration projects led by recreational angling groups, fisheries groups and conservation groups. There are lakes across Canada where spawning habitat has been restored, aerators have been installed and anglers will reap the benefits today, tomorrow and for the years ahead. Just as Bob wanted, it was done with the people who care so much about the natural world, who will get in hip waders, get into the water and want to make meaningful impacts on our fishery stocks. He knew the best people were those who wanted to get things done, who not only wanted to talk about doing things but they put their money where their mouth was.

Through perseverance, persuasion and perhaps just sheer stubbornness, he was able to convince former Finance Minister Flaherty and Prime Minister Harper to enable this plan, and it is an ever-lasting legacy for the projects that it undertook. It would never have happened without Bob Sopuck. I would go so far as to argue that, single-handedly, Bob has saved more fish in our country than anyone else ever has.

- (1115)

Throughout his career, he was an effective and long-time member of the fisheries committee and loved every minute of it. I think his colleagues appreciated him there, too. That committee was always, and I think still is, rather cordial with many unanimous reports. He was also on the environment committee, which at times is a little less polite.

Bob was a pit bull. Given his Ivy League education and his series of careers prior to being elected, not many people were going to best him at any topic at those two committees. That included the bureaucrats who I remember once telling Bob, whenever he was there, that they knew they had to be on their toes. He was so very proud of that. He just revelled in the opportunity to rip apart some pompous executive who thought they could get away with saying things that were not actual answers. He would fight to get the answers and he would run circles around them.

Now, I am a proud member of the environment committee, and the lessons I have learned could not be more clear. Some of those officials now know where I learned it from. I have to mention the Fisheries Act specifically, because Bob wrote a paper back in 2001 entitled “The Federalization of Prairie Freshwater”, which was the policy framework used by the Harper government when making important changes to the Fisheries Act.

It was 10 years after he wrote it that the catalyst for those changes finally happened: it was overland flooding in Saskatchewan. At the Craven country jamboree, threatened due to excess rain, a campground was unable to be pumped because DFO declared there was water there now, so clearly fish could be there. There was habitat so we had to prevent it from being pumped. Normal person logic said that was not really fish habitat, it was a campground, but it was the definition of fish habitat in the act that was the problem.

Bob knew it and identified it years earlier. He went on to lead the charge drafting that legislation to make those important changes to stop ridiculous overreach from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans that had a real impact on rural Canadians and our prosperity. He understood that unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats had to be kept in check, that they did not understand our way of life, that he had to be involved in educating them.

Bob was the founder of our Conservative hunting and angling caucus with the help of his close friend, the member for Red Deer—Lacombe. That member has carried the torch ever since. I know for a fact he will not only keep Bob's legacy alive, but he will be the steadfast advocate that community needs and will continue to work on their behalf. He is joined by so many of my Conservative colleagues, such as the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, who are dedicated to protecting these communities. There are so many more; they know who they are, and it is appreciated.

There are millions of law-abiding firearms owners in this country, of hunters, of anglers, of people who contribute directly to enhancing our wildlife populations, and as Bob would always say, are the environment's best friends. We would not think communities like this necessarily need protecting, but, unfortunately, they do. For the most part, rural Canadians do not really care what happens in big cities. They just kind of want to be left alone, but for some reason, many of those radical environmental and animal rights activists living in their concrete jungles have a real keen interest in what happens on our private landscapes.

We need great MPs like my colleagues to continue to stand up for that now in his honour. I am proud to join those efforts and will continue to take part in any of those future fights. When I think

Privilege

back to some of the fights, he revelled in a good fight. One I remember he led the charge on, which was important, was Bill C-246. It was an animal rights bill that would transfer human rights to animals. What it was going to do was destroy modern agriculture, animal livestock agriculture. It was going to destroy hunting and angling in this community.

He led with help from across party lines, using those relationships he had built by being the guy he was, to kill that legislation. I remember when the RCMP decided to try to appease those animal rights activists and get rid of the iconic muskrat hat for Mounties, Bob was having none of that. He wanted to protect the livelihood of those trappers across the country and the warmth of our frontline police officers serving in our northern communities. He walked the walk and he was a true friend of the trapping community. Many of us may remember him strutting around here with a fur jacket, with his own muskrat hat and these big old skunk mitts. He was the real deal.

Bob was always on the lookout for government overreach, or efforts that would impact the people he was sent here to represent, which is why he was great. He was not just about defending, he was vocal in supporting and promoting, proactively working to set the stage to communicate with the average person who otherwise might not think about these issues or even realize they cared about them. In many cases, these were urban audiences, like when he was writing for the Winnipeg Free Press.

• (1120)

What might be less known is the impact he had on so many people, directly, personally, individually and, particularly, on young people. I think it is important to highlight the legacy that this leaves behind. Bob freely shared his wisdom and his wealth of knowledge with young people around him, understanding that it was not just about today, that it was about tomorrow. Anything he could do to nurture the next generation, he was willing to do.

He was a mentor to so many of us, to those who worked directly for him and to our friends he got to know, he would spend time with and to whom he would give, generously, of his time. We, each and every one of us, loved him. He gave so much time. He would answer questions candidly, provide advice when asked and sometimes when not asked. He would share his life experiences and those incredible stories that he had amassed over that wonderful life of his. He treated us like part of the team or the family, which is why I think he was referred to as Uncle Bob by so many people. He made us believe that we actually had something to contribute, that we mattered.

Privilege

I know I am going to miss some names on the list, but I want to give a bit of a scale of some who have been impacted. I think of Duncan, Brett, Michael, Blake, Olivier, Jay, Megan and the Simms boys, just to name a few. Just like him, he wanted us to be authentic and humble. He wanted us to be proud of where we were, what we were doing, where we were going and what it meant.

Simply put, he wanted each one of us to believe in ourselves and he made that a little bit easier. He loved telling stories and he had so many profound statements. I do not know what to call them other than Bob-isms. I can think of a couple, one of which was, "I take the view that if you give up fat, sugar, and alcohol too, you may not live longer, it will just feel that way."

On a more serious note, there are two quotes. "Life is about chapters. You have to turn the page on one before you can start the next." "Nothing lasts forever, and nothing stays the same."

He lived in the now. He was not one for birthdays or arbitrary reasons to celebrate. He preferred milestones and achievements. He espoused sharing stories of the past, not living them, of looking to the future but not dwelling on it, enjoying the moment, and being proud and happy with where you were, being rational and thoughtful, asking questions and acting with purpose, and recognizing that the best way to achieve success was to do it with passion and to embrace the challenge in front of us and to find the opportunity within it.

When Bob retired, our relationship did not just stop like we would expect with many bosses and their employees. He called in regularly to catch up. I would go visit Bob and Caroline at the farm. He was the first to pledge a donation when I called him with the crazy idea that I was going to run for politics. He was the one I had introduce me at the nomination campaign launch. He has been by my side since the day we met and I will forever appreciate his friendship, as I know so many others do.

The best part is that I am not unique. There are so many others. I am part of a massive group of people to whom he has meant more than he can ever know. I am going to miss Bob. I thought we had more calls. I thought we had more business on the farm ahead of us. I will be forever grateful for all he has done for me.

In closing, I want to share a quote from one of Bob's favourite writers, Henry David Thoreau. "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Bob lived and lived well. He was a great Canadian and he will live on in all of us who had the privilege to know him. I cannot think of any higher achievement, any higher recognition of a life well lived, than having those who knew us proudly say, after we are gone, that we lost one of the good ones but that I am happy I knew him.

He achieved that. We will miss him and we will never forget.

• (1125)

The Speaker: Before we move to questions and comments, I think it would be appropriate to say that when I was a new MP, I was thoroughly impressed with Bob Sopuck's quick smile, those

ruddy cheeks framed by that silver white beard and his firm handshake that welcomed to Parliament Hill. As the hon. member said so well, he will be missed.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be very brief, I did not know Bob Sopuck before the by-election in which he was successfully elected. He and I were elected at the same time. He had a very strong personality, a personality that sticks with someone, as did the manner in which he conveyed his thoughts.

I always thought of Bob as a great outdoorsman, someone who truly understood the benefits of a healthy environment, whether it is nature, land or water. I had a deep respect for him. I would classify him as a true Conservative, but a Conservative who could really express himself. One would respect the gentleman and his attitude.

I want to give my condolences to Caroline and the family. I know Bob will be dearly missed and in the prayers of many of his former constituents and Manitoban families. I was really touched by the member's comments in regard to Bob, and I wanted to take the opportunity to wish his family and friends well, and give them our prayers.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the kind words. I will pass those wishes along to the family, though I suspect they may be watching right now. It is appreciated.

The member touched on something I find quite interesting. Bob always talked about the fact that "conservation" and "conservative" come from the same root word. He was the biggest believer and defender of the fact that Conservatives had nothing to be ashamed of when it came to the environment. The greenest prime minister in Canadian history was Brian Mulroney.

His focus was always on outcomes, not process. It drove him up a wall when there was more of a concern on how do we get to where we are going, rather than actually getting there. That focus on outcomes would serve us all well in our lives, but more broadly in government. Government is a behemoth that often, as Bob always said, does not understand many of the facets of our way of life. That is why it is so vital that we step up to defend them and fight as true environmentalists for a better, healthier planet based on metrics. We need to improve the biodiversity of wetland habitats and fishery stocks. That is what I am going to continue to fight for.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by commending the member for Portage—Lisgar for his touching tribute. We were touched by his testimony. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and all of the people we represent, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to my colleague and to the family and friends of Robert Sopuck. I encourage them to take care of themselves.

I was elected in 2019, so I did not have the privilege of knowing Mr. Sopuck. However, based on what I have heard this morning, I think I would have really liked to meet him. It seems as though he was a true model of commitment. He was described as a right-wing environmentalist, which is something that we do not see very often. I think that we need more people like him, compassionate people with a sense of duty. According to what the member for Portage—Lisgar said, Mr. Sopuck stood up for the little guy. I like that and I support it. The role of an MP is to stand up for their constituents, to proudly and faithfully represent them and to go to bat for them. I support that too.

That is a challenge that the 338 members of the House of Commons have to deal with on a daily basis: Knowing when to go to bat for their constituents publicly and when to do so privately. A lot of informal discussions take place here, and I think we get a lot of results that way. I am absolutely convinced that I would have loved this man.

Take what I just said as an example. I am a Bloc member from Quebec talking about a Conservative member from Manitoba, and I have just pointed out a number of things we have in common. We must always remember that, most of the time, we have a lot more in common than we might think. I urge us to work together to make progress on the issues and improve society, for the common good. I am sure my colleague from Portage—Lisgar will agree with me.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, all our elected officials and all those we represent, I once again offer my most sincere condolences.

[*English*]

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the well wishes.

I agree with him. Bob had a fondness for Quebec. Quebecers have a very high rate of firearms ownership and have a love of the outdoors: plodding, sledding and doing all the modern and traditional heritage activities. He always felt a strong connection with many people in Quebec. That is why he was focused on Canada broadly and on the many individuals who shared his views. I could not be more proud of that and can only aim and hope to achieve half of what that man ever did.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech today. It was very touching to hear the words he had to say about his former colleague. While I did not have the pleasure of working with the late Mr. Sopuck, I have heard many things from my colleagues in the lobby. Many have very funny stories about their time working with him.

Privilege

I have to acknowledge that there were very few times the late Mr. Sopuck and the New Democrats saw eye to eye, but one thing they appreciated about him was that he was an avid outdoor enthusiast who championed the rural way of life. As part of his enthusiasm, he was also a dedicated conservationist. As someone who comes to this place on the heels of Linda Duncan, another important conservationist in the House, I know that was very important to the New Democrats.

His devotion to a rural way of life endeared him to many across party lines, and on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I would like to extend my condolences to his family and friends. I would ask the member to share some more stories of the late member.

• (1135)

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the kind words.

Bob probably did not get along with every NDP MP and certainly would happily disagree on many policy issues, but to give an example where that was not the case, I note former MP Fin Donnelly. I had the privilege of joining them on occasion for a scotch and an across-the-lines political and candid among-the-rurals conversation, because that was the kind of guy Bob was. He could not necessarily understand why people felt the way they did, but he would say that we should probably sit down and ask them. That is what made him a brilliant communicator for different audiences, particularly the urban audiences that he worked with during his time at the Winnipeg Free Press.

I think Bob still owed Fin a couple of bottles of scotch from a couple of bets that did not go his way, but he will hopefully be forgiven for that. I know he enjoyed many opportunities with some of his former colleagues.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is funny is that, even though I am an Alberta MP who has been here for quite some time, two of my best friends have been Bob Sopuck and Candice Bergen, the MP my colleague just replaced. People back home might be questioning my Alberta credentials right now, but they do not need to worry about that; they are still intact.

Of course, I express my condolences to Caroline and the entire family.

One thing I look back on is that Bob and I spent a lot of time here together. He put the meat on the bones of the Conservative hunting and angling caucus. He galvanized it. I was here a bit before him and we became instant friends because of our like-minded views of the world. I grew up on a beef ranch in Alberta and loved hunting and fishing. I have spent time as an outdoorsman, a conservation officer, a national park warden and a fisheries technician for Alberta Fish and Wildlife working on walleye. We became fast friends. I was able to spend a bit of time in his riding and he was able to spend a bit of time in mine. We did a bit of hunting and fishing together too. The Sims boys were there.

Privilege

One of the best duck hunts I have ever been on in my life was with Bob Sopuck. These canvasbacks were going 100 miles an hour, jinking all over the place. We could not hit anything. I openly admit that. I think we probably fired 100 rounds of shotgun shells and came back with three ducks, but we had a lot of fun.

He was a great guy, and I am beside myself. I am going to miss Bob. We stayed in touch on a regular basis. He did not just come and go or do his thing and leave; he still cared. I was so angry when he left because I felt like I lost half of the duo, but I am glad he did now because we never know how much time we are going to have. I am glad that he was able to spend those years back in his beautiful log house on the farm with Caroline.

One thing I loved about Bob is that he would always find a way to defend rural folk. As a guy who grew up on a cow-calf operation, he would defend beef farmers as some of the best environmentalists we have. They are often under attack. I wonder if my colleague would elaborate on how well Mr. Sopuck defended the cattle ranchers in this great country.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe. They were as close as one can get. The member is a true Albertan, but I think Manitobans appreciate having him in their back pocket.

Bob cherished those hunts and those days on the lake with the member and so many other people. That is where he was happy. On the beautiful, sprawling farm he had, he managed the landscape. He was a gardener of his little piece of earth. That was the way he thought. He wanted more ducks, more available, and he took action to do so.

When I was working for him, we made a video called “Eating Canadian Beef is Good for the Environment”. It did not seem that controversial, but it did get a bit of push-back. It was the first time that I learned many animal rights activists are kind of sociopaths, and he warned me about that. A lot of the online comments, death threats and suggestions of ways he should die, which I hid with current advanced tools, were telling.

He did it with such pride. He knew that ranchers are our best boots on the ground and are important for maintaining our national grasslands and rural communities. I could not say how many groups thought he was the best friend they could have ever had: hunters, anglers, trappers, ranchers, every other type of agricultural producer and many others.

He was always grounded by his belief in the rural way of life: protecting it, maintaining it and fighting for it. He was one of the best at it there could ever be.

● (1140)

The Speaker: I thank all members for participating in a touching tribute to a former member, one who touched so many people here.

We wish Caroline, his family and all his friends the solace of having so many memories with him.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a privilege it is to stand here, as I am preparing to do a speech in a completely different direction, and have the opportunity to reflect on a colleague with whom I had a chance to serve for

many years in the House of Commons, Bob Sopuck. It was such a privilege to listen to my hon. colleague's fantastic speech and reflections. My thoughts are, as everybody else's are, with the family.

Moving to the issue we have been discussing for quite some time and will potentially discuss for quite some time, I imagine until there is a resolution, the best way to start my comments today is to read from the opposition motion that precipitated the conversation we are having right now. It was from back in June, and I believe it passed in the House on June 10, which is a key date, as members will hear when I read from the motion.

The opposition motion, which passed the House with the support of the NDP, the Bloc and the Conservatives of course, stated:

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 order was adopted on June 10.

—the following documents, created or dated since January 1, 2017, which are in its or her possession, custody or control:

(a) all files, documents, briefing notes, memoranda, e-mails or any other correspondence exchanged among government officials regarding SDTC;

(b) contribution and funding agreements to which SDTC is a party;

(c) records detailing financial information of companies in which past or present directors or officers of SDTC had ownership, management or other financial interests;

(d) SDTC conflict of interest declarations;

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

(f) all briefing notes, memoranda, e-mails or any other correspondence exchanged between SDTC directors and SDTC management;

provided that,

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

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

Privilege

We are sitting here five months later and are continuing to debate this because the conditions in this opposition motion, passed by the House, have not been met. Of course, as soon as the House came back, our opposition House leader raised a question of privilege, and that question of privilege was debated at length.

In your ruling, Mr. Speaker, you referenced the adoption date of June 10, and we get a chance, from the speech you made when you made your ruling, to talk about some of the issues. As I was preparing for this speech, I took the time to read some of the comments you made. I have sat here and listened to government members, or future opposition members, hopefully in the near future, raise some of their concerns. I was not here for the debate when we were raising the question of privilege in the first place, but I did not realize that those concerns had been raised. You, Mr. Speaker, dealt with them and made the ruling that you made regardless. It is interesting to note that.

● (1145)

I will note that in the Speaker's ruling, the Speaker said, "The Chair cannot come to any other conclusion but to find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established." He went on to say many other things, but he pointed out, even as he made some of the points the government has pointed to in its comments, questions and debate, that it is "ultimately for the House to decide how it wishes to proceed in the face of such objections".

Here we are today as a House continuing to fight this situation.

We can take a look at some of the background, for folks who might be tuning in for the first time. Many people have heard of what we have referred to as the green slush fund, but we could refer to it with many different terms, all of which would probably properly focus on the scandalous nature of this situation. It goes back to the Auditor General of Canada finding that the Prime Minister turned SDTC into a slush fund for Liberal insiders, and this is the point we have made over and over again.

There is a recording of a senior civil servant talking about the "outright incompetence" of the Liberal government giving 390 million dollars' worth of contracts out inappropriately, at a time when the government is racking up unprecedented, and "unprecedented" is not a strong enough word for it, levels of spending, deficits and debt. We are spending more today on interest on the debt racked up by this government than we are spending on transfers to the provinces for health care. That is unheard of. I think that is incomprehensible for most Canadians, and it is understandable that people would be infuriated by what they are hearing and that they would want answers.

What we are doing here, holding this place, temporarily, as His Majesty's official opposition, is getting prepared to clean up the mess the Liberal government has created. We are standing here on behalf of voters. I have the privilege to stand here on behalf of the voters of Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, who at every turn are asking me to level some form of accountability from the government, using the power I have, with the seat I have in the House, for the unbelievably and devastatingly wasteful spending we have seen.

In this case, we are talking about \$390 million. The Auditor General found that SDTC gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects

that, on occasions, could not demonstrate any environmental benefit or development of green technology at all. We are talking about \$334 million, from 186 cases, to projects where board members held a conflict of interest and \$58 million to projects without ensuring contribution agreements were met. I believe the Auditor General also made it very clear that the responsibility falls on the Liberal government and the Liberal minister responsible.

We are here to get answers. We moved a motion so information could be made available to the appropriate authorities. I have to make it really clear that nowhere in the motion does the House order the RCMP to conduct an investigation. This is something the Liberals have said over and over again. The House is simply asking that documents be provided and have the opportunity to be scrutinized.

● (1150)

The whistle-blower who was at the public accounts committee had this to say: "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." We trust the whistle-blower, and if the documents are provided, we have faith in the RCMP to decide what to do with them.

I will note, for history's sake, that the Auditor General gave a clean bill of health to SDTC back in 2017, so it is important to understand the timeline, with a government that chose Liberal insiders as board members since then. Liberal members have had lots of time to speak on this topic and make arguments. It was only after 2017 that we saw the board voting to give itself tax dollars from the fund the Auditor General is referring to.

It is interesting because the hon. member, the lead member in the House for the Liberal side who stands up so often in this place and who just heckled me, can go into caucus every Wednesday and, if he wants to, make the argument to have these documents produced so Canadians can make their assessment. Surely, if his argument is correct, the documents will bear that out and then he can stand up in the House and point to those documents. I am not sure whether he can get on the list to actually speak in the caucus meetings; I am not sure what the process is. It might be easier to get up on this topic. I am sure the Liberals are looking for anybody to get up and talk about anything other than whether their leader should step down right now, so maybe this is the time. I will give him some advice, if he is willing to take it, that maybe this is his opportunity to make the argument for the release of these documents so his arguments can be borne out.

Privilege

I will tell members why Canadians are concerned. I host constituent round tables. We do something a little unique where we bring in 16 constituents on a rotating basis and do 40 or 50 two-hour round tables; people come in, we go around the table and everybody gets a chance to speak, which may be a bit foreign to Liberal members. Everybody gets a chance to speak and raise their issues, and then we have a really good discussion on the issues. I will tell members that at these round tables, people are talking about how they are trying to live their lives in the context of the unbelievable crises, on multiple fronts, that have been caused by the Liberal government. They bring up issues around housing. More and more people are showing up at my round tables. This is in Alberta, where the cost of housing is less expensive than in other parts of the world, but still constituents are talking about housing challenges.

The thing I have noticed more than at any other time, and I have been hosting these round tables for 19 years as a member of Parliament, is that I am seeing 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds coming to round tables talking about the fact that they are having trouble finding work. Then, when they find work and start working full time, they do not believe they are ever going to be able to afford a down payment for a house. In some cases, they are worried they cannot even afford rent for a house. Again, this is not something that I have seen before. However, I have actually seen the same kinds of concerns brought up as I have travelled the country speaking on other things to university students.

Another thing we are hearing a lot about is crime and safety. I am hearing more from young people who are going to university and do not feel safe on public transit anymore. It is an absolutely common concern brought up by constituents at my round tables. Also, I am certainly hearing a lot about budget balance and fiscal responsibility, and questions on who is going to pay for this massive bill incurred by the Liberal government; I do not even want to say it is with a lack of results.

● (1155)

Certainly, there has been a lack of results corresponding to the spending, but the worst thing about this situation is that the more the government spends, the worse the results are. Our outcomes are going down on almost every front that can be measured. The Liberals' response in the House of Commons day in and day out is to ask why we will not support their ever-increasing spending. They have introduced new programs. It is probably good that we are having this prolonged debate right now, in the sense that we want to get an outcome with some accountability; at the same time, while we are having this conversation, the Liberals cannot introduce a new \$10-billion, \$20-billion or \$30-billion program they have cooked up with the NDP, in partnership, to drive us even further into debt. Day in and day out, that has been the Liberals' answer: "Why will you not spend more? Why will you not support us to spend even more money?" Taking a look at the numbers, over \$300 million in this case, it is no wonder Canadians do not trust the government to spend their money.

I was elected in January 2006. When I got elected, I replaced someone who had sat on the Liberal side for four straight elections. The context at that time, the main issue, was the sponsorship scandal. The sponsorship scandal did not even come close to touching the numbers we are talking about now. We talked at that point about

the long-gun registry that had been brought in by the Liberal government. That seems like ancient history, but we are seeing history repeating itself over and over again. Now we have a gun buyback, which is a complete misnomer because the government never owned the firearms in the first place. The government is talking about spending billions of dollars buying firearms from law-abiding Canadians while record levels of firearms are being smuggled into our country, illegal firearms being used by criminals on the street right now, and the government is doing nothing about it. Of course, back in those days, we also had the HRDC boondoggle and irresponsible spending.

At that time, those were huge issues that brought down a minority Liberal government, but the context is much different today. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars more in deficit spending over the years and our fiscal situation is on the brink of disaster. We have not seen it this tough since the Trudeau years of the 1970s and 1980s. The Trudeau legacy was very difficult for subsequent governments to dig out of. In fact, as I often remind my Liberal colleague across the way, it was the Martin-Chrétien Liberal government that had to cut record levels in spending for health care, social services and education. Because of the policies of the Trudeau government of the seventies and eighties, there had to be 32% cut, absolutely cut, from spending on health care, social services and education, through government transfers, in 1995. That legacy has obviously continued and worsened today.

We are in a worse situation today because of subsequent governments within that same legacy. I believe that out of 25 budgets, there were 24 deficits. That is intolerable when we look at the context of what we are discussing today. We need to get to the bottom of this. As we work to get to the bottom of this, I think the one thing that would help right now would be, quite honestly, if the Prime Minister finally had a realization, if he listened to some of his caucus colleagues who are speaking out. If there is a lot of confidence over there, maybe we will hear that in their questions: declarations of confidence in the Liberal government's approach to things.

If the Liberals are so confident in their approach, maybe we could have an election. Maybe this would be the time. It is the longest-serving minority Parliament in history because of the support the NDP has given the Liberals, to prop it up. Maybe it is time we have an election and take it to the people. If the hon. member over there and his colleagues are so confident, surely their fortunes would turn around and they would be confident in having an election based on the policies of the government, a carbon tax election, which so many Canadians are calling for.

● (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been witnessing an ongoing game that the Conservative Party continues to play at significant expense.

Privilege

I would like to provide an example of foreign interference. This is an issue that affects us all. All Canadians are concerned about foreign interference. I care passionately about the Sikh and Indo-Canadian communities and the impact that foreign interference is having on them. There is everything from extortion to assassinations, as well as allegations of the Conservative leadership being manipulated through foreign interference and parliamentarians being involved in it. However, every leader in the House of Commons, except for the Conservative leader, has gotten the security clearance. It is not good for the Conservative Party to put its personal interest ahead of the national interest.

Can the member explain why the leader of the Conservative Party refuses to get a security clearance when so many Canadians are concerned about international foreign interference in Canada today?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, the member has asked me a lot of questions, but this might be the first relevant question he has asked in many years. The reality is that, when asked about this, the Conservative leader, the future prime minister, said in the House of Commons the other day that he is not going to be gagged by the Liberal government.

He has the support of the person who was in charge of holding us to account when we were in government, as opposition leader. Tom Mulcair said the same thing: He would not do it if he were the Conservative leader either. The Liberals would like nothing more than for the Conservative leader to take a briefing he cannot talk about so that he cannot ask the questions he is asking in the House of Commons. Those questions are superuncomfortable for the Liberals.

This whole issue is connected to that. It is all about government censorship and the government controlling information Canadians get. I hope the member will take to heart the question that he has just asked, go into caucus on Wednesday, fight for a spot at the microphone and demand that the government release the names of everybody affected by foreign interference in the House.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the last few weeks of this debate, the government has paralyzed the House of Commons, which is unable to continue with the work of reviewing private members' bills, motions and legislation here on the floor.

In the past, all opposition parties were always united in opposing government corruption, especially Liberal government corruption, which we have seen over the past many decades whenever Liberals were in government. It would eventually lead to the point where it paralyzed Parliament in some way. Typically, opposition parties have always held together in holding the government to account and making sure it produced the documents being demanded by a motion such as this.

Has it perhaps been shown now that other opposition parties are going to break away in the coming weeks and not hold the government to account for the corruption that it has allowed in this one particular fund, leading to this awful situation in which it has come apart? Could the member reflect on that?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I referenced that the election in January 2006 was precipitated by the sponsorship scandal. It was a

minority Liberal government at the time that had been supported by the NDP. We saw that it eventually got to a point for the NDP that the scandal and information coming out was bad enough that no one with a conscience serving in opposition could possibly prop up a government in that circumstance.

As I mentioned earlier, the situation we are facing today is infinitely worse than the situation in 2005. I think Canadians find it absolutely abhorrent that members from the NDP, particularly, and the Bloc, from time to time, are finding ways to twist themselves into pretzels to support a government that is so clearly on the wrong path for Canadians.

• (1205)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening intently to the debate, and it is fascinating to hear the information coming from the member for the Conservative Party. I was born and raised in the Waterloo region. I am proud to have been born Canadian. I did not choose the community I was born in. I did not choose my citizenship. However, I will always pick Canada first.

I find it interesting because a lot of what the member responded to is not actually accurate. I listened to the reports that came out last weekend, and the commissioner of the RCMP stated very clearly that the RCMP cannot take this information, because Canadians have certain privileges. People wear their poppy with pride. These are hard-fought rights and freedoms.

Why not let the steps unfold so that the committee can do its work? We know that, with the first wave of information that has gone to the RCMP, it cannot look at it, because we have to respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The rights and freedoms of Canadians matter.

Is there anyone in this chamber opposed to the question of privilege? When will the member's party start basing its decisions on evidence and not ideology? Does he support the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Hon. Mike Lake: It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, to listen carefully to that question. The assertion the member makes at the start of the question is that I have said something that is incorrect, but nowhere in her question does she actually itemize anything I said that was incorrect. She talks about evidence, but she does not give one piece of evidence that anything I said was incorrect.

The fact of the matter is that she talks about the privilege motion, but it is important to go back to the opposition day motion for the production of papers that was passed. The Liberals voted against the motion, but the House voted in favour of it. We are here today because the government clearly has not complied.

If the member gets another chance, I would love to hear what she would deem incorrect that I had to say in my speech. I assert that there is nothing and that she knows there is nothing. This is just part of the debate we have seen week in and week out since we came back in September.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am basing it on the assumption that the leader of the official opposition—

Privilege

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear it first.

The hon. member for Waterloo has the floor.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I am basing that comment on the point that the leader of the official opposition would be gagged. There is no such—

The Deputy Speaker: That is just falling into debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will comment on the previous question. Debating whether the House of Commons should have voted for the original opposition motion is the old debate. Liberals are debating something that has already been pronounced on by the House. What we are debating now is the actual issue of the breach of privilege.

In his speech, the member talked about the accusation that it is the opposition paralyzing Parliament. The government could just table the documents and have this debate over with. We would rather deal with the actual problem than study it. Furthermore, I agree with the member: I do not want to debate new government bills that are going to continue on the same agenda that has wrought so much destruction to the Canadian economy. Does he agree?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with that. Anything that stops the Liberal-NDP partnership from continuing to destroy the economics of our country is important. I also want to point out the reason we are having this debate, which is that the Liberals continue to do exactly what the hon. member said. They relitigate a debate they already lost a vote on, which was the opposition day motion. That vote is done. It was passed in the House. They did not win. We are here today because members such as the hon. member continue to stand up in the House and relitigate that debate. This can end immediately if the government simply complies with the conditions of the order that was passed in the House.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, here is where the member is incorrect when he asserts that his leader does not want to be gagged.

I ask members to listen to what iPolitics stated:

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 is 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.

No gag would be imposed on the leader of the Conservative Party. Why will the leader of the Conservative Party not do the honourable thing, get the security clearance and show Canadians that he is going to put the nation ahead of his party?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. member stands up and asserts that I am incorrect in what I said, but he does not actually reference what I said.

Yes, our leader would be restricted. It is very clear. We could say he would be "gagged" or whatever other word we use, but he would be restricted in his ability to say things that he learns in the briefing. People might have different opinions on everything that is going on. This foreign interference scandal is one of the most important issues facing our country today. We need the government to name the names. We have been very clear that we want the government to do so; then we can decide where we go from there to protect our country.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members opposite may think that we are here to talk about the production of documents, something that has engaged the House for weeks now. I suspect that the Liberals have set themselves to tune out any words I say and perhaps instead are watching cat videos on their phones.

The documents in question are really not the issue here, and the government knows that. The government does not want its own Liberal members to understand what the issues are. It wants them to keep watching cat videos in the hopes that they will not realize just how much contempt their leader and their ministers have for them and for the House.

The Speaker has ruled that the Liberals have violated an order by the House to turn over evidence to the police for a criminal investigation into the latest Liberal scandal, which involves \$400 million. In essence, the government is telling us that it knows best and that the will of the House can be ignored no matter what the Speaker and the members say.

However, as the Prime Minister said in his mandate letter to the previous government House leader, "Canadians expect us to work hard, speak truthfully and be committed to advancing their interests and aspirations. When we make mistakes—as we all will—Canadians expect us to acknowledge them, and most importantly, to learn from them."

It is time for the government to speak truthfully. It does not want the documents released, not because it is concerned about the legal process but because it is embarrassed. The Auditor General has found that Liberal appointees gave \$400 million of taxpayers' money to their own companies. This involved 186 conflicts of interest. The government is concerned that providing the documents would reveal even more corruption.

The issue is about \$400 million of wasted or stolen taxpayers' money, while Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat their home and house themselves. The government's embarrassment is understandable. The implication of what has so far been revealed is that Liberals were illegally benefiting Liberals, advancing their own interests and aspirations instead of the country's best interests. What was supposed to be a way of fighting climate change was instead a way to line the pockets of people who had Liberal connections.

After nine years of the current government, Canadians are not surprised by the climate hypocrisy; however, there is no reason for them to accept it. The Prime Minister has apparently forgotten his own words about admitting mistakes and learning from them, or maybe he thinks he and his government are so perfect that mistakes are impossible so there is nothing to acknowledge and nothing to learn.

The government seems to think there is a problem with the opposition parties in this matter. The Liberals say that the work of the House is being tied up and that if the opposition would just allow a committee to deal with the matter, then we could get on with more important business. The government wants to know why the opposition cannot see that.

When Liberal cabinet ministers make statements like that, they seem to have checked their collective brain at the door. What is more important for the House than to establish that the government does not dictate to the elected members? When the House makes an order and the Speaker affirms the order, the government does not get to say no.

I realize it would be more convenient for the Liberals if the opposition did not exist. That may be why its first idea at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was to suggest that it be given free rein to act without parliamentary oversight. The government wanted the opposition parties to go home and allow it to work without oversight. That is not the way parliamentary democracy is supposed to work. I would hope that the government MPs who were here at the time look back on that period with a certain amount of embarrassment that they were persuaded to agree to such a thing.

This was, after all, supposed to be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history. In 2013, the newly elected Liberal leader, today's Prime Minister, said, "Political leadership is about raising the bar on openness and transparency." Eleven years later, the government has a reputation for secrecy. The Prime Minister will not release the documents. What is he trying to hide?

● (1215)

The Prime Minister seems to have forgotten his own words, or maybe he was just saying something he did not believe in order to get elected. Canadians believed him when he said, "For me, transparency isn't a slogan or a tactic; it's a way of doing business." In 2024, Canadians doubt the truth of that statement. Obviously it was a slogan and a tactic designed to fool the public.

Canadians are no longer fooled. If the Prime Minister and his government believed in transparency, there would be no need for me to be speaking today. They would have released the documents already. Instead they look like a criminal with something to hide.

The supposedly open and transparent government is defying the will of the House. The Liberals' actions show just how hollow their idealistic words are. If the Liberals want to move the work of the House forward, something we all would like to see, then the path forward is simple: Obey the will of the House, accept the ruling of the Speaker and provide the documents.

What happens to the documents is not the Liberals' concern. They are not the Law Clerk. They are not the RCMP. The govern-

Privilege

ment should not be telling others what to do with the material. The Liberals have already shown that a cover-up is their preference. They must end the cover-up and hand over the evidence to the police so Parliament can get back to working for Canadians. Why do they continue to defy the will of the House and the ruling of their own Speaker?

It is probably worth mentioning again why this is an issue. The Auditor General of Canada found that the government, led by a Prime Minister who boasted about transparency, turned Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. A recording of senior civil servants slammed the outright incompetence of the Liberal government, which gave 390 million dollars' worth of contracts inappropriately.

The Auditor General also found that, first, SDTC gave \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects that on some occasions could not demonstrate an environmental benefit or development of green technology. Second, \$334 million was given to over 186 projects in which board members had a conflict of interest. Third, \$58 million was given to projects without ensuring that contribution agreement terms were met. The Auditor General 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.

By not complying with the Speaker's ruling, the Liberals have paralyzed Parliament, making it impossible for anyone here to address issues like the doubling of housing costs, Liberal food inflation, and crime and chaos. Given the Liberal record, I wonder whether that is their plan. With the level of incompetence they have displayed over the past nine years, I would not want to talk about housing, crime or the economy either, but maybe we should.

After all, after nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians have never been less safe. Insane catch-and-release policies are putting dangerous repeat violent offenders back onto our streets. The reckless experiment of taxpayer-funded hard drugs has created crime, chaos and disorder across Canada. Statistics Canada has revealed that since 2015, violent crime is up by nearly 50%. Homicides are up 28%, while sexual assaults, auto theft and extortion are up 74%, 45% and 357% respectively.

● (1220)

Meanwhile, the Liberals' failed experiment funding hard drugs with taxpayer dollars has increased drug deaths by 184% since 2015. In London, Ontario, the chief of police has been clear about the unfolding disaster, saying, "Diverted safe supply is being resold into our community. It's being trafficked into other communities and it is being used as currency in exchange for fentanyl, fuelling the drug trade."

Privilege

In British Columbia, the Vancouver Police Department noted that around 50% of all hydromorphone seizures were diverted from the Prime Minister's taxpayer-funded hard drugs program. Since 2015, nearly 45,000 Canadians have died from drug overdose. It seems that everyone except the current government can see the problem.

When it comes to housing, the Liberals know they created a problem, but they do not know how to fix it. Housing has become unaffordable in Canada because we are failing to build enough homes for Canadians. This was confirmed by a recent report from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, which showed that Canada is still building fewer homes than in the 1970s, when Canada had half the population it has today.

National housing starts declined by 13% between August 2023 and August 2024. There has been a 25% drop in housing starts in Ontario. In Toronto, housing starts in August 2024 had a massive 48% decline over 2023, while Vancouver saw a drop of 34% year over year.

The Liberals' housing hell is not limited to Toronto or Vancouver. Across British Columbia, housing starts dropped by 31%, and in Victoria housing starts decline by 33%. Manitoba and Saskatchewan housing starts have dropped by 14% and 12% respectively during the first eight months of this year compared to the same period in 2023. Winnipeg's housing starts are down by 16% over the same period, while Ottawa had 17% fewer new housing projects. Housing remains unaffordable in Canada, in spite of the Liberals' giving billions of dollars to the same gatekeepers who caused the housing crisis in the first place.

Since last year, food prices in Canada have risen overall by 3.9%, with meat up by 9.5% and margarine up by 9.9%. The price of baby food has increased by 5%. These price increases hit seniors and low-income Canadian families the hardest. According to a recent poll by Angus Reid Institute, more than one-third of Canadians have struggled to afford enough food to feed their family. This is unacceptable.

Our food prices are an afterthought for the Liberal government. While inflation may have slowed, food prices are not going down, and the Liberal's carbon tax further restricts producers' competitiveness through added transportation costs. It is fair to say that Canada's food security is at a tipping point.

These are definitely not topics that the Liberals want to address. Since they have no plans to fix anything, they instead tie up the work of the House, hoping that Canadians will not notice. The Liberals try to pretend that they are standing on principle, instead of being open and transparent. They are trying to convince Canadians that covering up wrongdoing is a virtue. Canadians do not believe them.

The Liberals say it is all the opposition's fault, while they continue to do the wrong thing as they ignore the will of the House of Commons and the authority of the Speaker. Instead they are trying to deflect the issue and are pretending the order is somehow improper. What could be more proper than the House of Commons' demanding accountability from the government? There is 800 years of constitutional tradition backing that up. The Prime Minister may

not like it, but we are not here to do what he likes; we are here to do what is right.

● (1225)

The government's House leader has said this debate is, "something every single Canadian should be extremely alarmed about." I agree. Canadians should be alarmed and concerned about a government that thinks it is above the law. Canadians should be alarmed by a government whose ministers do not seem to understand what constitutes a conflict of interest. Canadians should be alarmed by a government that illegally rewards its friends. Canadians should be alarmed by a government that tries to cover things up while claiming to be open and transparent.

Parliament needs to be respected by the government. The documents must be released. It is not the government's responsibility to consider what happens when the documents are released. It can let the law clerk and the RCMP worry about that. That is not the Liberals' job. The Liberals' duty is to release the documents and to stop their contempt of Parliament, which is the democratic system that they claim to uphold.

When a party that claims to be the most transparent government in Canadian history refuses to respect the will of the House of Commons, Canadians are right in wondering what the party is trying to hide. We know there is something questionable about the \$400 million. How much more is there? Canadians deserve to know the truth, no matter how much the Liberals want to cover it up.

We all know why we are here. The Liberals' selective amnesia is not fooling Canadians. The Auditor General found evidence of serious mismanagement at SDTC, and maybe even criminal activity. The Liberals response to this, as with so many other things, is to cover it up and pretend there is no problem. Maybe, from their perspective, there is no problem. After all, apparently the funds in question went to those with Liberal connections. How can anyone see a conflict of interest in awarding contracts to a few friends?

The Liberals need to remember that this is not their money. The \$400 million did not come from the Liberal Party. It came from ordinary Canadians who are struggling to put food on the table as they are being carbon taxed to death. They deserve better. The Prime Minister is fond of telling the media and the House that Canadians will forgive him for not taking direction from the Conservatives. His ministers frequently use the same line. It makes for a nice media clip.

However, the Prime Minister and his ministers really should take direction from Conservatives respecting Parliament, ethics and transparency, not to mention crime, housing, taxation and balancing the budget. No, I do not think Canadians are going to forgive him.

Privilege

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will emphasize that this is nothing more than a political game the Conservatives are playing, at a very expensive cost. I want to pick up on the member's quote when he says, "to do what is right". That is what we are asking the Conservative leader of Canada to do: to do what is right. To take another quote from the member, he says Canadians deserve it, and he, again, is right. Canadians do deserve to know why the Conservative leader today is refusing to get the security clearance.

Why is he putting his political party ahead of the interest of the nation? That is a legitimate question, and we have yet to hear any argument as to why and how the leader of the Conservative party is justifying that behaviour by refusing. The leaders of the Bloc, the Greens and the NDP, as well as, obviously, the Prime Minister, all have that security clearance.

What is the Conservative Party scared of? They owe an answer, a credible answer, to Canadians. What is it?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the ask is mutual. The government has to be responsible, answer questions, tell the truth and uncover what it is trying to cover up, such as the scandal of \$400 million of taxpayers' money.

The member is a symptom of a government that expects everybody to do its dirty work. This is a government that hides things every day and that has been a government of secrecy since day one. It is a majority government in the House, and it continues to do that with the NDP members.

This is a political gain. The Liberals are talking about political gain. There has never been a government in Canadian history that always wants to look for opportunities for political gain, with ID politics and everything it has done so far. Shame on the government for questioning members about this.

To change the topic, let us get the answer to this question: Where is the \$400 million?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are some pretty surreal moments in Parliament at times. That is what I think when I hear the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons asking the official opposition party what it is scared of and demanding answers, when all we have been talking about for weeks is the transparent handing over of unredacted documents. That is a question for the government to answer.

I have a question for the opposition member. When are we going to vote on this? The Bloc Québécois is ready to vote, and the Conservatives know they have the support of the majority in the House. When do we vote to force the government to hand over the documents?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my Bloc colleague for his question.

[*English*]

The government has started asking the opposition parties to do something. The Liberals should ask themselves to do what is their duty, which is requested and expected by Canadians. That is the first thing. They have to look in the mirror and ask themselves to do this. That is what the Conservatives expect from this debate.

As soon as the Liberals do that and show the level of transparency expected, then we will have a resolution to this crisis, which they created. This is a fire that the Liberals made, and they want to send the fire department to put it out.

That is the government that we are dealing with. Until the Liberals are responsible enough and transparent enough to do what is right, we will have a problem.

• (1235)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think my question is very similar to that of my friend from the Bloc.

I have been here for five years, and I think that this is the first time I have seen the House in violent agreement with the content of a motion while members are refusing to vote on that same motion so a committee could do the work that is called for in the motion. If I were a Canadian sitting up in the gallery, I would be rightly confused by the little game being played. The reality, of course, is that the Conservatives are simply holding up the business of the House as a way to try to force the production of these documents, something which, incidentally, is not called for in the content of the motion being debated.

Why does my friend from the Conservative Party feel it is appropriate for the business of the House to be held up for so long when what he is calling for, and what he just spoke to, is not actually in the content of the motion his party has put forward?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the NDP has been propping up the government for the last two years, on good and bad issues, to get to this stage. The government felt so comfortable to do whatever it wished to do. Of course, it was supported heavily by the NDP.

The NDP should ask the government, as they were partners with a kind of marriage, over two years, and they are still working together, to do the right thing, which is to release the documents and tell the truth. That will solve the problem.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton Manning for his excellent speech. I have been listening to this debate for a long time now. The reality is that the Auditor General found that money had been funnelled from Liberal appointees at the green slush fund to themselves. All we are asking for is that the evidence of this crime be released by the government. I would think that would be a natural thing, that the government would want to co-operate with the police and get to the bottom of this crime.

What does the hon. member think is in these documents that would be so damning against the government that it would allow Parliament to be paralyzed for weeks on end?

Privilege

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the \$400 million could be more. That is why the government is fearful of releasing any source of information on this, hiding behind certain things that it believes that it can convince Canadians of.

The first responsibility for decision-makers, policy-makers and representatives of Canadians is to tell the truth. We are supposed to be managing the money and wealth of Canadians properly and not wasting it on friends and people who support certain parties. The government is in the position of hiding everything so Canadians do not know the truth. If Liberals are really being transparent, they should do that.

I believe the \$400 million, unfortunately, may not be the full amount. There could be more. There is a lot of stuff that Liberals have been hiding, and Canadians deserve the truth.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I asked a legitimate question of the member, and he chose to completely ignore it. That does not make the question or the issue disappear. Canadians have a right to know why the Conservative leader of Canada has chosen to put his party ahead of the nation.

Can the member across the way explain, from his perspective, why the leader of the Conservative Party is not coming clean with Canadians about getting the security clearance and, if he continues to refuse to do so, to explain the real reason? Is there something in his background that Canadians should know about?

• (1240)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to know the truth about the \$400 million, the waste of money, and the mismanagement of their wealth, the taxes that they work hard for to pay to the government. That is what Canadians expect.

The government can try to change the channel as much as it wants. Is it going to happen? We know exactly what Liberals are looking for, and we know what they are hiding. Canadians are not fooled by the government. Hopefully, the truth and the sun will come out to uncover the scandal that is deeply rooted in the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is still not an answer.

Let me move to something a little more relevant in his mind. At the end of the day, the only prime minister in the history of Canada to ever be held in contempt of Parliament was Stephen Harper. The parliamentary secretary at that time is today's leader of the Conservative Party. I could argue that he is once again in contempt of Parliament by not doing what is in the nation's best interest.

Why is the leader of the Conservative Party so driven to not get that security clearance? What is it in his past that is preventing him from doing the honourable thing and putting the nation ahead of his political party?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the multi-billion dollar scandal government can face others and ask them to do something that it does not do itself in the first place. It is very unfortunate, but knowing the nature of the government, and of the member who asks the same question over and over again, the answer is simple. They should be transparent and tell Canadians what they are hiding about that \$400 million. They need to tell the truth

about what they have done. Then we will have a chance to discuss other things. Otherwise, they have had scandals, worth many billions of dollars, that Canadians are fed up with.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House once again. Before I speak to the motion of privilege, if the House will indulge me, I will say that tomorrow will be one year since the passing of my mother and missing of her cookies. However, we smile and we celebrate her life today. I know that she watched me speak many times in the House. As we have all lost loved ones, it kind of hits home today.

First and foremost, I am honoured to represent the wonderful people of Essex and to address the House today. As my colleague and friend, the member for Oshawa, pointed out last week during his speech on this very topic, we are once again proud to stand today on behalf of the constituents of our ridings to hold the government accountable for its Liberal corruption. However, we do not take any pleasure in this. Returning to our ridings, trying to explain how the government has undermined our institutions and corrupted the way government operates is truly a disheartening example of governance.

I want to highlight the government's mishandling of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, often called the green slush fund. This program was created in 2001 to support innovation and sustainable technologies, and ran smoothly under both Liberal and Conservative governments until the current Prime Minister took office. I know a thing or two about clean technology.

It is unacceptable that the Liberals are refusing to hand over all the documents related to the Prime Minister's green slush fund to the RCMP within the required days. My colleagues on the public accounts committee received a report from the Auditor General last June in which 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 members who voted to give out that money had a conflict of interest.

I am tired of this lack of transparency, which only deepens distrust and frustrations among Canadians. After nearly a decade in power, we have yet more evidence that the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost in terms of both financial resources and the increasing crime and corruption that has plagued the government. Their inability to be transparent about their actions is unacceptable.

The Speaker has ruled that the NDP-Liberals have violated a House order to turn over evidence to the police regarding a criminal investigation into their latest \$400-million scandal. This blatant disregard for accountability shows their ongoing refusal to be open and honest with Canadians.

Privilege

The Speaker's ruling, coupled with the NDP-Liberals' stubbornness, has effectively paralyzed Parliament. This inaction makes it impossible for us to address pressing issues like skyrocketing housing costs, rampant food inflation and the rise of crime and chaos in our communities. We cannot move forward while they hide behind their secrecy.

While it used to be normal for working-class young people to buy homes, now 80% of Canadians tell pollsters that home ownership is only for the very rich and definitely out of their reach. After nine years of NDP-Liberals the situation is so bad that there are now 1,400 homeless encampments in Ontario alone.

In Ontario and British Columbia, government charges account for more than 30% for the cost of a new home. The federal government takes the biggest share. In Ontario, about 39% of total taxes on a new home go to politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa. The GST alone adds \$50,000 in cost to a \$1 million home. In my great riding of Essex, people are struggling. According to the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors' September market update, the average sales price was up 8.2% to \$579,290.

At a time when many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, with rising housing and food costs, it is incredibly disappointing that we find ourselves still discussing the Liberal government's role in the \$400-million green slush fund scandal. The Auditor General has clearly stated that the responsibility for this scandal lies directly with the former Liberal industry minister, as well as the current one, who failed to adequately oversee the contracts awarded to Liberal insiders. This lack of oversight has contributed to a serious breach of public trust at a moment when transparency and accountability are more important than ever.

At the heart of this issue is the Auditor General's finding that Liberal appointees were allocating \$400 million of taxpayer money to their own companies, resulting in 186 documented conflicts of interest. This is not just a scandal; it is a betrayal of the trust that Canadians place in their government, and it underscores the urgent need for transparency.

This money could have gone back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians or toward beneficial programs that would help our communities. This money may have been used to support neighbourhood projects, support the growth of small enterprises or lessen the financial strain on families dealing with growing expenses. It is a lost chance that may have had a significant impact on the lives of regular people. We are talking about \$400 million in taxpayer money that may have been wasted or stolen, while everyday Canadians struggle to afford food, heating and housing.

This situation is intolerable, especially when so many are suffering due to the government's lack of accountability. The NDP-Liberals must put an end to their cover-up and hand over the evidence to the police. Only then can Parliament get back to its critical work of serving the interests of Canadians. Their continued obstruction is unacceptable.

- (1245)

The division between those in government and regular Canadians who must deal with the fallout from such carelessness is widened by this incident. Why will the NDP-Liberals not stop hiding behind

the green slush fund and release the required documentation so that Canadians can have the openness and accountability they deserve? Only our sensible Conservative colleagues will put an end to the turmoil and corruption and figure out what happened to the \$400 million.

To know where we are going, we must know where we came from, and it is really important to speak about the scandal timeline.

Dating back all the way to late 2018, the then Liberal industry minister, Navdeep Bains, expressed concerns regarding the Harper-era chair of SDTC, Jim Balsillie, given his public criticism of the government's privacy legislation. Minister Bains then proposed two alternative chairs to the CEO of SDTC as replacements in a phone call. One of the candidates proposed was Annette Verschuren, an entrepreneur who was receiving SDTC funds through one of her companies. Then the minister, PMO and PCO were warned of the risks associated with appointing a conflict chair, and were told that, up until this point, the fund never had a chair who had interests in companies. It then went into June 2019, another full year later, and Minister Bains decided to proceed with the appointment of Annette Verschuren despite repeated warnings expressed to his office. The new chair then went on to create an environment where conflict of interests were tolerated and "managed". Minister Bains then went on to appoint two other controversial board members who engage in unethical behaviour in a breach of conflict of interest.

Now we are all the way to June of 2024. By the way, I skipped over five or six other points I could have made. However, in June of 2024, the Auditor General's report was released, finding severe governance failures of SDTC. Our colleagues asked a whole bunch of very direct, pointed questions at the committee. One of the testimonies on SDTC in committee was that:

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.

We also heard that:

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.

Privilege

We can look at those folks who are so busy trying to run their businesses, who are working overtime to try to make ends meet, those young adults who are trying desperately to figure out how they are going to afford a home, if they can afford a home, and those folks standing in lines at food banks who do not have time and/or the energy to watch the House of Commons. They are very busy trying to get their lives back in order after the failed Liberal-NDP coalition. Because of that, I want to give a quick overview of the privilege motion and why it is so important that we have this debate today.

● (1250)

To really bring us all back to kindergarten, the key mandate of SDTC, a federally funded non-profit, is to approve and disburse over \$100 million in funds annually to clean technology companies. In a former life, back when I was in the world of business, we did exactly that: clean technology. Is it a good thing to have clean technology? Absolutely, it is. It protects our environment and creates great jobs. Exporting that technology is a lot of what our business did.

However, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada through the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act to fund the development and demonstration of new technologies. It is an arm's-length, not-for-profit organization that was created to support projects that develop and demonstrate new technologies that address issues related to climate change, air quality, clean water and clean soil. It is responsible for the administration of the tech fund.

Here are the problems. The key problem is that SDTC executives awarded to projects, in which they held conflicts, over \$330-million worth of taxpayer funds.

In 2019, the former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains began appointing conflicted executives to the board. The Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner initiated separate investigations after whistle-blowers came forward with allegations of financial mismanagement.

● (1255)

The Prime Minister, in 2015, spoke about sunny ways. What he really said was that we were going to have an election on transparency. Canadians not only deserve the documentation, Canadians want the documentation. They want it handed over so that the RCMP can do what it needs to do.

Why are we into, I believe, week four of this debate, if the government has absolutely nothing to hide and no conflict of interest and if there is nothing to see here, just like the many other conflicts of interest that we have seen the government, since 2015, be a part of?

Canadians do not forget. They do not forget about the Aga Khan. They do not forget about the WE scandal. It is getting awfully tiring to have to continue to hold the government to account, to hold its feet to the fire, when what we really should be debating in the House is how we are going to get Canadians' lives back on track. We cannot do it because we need to know the truth. We need to know where the slush fund dollars are going. We know who is ulti-

mately responsible for this. We need to know for sure that these dollars were invested properly, that big corporations, big buddies of the Liberals, are not padding their pockets with this.

Why do we have people standing at food banks? Why do we have veterans lying in the streets? Why do we have an opioid crisis? Why do we have so much money that should be used to help everyday Canadians and their families, putting diapers on babies and pablum in their mouths, going to profit large corporations, only friends of the Prime Minister?

I was elected in 2019 and they just said to bring common sense to the House of Commons. I said that I would do my best. Sometimes, it really blows my mind when we hear the hypocrisy from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who want to talk about everything but the issue at hand.

The issue at hand is nothing more than the Prime Minister, who spoke about nothing other than transparency in 2015. We now have zero transparency. In order for me to represent the great folks of Essex the best, they deserve answers. Therefore, we in the House of Commons, the official opposition, deserve answers.

That is why I am very proud to speak about this today. We will continue to hold the government to account. It is the service and the job of the official opposition to hold the government to account. That is why it is so important, to those folks at home who perhaps wonder why we are spending so many days on this. Quite frankly, it is because we are responsible to them, ultimately, and we will not stop. We will be very steadfast in continuing the hard work that we do here in the House of Commons.

In closing, I just really want to reiterate one more time why this is so important. It is a question of privilege for all of us. We know that we cannot effectively do the important work that we are asked to do without the answers. We are not asking for anything other than the documents. It is as though I had a buddy and my buddy said to just show them, if we have nothing to hide. All we are really asking is for them to just show us. If they have nothing to hide, show us, and we will move on with government business.

As always, it is an honour to represent the folks of Essex.

● (1300)

I look forward to questions from my colleagues, but more importantly, I look forward to getting this resolved so we can get Canadians back on track, we can put diapers on the little ones, we can feed the little ones, our young adults can have a good-paying job and, probably most importantly, we can see some light at the end of the tunnel. We know where that light is. I am excited to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Privilege

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party today was the parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who was the only prime minister in the Commonwealth who has actually been held in contempt of Parliament.

Fast-forward to today, and we have the leader of the Conservative Party continue to filibuster a motion that all other opposition parties and the government want to see come to a vote. This is nothing but a game to the Conservative Party of Canada. Conservatives know that, but they refuse to focus on the real issues.

I have raised the issue of why the leader of the Conservative Party has put his party ahead of the interests of the nation by not getting a security clearance. I am wondering if this member could provide his thoughts as to why the leader of the Conservative Party today refuses to join the other leaders in this chamber in getting a security clearance, so he is better able to deal with the issue of foreign interference. Can he justify that?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I have been watching this debate keenly for the last three and a half to four weeks, and this question continues to come up.

I guess the real question is, if the member really wants to continue on with the government business, why does he not stand in caucus this Wednesday and ask his Prime Minister, his leader, to just release the documents? Then we could get on with another order of business.

It is kind of mind-boggling to me, and talk about duck and deflect, oh my goodness, that has got nothing to do with the motion that we are speaking about today. I do not know why he would ask the question. As a matter of fact, I believe it would be out of order. However, if the member really wants to move on with government business and get to the answers that he continues to ask, it is really simple. He could just ask the Prime Minister to release the documents, and we will get moving.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope you are feeling on top of your game because for the past few weeks, listening to these debates here, in the House, has been a test of strength. I am a strong person, but even I have had my moments.

We agree. We are examining a question of privilege because an order was made. Instead of lobbying questions from the other side of the House, as it is doing now, the government should take appropriate action.

Indeed, this is a complicated and dense program. Still, some businesses were counting on it because it had the potential to make a difference. Now that it has been tainted with scandal and corruption, however, we have to get to the bottom of things. That means we need the documents.

The Conservative Party also says that it has Canadians' backs and is looking forward to moving on to something else. What is the something else it wants to move on to? Could it be an election?

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the real, short answer, and I am pretty sure I speak on behalf of the majority of Canadians, is yes, we would love to move on with the carbon tax election. Absolutely.

That being said is, what do I want to move on to? I go back to my original statement. I want to go back to common sense for Canadian people. I want to move on to opportunities for Canadians. I want to go back to getting crime off the street. I want to go back to making sure that people are not \$200 short each and every month to pay their bills. I want to go back to supporting small businesses.

However, if it means a carbon tax election, then I certainly hope that the Bloc Québécois will join our forces in getting to the polls.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, while the member from Winnipeg North is stating that we are playing a game, this is \$400 million on another one of their scandals with misappropriation of funds.

Could you please speak to this, that there are so many people in your riding who are struggling financially, and yet they see the government wasting another \$400 million, even though the member says it is just a game that we are playing? Can you please comment on how this is affecting your residents and what you have heard from them?

The Deputy Speaker: I will not be answering it, but I bet the hon. member for Essex can.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, that is a dynamite question. My hon. colleague is absolutely correct, and I will tell members why. We often hear that politics is a game. Politics is not a game. Politics is people's lives.

What I am hearing from the great folks and small businesses of Windsor-Essex is to please leave them alone, let them go and stop taxing the world from them. They understand that we cannot move on until we get full transparency and that we have a job to do. They send us to Ottawa for a reason and are asking for us to give them the answers. They are asking that we let them make a choice at the ballot box.

My colleague is absolutely dead-on that this is not a game. This is people's lives and people's livelihoods.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, as I have shared before when rising for this motion previously, the Greens supported the original motion back in June calling for documents with respect to the mismanagement of SDTC. We support this motion as well so it can go to committee to be investigated. What we do not support is continuing to use House time and resources to day after day speak about the exact same motion.

Privilege

I have an update for members in case they might be curious. It is the third time I have risen on this point. We have updated numbers on how much money has been spent by the Conservatives on debating this motion. We have now had 96 Conservative members speak to it, which is about 48 hours if we only account for the Conservative speeches. That adds up to over \$3.3 million spent continuing to speak to a motion we could vote on if the Conservatives would just stop speaking to it.

Here is my question for the reasonable member for Essex: At what point will he call out the need to stop using House resources and bring this to a vote?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, House resources are not only for the House of Commons proper but also for committees, so let us speed this process up so we do not drag our feet in committee. If the unredacted documents are released, that is a whole bunch more hours we will not have to spend in committee.

The answer is right there. Let us get behind and vote for this motion, release the documents and get on with House business.

• (1310)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I thank the member for showing us what a Conservative government would act like. It would not be able to multi-task or strategize in addressing policy issues, as the Conservatives are forcing the House of Commons into a stalemate for one disclosure. It is an important disclosure, yet many different proposals have been provided to a number of Conservatives on how to get past the stalemate. As the previous MP just mentioned, \$3.3 million has been spent, which could have been spent on discussing many other important issues, like whether the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project should be funded by the federal government as a sustainable development initiative.

A very simple solution has been provided to get past this. Does the member agree that we should vote on it so we can debate other matters?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I suppose the answer is simple, although I was a little confused with my colleague's opening statement with regard to how a Conservative Party would govern, which we are looking forward to. I do not agree with that.

To answer her question, if somebody makes a mistake, they need to be held accountable. We do not just cut into that and say that, while they have made a mistake, we should find a solution. No. Hands need to be held to the fire.

The Prime Minister promised open and honest transparency, and that is what the Conservatives will always stand for. To the member's point, \$330 million is a lot of money that I am sure she could really use in her community.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the democracy-defending constituents of the autumn-coloured riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Today, we are debating a subamendment to the amendment of the motion. That is about as parliamentary a sentence one could say in this chamber. This motion calls for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to complete a report on the government's green slush fund scandal. The amendment adds some witnesses, along with the subamendment.

However, Parliament is what this debate is truly about: Parliament and the government's contempt for parliamentary democracy.

Exposing government corruption is a core function of Parliament. As one of the longest-serving members in Parliament, I have seen off a few governments. There is a natural tension between a government and any Parliament, but the current government is different because the Prime Minister is different. Never before have we had a Prime Minister who openly stated his admiration for the Communists who control China.

It is not unlike the praise that former Liberal prime minister Mackenzie King gave Adolf Hitler. Writing in his diary, the former Prime Minister described meeting Hitler. He wrote that he had personally praised Hitler for the "constructive work of his regime". The current Liberal Prime Minister has made these comments: "There's a level of admiration I actually have for China because their basic dictatorship is allowing them to actually turn their economy around on a dime and say, 'We need to go green...we need to start investing in solar.'"

Liberals like Mackenzie King were enamoured with how the national socialists turned the German economy around on a dime following the Great Depression. Both past and present Liberal prime ministers seem to forget what prevents them from simply waving their hands and issuing orders like some king is democracy.

These are not just a couple of prime ministers who admired dictators for their good looks and nice socks. These Liberal men were praising dictatorships for their dictatorial policies. If that were the end, if this had just been one comment one time, most people would have forgotten it. However, remarkably, the Prime Minister seems almost maniacal in his commitment to proving his critics correct. He heard the expression "do not judge a person by what they say; judge them by what they do" and took it to heart.

The Liberal government's refusal to obey an order of Parliament is the current thing it is doing. When sports leagues began shutting down in March 2020 and the government decided to follow the lead of the NHL, the first instinct of the government was to grab as much power as it could. The Liberals sought to rule without restoring Parliament for two years. When that was quickly rejected—

• (1315)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know you provide a lot of leniency, but we are on a subamendment moved by the Conservatives following an amendment moved by the Conservatives to a question of privilege that all members of this chamber support. I would like the member to get back on topic so we can advance the matter at hand.

Privilege

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, the relevance issue is one that I care deeply about. I will note that you have permitted the member for Winnipeg North and many others to repeatedly ask questions unrelated to the motion. You have already granted extraordinary latitude in this debate, so if we are going to narrow the speeches, we will have to narrow the questions.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the point of order. I call on all members to tighten up a bit. We will try our best to stick to the subamendment to the privilege motion we are debating today.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, when that was quickly rejected, the Liberals still kept Parliament hobbled for months. That is how it is related.

Let us recall that the biggest scandal at that time was the Prime Minister's decision to hand a billion dollars to a couple of guys who had hired his mom to give some speeches. Those well-connected Liberals from WE Charity, with their billion-dollar made-up program, were to give money out to applicants, just like the green slush fund. Liberals giving money to Liberals to hand out to favoured interest groups sure sounds like a familiar scandal to me, but we will come back to Liberal corruption in a bit.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that this motion is not really about Liberal corruption as much as it is about the Liberal government's contempt for democracy, and in particular the Prime Minister's disdain for it. The praising of murderous dictators was alarming, but for me, the day the Prime Minister assaulted two members of the opposition on the floor of the chamber is one that should never be forgotten.

Much of the media focused on the Prime Minister's inadvertent assault on a member of the NDP. Here was a so-called feminist Prime Minister elbowing a woman in the breast. That is the kind of man-bites-dog story the media has always loved. What everyone just glided over was the actual and intentional assault on our dearly departed colleague Gord Brown. For Canadians who do not recall the first time this Prime Minister attacked another member on the floor of the House of Commons, I will recap it.

We were all in the chamber for a vote. Before a vote, the government whip and the opposition whip will walk down the centre aisle here to check to see if everyone—

The Deputy Speaker: We have another point of order from the hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives have no regard for this institution or democracy, but I would ask the member to get to the question of privilege. We are discussing privilege, privileges most Canadians do not have. We have a lot of important work to do, and she is recounting history. There is a time and place for that, but the Conservative subamendment to this question of privilege is not it.

Can you please ask her to have a bit of regard and respect for this institution and get on topic?

The Deputy Speaker: I remind members to flow it back as best we can.

The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, on that day, the NDP were acting a little silly. They were lightheartedly trying to delay the vote by blocking Gord from coming down the aisle. The NDP were not being out of line or in any way aggressive. Anyone who knew Gord knew he could stickhandle his way past any opponent if he wanted to. However, that is not what the Prime Minister saw. He saw the NDP blocking his agenda, grew impatient, left his chair and crossed the floor, a floor that is two sword lengths for a reason. This is meant to symbolize that we value debate over physical conflict.

The Prime Minister crossed that symbolic floor, grabbed Gord and pulled him through the crowd of MPs. In the process, he elbowed an NDP MP in the breast. The Prime Minister of Canada had physically assaulted two opposition members because he was impatient with parliamentary democracy, just as he is now. That should have been the end of him as Prime Minister, but apparently that is not disqualifying for the Liberals.

Had the Liberal backbench had the courage, they could have removed him then. That would have spared them the optics of kicking out Canada's first aboriginal attorney general from her job for not following the Prime Minister's order to obstruct justice. Had they acted then, Canada might have had a Prime Minister who read his briefing notes about the Communists he admires interfering in democracy, and that is what these documents relate to.

Instead, they sat on their hands and watched passively as scandal after scandal revealed their emperor had no clothes, except for his pretty socks. This should not surprise anyone. Too often, I have heard Liberal MPs refer to the Prime Minister as their boss. That comment alone tells us how upside down the Liberals see democracy. This is well understood in other Westminster-style parliaments, but these Liberals clearly need it explained to them in simple terms. The leader of a party is not the boss. Our constituents are the boss. We work for them. The leader works for us. That is how parliamentary democracy is supposed to work.

Instead, the Liberals have handed all their power to the Prime Minister and his powerful PMO. Now the Prime Minister is rubbing their faces in it. He keeps finding himself in contempt of Parliament because he has nothing but contempt for Parliament. However, it is not just Parliament. Something about the serving Prime Minister makes former cabinet ministers want to bare their soul in the form of a tell-all book. It is almost a form of seeking absolution for the sin of enabling him.

Privilege

What is alarming is how much these books reveal about the aloof, incurious and arrogant Prime Minister. More alarming is that nothing has changed and every member of the Liberal Party knows it. They see first-hand how he manages caucus. Not once have I ever heard them speak about his democratic approach to party management. Canadians heard how the Prime Minister talked about being a party leader last week. He talked as if he had all the power and the caucus was merely there to be disposed of when convenient.

We are here debating a subamendment, but this is not really a debate. This is an order from the House of Commons. Just like with the cover-up of the infiltration of Communist agents in the Winnipeg lab, the government is refusing to follow an order given to it by the elected representatives of 41 million Canadians. The government has tried everything to prevent the release of the documents. It even tossed in the kitchen sink, doing so with a charter. Only a Liberal would claim that well-connected Liberals have a charter right to steal our money.

They can claim whatever they want. It does not change the fact that they are ignoring an order from the House. In doing so, the government showcases its contempt for Parliament, but it is not only its contempt for Parliament that is showing. By withholding documents demanded by Parliament, the government is showing contempt for its own members. Each of them ran on a platform. We will disagree with that platform strongly and would be happy to keep that platform off the House of Commons agenda until the next election.

What is in those documents that is so damaging to the Liberal Party that it would abandon any future Liberal legislation if it means it can keep the cover-up going a bit longer? Its position only becomes more untenable the minute we think of it for even a second. Eventually, the government shall fall. Eventually, the people truly behind this scandal will be exposed. When that day comes, all of this obstruction by the Liberals will be for nothing.

● (1320)

What will they have to show for it? The only conclusion a reasonable person could reach is that there is more to this and that what happened at SDTC was just the tip of the Liberals' corrupt iceberg. As I have pointed out previously, this scandal is nearly identical to that in the local journalism initiative. There, the government gave 60 million hard-earned taxpayer dollars to a group of media lobbyists. Those media lobbyists, in turn, formed a committee with the job of handing out money to the local media in order to hire a local journalist. Of the seven committee members, five handed cash out to their own companies. In order for a media outlet to receive funding for a local journalist, it must promise to hand over the content the local journalist produces, free of charge, to the Canadian Press news wire. Can we guess which committee the head of the Canadian Press sits on? Everybody in the legacy media knows about this corruption, but not a single one will report on it, even after being called out in the House twice.

Before the current government, the biggest knock against the legacy media was its Liberal bias. Thanks to the Prime Minister, Canadians can add corruption to their list of media complaints, and that is not surprising. Everything the Prime Minister touches be-

comes tainted by him. Sustainable Development Technology Canada started over 20 years ago, and it had been a rare government success story; however, this bunch then did what they have done to so many Canadian institutions. They ruined it, and what is so egregious is that this never should have happened.

The government was warned. The former president at SDTC warned the minister not to appoint a person who had received funds from SDTC. That minister did it anyway. Now the organization is in shambles, and money is not going to qualified companies. Employees are demoralized because everything they touch becomes worse. How could it not under a Prime Minister who admires a basic dictatorship? At the core of his authoritarian streak is a mentality in which the ends justify the means.

The Prime Minister sees jobs in his riding as an end, so he justifies obstructing justice and sacking an honest minister who got in his way. He saw a routine vote in the House of Commons as an end, so he justified physically assaulting another member of Parliament. He sees handing out cash to well-connected friends as an end, so he justifies ignoring Parliament to keep doing it. Before the Liberal Party's next caucus, all its members need to ask themselves when they will become the means to bring an end to the Prime Minister's misrule.

As I mentioned earlier, the twin scandals of the green slush fund and the Liberal journalism initiative are just the ones we can see from our side of the floor. We know the government hands out so much money so quickly and with so few controls that it can fund a virulent anti-Semite to provide diversity training remotely from his home in Lebanon. Did anyone check to see if Laith Marouf was on any of those evacuation flights?

We are only standing at the base camp of a mountain of Liberal corruption. The government's entire agenda since 2021 has been to create unaccountable pots of money for its friends.

Every Canadian is receiving notices about increased prices for streaming services. Spotify has gone up. Disney+ goes up in November, according to the finance minister.

Of course there are increasing prices to pay for the new streaming tax. Those tax dollars then go to a fund controlled by the Canada Media Fund. That fund is controlled by big telecoms, which pushed hard for this streaming tax. Now those dollars will flow to well-connected groups, hand-picked by Bell, Rogers and the Liberal Party. Some money will trickle down to a makeup artist on the set of CBC's next American-cloned reality show, but most of it will end up in the pockets of Liberal-connected lobbyists.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage surely knows what I am speaking about. She is still listed as a lobbyist on the lobbyist registry. We can talk about a well-connected Liberal. She went from lobbying for a streaming tax to implementing one.

The Prime Minister does not need to dress up as a character from Star Wars again to pull a Jedi mind trick. He just waves his hands at the media and says that these are not the conflicts of interest people are looking for.

• (1325)

Some believe this world sits on a turtle, which sits on a turtle, and it is just turtles all the way down. In Canada, it is just well-connected Liberals stacked atop well-connected Liberals all the way down to our wallet.

That is not the kind of Canada we want to build. Our party is looking toward the future. The Liberal Party is stuck in the past with the ghost of Mackenzie King. The Liberals cling to a dying broadcasting corporation that had its heyday in the 1960s. Their foreign policy would feel more comfortable wearing bell-bottoms. Their race-based policies invoke an even older past. It should not surprise anyone that the Liberals took this dark turn. The Prime Minister only came to rule them out of a mixture of desperation and nostalgia. He promised to make the Liberal Party great again, and they took the bait hook, line and sinker.

As I said at the outset, I have seen Liberal prime ministers battle with Parliament before. What I have never seen is a Liberal Prime Minister who openly admired dictatorships for being ruthlessly efficient at tyranny. We have someone as Prime Minister, for however long that may be, with a predilection for dictators. He has surfed to power on a wave of nostalgia and now ignores the will of Parliament. This should be setting off more alarm bells than it currently seems to be.

Fortunately, Canadians can count on common-sense Conservatives to stand up for Parliament. It is time to bring home democracy.

• (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, the member of Parliament who just spoke was a part of the Stephen Harper government. I will remind her that the current leader of the Conservative Party was the parliamentary secretary to the first Prime Minister in the history of Canada, as well as the Commonwealth, to be found in contempt of Parliament. If we fast-forward to today, we have the current leader of the Conservative Party, I would ultimately argue, once again demonstrating his contempt of Parliament as the Conservatives continue to play this filibustering game.

Would the member opposite not agree that, instead of playing this game, we should be dealing with issues such as foreign interference and her leader's continuing refusal to get the security clearance required? He is putting his party and his self-interest ahead of the interests of the nation. Can she explain why?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that, if the Leader of the Opposition receives a classified briefing, he cannot speak with respect to the contents thereof without contra-

Privilege

vening the Official Secrets Act. If one does so, one faces years in prison.

The member for Papineau never applied for security clearances. Considering he has admitted to not disclosing his blackface past or his sexual assault of a reporter even to his closest advisers, what else is the Prime Minister hiding from Parliament?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think you might find this rather funny.

When I was an actor, I was fortunate to work with a Quebec director and actress whom some of you may not know, but my colleagues from Quebec might be familiar with her. Her name is Denise Filiatrault. She is very passionate as an actress and has a very unique style.

When we rehearsed scenes for her, if she thought they did not have enough rhythm and cohesion or were not moving fast enough, she would quickly become impatient. She would start yelling from the back of the rehearsal room. I can still picture her, with a cigarette in her mouth, screaming and asking when we would get to the punchline. She was trying to tell us to pick up the pace, find our rhythm and get on with it.

We are really stuck on this issue. I want to know when we are going to get to the punchline. We have been talking about the same thing, the same motion, just this one thing, for three weeks now.

Earlier a colleague mentioned the problem of homelessness in Canada. We want to talk about that. The number of deaths on the streets of Quebec has doubled in recent years. It is shameful that we are not talking about that.

Here, then, is my question for my colleagues: When are we going to get to the punchline? When are we going to vote?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, we will get to the punchline. We will be able to vote once the Prime Minister produces the documents that Parliament has asked for.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those on the Liberal benches have alleged throughout the debate that it is the opposition grinding this place to a halt. They set aside the issue that, of course, it is the government's own action and refusal to disclose the documents that has led members to wish to debate their corruption rather than to move on to other business. However, there is an important mechanism built into our system of Parliament that can break any impasse. The Liberals can call an immediate election.

Does the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke agree that what the government really ought to do, if it cannot table the unredacted documents and turn them over to the RCMP today, is to at least call an election and elect a new Parliament?

• (1335)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree with my colleague that the government is beyond redemption. Unless the Liberals table those documents as Parliament requested, they are in contempt.

Privilege

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saaneh—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on something my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said. It was not quite phrased this way, but she said that the Liberal backbenchers had failed to take the actions that could replace the Prime Minister.

I want to draw the House's attention to the admirable private member's bill from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, generally known as the Reform Act. It put into place changes to the Parliament of Canada Act wherein each caucus of recognized parties has an opportunity, after an election, to decide whether to accept them or not. So far, to give credit for grassroots democracy, only the Conservative Party has adopted the Reform Act.

What allows the Conservatives to be in compliance, basically, with the practice of every other Westminster parliamentary democracy around the world is that a caucus can choose to remove its leader. For example, the Conservative caucus in the U.K. removed Margaret Thatcher and replaced her with John Major.

I recall the events that occurred on the floor. My recollection, as an eyewitness to the events in 2016, was not that the Prime Minister attempted to disrupt democracy but that numerous opposition members were blocking the passage of legislation for House leaders to go forward to the Speaker. It is good for the Speaker to know what our former colleague, Geoff Regan, did not: We do not have to wait for the House leaders to march forward. He could read the motion and the question, put it to a vote and not be concerned about obstruction, which was quite against our rules.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, it depends on everybody's perspective, where they were sitting at that point in time and what they saw that evening.

In terms of the Reform Act, yes, I have to thank my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills, who drafted it. Had the Liberals exercised that themselves in a way where no one was controlling the outcome and no one was bullying anyone else, they would now see, with what is going on with their leadership, how important it is to have a process to eject a leader if they are not adhering to what has been agreed to by caucus.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question, but I am pretty confident the member will not be able to answer it: Can the member please let us know if any member or political party in the House does not support this question of privilege?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, what I know is that every member of every opposition party agrees that we have to have the documents in question tabled in the House of Commons. I have not done a one-on-one interview with each member to see whether we want this to go forward. Ultimately, we want the documents to come forth so that we can see what the Prime Minister is hiding; it is so much worse than what we already know about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are making a lot of accusations of corruption. We agree with them on the motion. However, when they were in government, they were also routinely criticized for corruption, influence peddling and so on. I would like to know if a Conservative

government will come up with ways to reduce or eliminate corruption.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the member may recall that the second thing we did as government when the Conservatives were in power was to enact a law to end corruption. While it has worked well so far, it does need to be augmented. We would bring in amendments to improve the Federal Accountability Act, which our current leader shepherded through Parliament.

• (1340)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are now in the third week of debating this privilege motion. It is the third week since the House came to a standstill, and it does not have to be this way. The blame lies four-square on the shoulders of the Liberal government. It is essentially snubbing its nose at Parliament; at you, Mr. Speaker; and ultimately at the Canadian public.

Parliament has a right to request documents, to hold the government to account and to get accurate information so we may or may not see, we do not know for sure, if there has been corruption at the expense of Canadians. The House requested that the documents related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada be provided, based on damning reports from the Auditor General.

The Liberals did produce some documents, but far from the number they were supposed to and they blacked out page after page. We are getting, "Oh, that's very interesting information," not. It is blacked out. "This is very interesting information," not. It is blacked out.

It is a mockery of Parliament. Our party and the other opposition parties appealed to the Speaker's office to rule on this violation. I have to commend the Speaker, who made a careful examination, along with the table officers, and came back saying the Prime Minister and the Liberal government were in violation of members of Parliament's privilege. That is why we are having this debate.

I know there are questions and accusations from the Liberals, saying we are just trying to delay Parliament, but the fact is that the Speaker ruled that they need to produce these documents and they have not. We are reminded of another situation not that long ago where a Liberal Speaker, a Liberal member of Parliament in the Speaker's role, just as the current Speaker is, ruled that documents regarding the lab in Winnipeg be produced. What did the Liberals do? They would not produce the documents. The Speaker ruled that they should produce them, and the government said it would take court action against the Liberal Speaker at the time.

Privilege

It did not go that far. He did not have his day in court. The Liberals thought maybe it was not the best idea, taking a Speaker to court, someone who was voted in as a Liberal, and that maybe it would be an opportune time to call an election, in the middle of the pandemic. It was something they said they would not do but then took advantage of, while hiding the information that never came out. It was probably damning information that would have impacted their electoral fortunes. That is what they did. They blocked, to prevent information from coming out. That is what what we are seeing happen again and again. I hope the Speaker does not find himself in court because of the decision he made.

As I mentioned, this debate would stop if the government would produce the unredacted documents. The question is, why has the government not produced them? I did not ask why it will not, because there is still the slimmest of hope that the government will do the right thing, the democratic thing, and produce the documents. I am not going to hold my breath, but I am hopeful that there is a slight possibility. We are still here and they can still act on it.

● (1345)

The public and all of us are wondering what the big deal is. Why will the Liberals not just do the the right thing, the appropriate thing, and produce the documents? Is it because the current government has grown long in the tooth, has run out of steam and is happy to let the parliamentary calendar waste away? It seems that way. We are on our third week and it does not seem very anxious to produce these documents. We want to get back to business.

An hon. member: No, you do not.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, actually, we do not. That is a good point from the Liberals. We want to be working on business, but we do not like their business.

This goes to my second point. Maybe the Liberals have had visions in the night and subconsciously recognize that Canada is going in the wrong direction under their mismanagement. Maybe they are feeling a bit of collective shame in their hearts and saying, “We should really let this parliamentary calendar continue to ebb away, because our actions are destroying this nation.” If that is the case, then I have to commend them, kind of.

For example, maybe in that vision at night they saw how the per capita income of Canadians is going down under them. When I was an MLA in British Columbia, I would talk to people who would come to visit, even Americans. This was during the Harper years. At that time, it was a Conservative Parliament. They were just amazed at how well things were going in Canada compared with the United States, where the economy, the housing situation and everything was going downward and was in real distress, as opposed to what was happening here. There was a contrast between Canada and the United States with respect to how things were going under Stephen Harper, a Conservative prime minister, and what was happening in the United States. The Liberals have decided they do not want Americans to feel bad when they come up here and see that Canadians are doing so well, they want them to feel good, so they are going to destroy our nation economically. Our per capita income has gone down significantly. People are struggling financially to buy a home, so it is tough. Young people do not feel they are ever going to be able to buy a home.

However, good news is on the way, and I hope we are going to see a Conservative government soon. Even today the leader of the Conservative Party announced an initiative that would remove the GST from all new housing built up to \$1 million. That is about 5%. It is up to \$50,000, not including the interest over the years, which could easily double or more than double the value. This is a common-sense approach to help young people and kick-start housing, which has been going down under the Liberals. We anticipate 30,000 new homes would be built every year under this initiative.

Our leader has also announced our intention to encourage the provinces to remove the sales tax on all new housing production. When the Liberals came into power in October 2015, it took 39% of the median pre-tax household income to cover home ownership. What is it now? It is 60% of pre-tax income. Basically, it is people's full income and more. People are drowning. This is a measure that would generate new construction jobs, which is good news and stands in stark contrast to the Liberals.

● (1350)

In the vision of the night among the Liberals collectively, all the same night, miraculously, maybe they recognize that what they are doing is just making this country much less safe, which would be true. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, violent crime is up 50%, while violent gun crime has increased 116%. I am giving some numbers: 50% and 116%, but we are talking about tens of thousands of Canadians suffering under violent crimes and gun crimes, and people getting killed. It falls on the Liberals. A lot of it has to do with their policies, their legislation.

Therefore I am very happy to be debating the topic and not trying to either pass or oppose legislation that the Liberals bring forth in the House, because the majority of it, and I will not say “everything” because I am sure there must be one or two things that are decent but could be better, by far is not helpful to Canada. It is taking us down, dragging us down, so we are quite happy to take our time.

We would not have to be debating the privilege motion if the Liberals would just comply with the Speaker's request and do the right thing, but their heels are dug in. Again, is it because of the collective pang of conscience that they recognize how bad their legislation is? The Liberals brag about banning firearms for law-abiding Canadians, while completely ignoring gun smuggling and the crime wave unleashed by the government.

Statements by Members

Police associations from across this country, last week or the week before, were forced to correct the Prime Minister. The Toronto Police Association, for instance, wrote to the Prime Minister, telling him, “Criminals did not get your message.” It went on to say, “Our communities are experiencing a 45% increase in shootings and a 62% increase in gun-related homicides compared to this time last year.” Things are getting chaotic, deadly and crazy.

The Toronto Police Association also said to the Liberals, “What difference does your handgun ban make when 85% of guns seized by our members can be sourced to the United States?” It does not make sense, but then we have come to expect that from the Liberals, unfortunately.

The Toronto Police Association statement was followed by similar condemnations from the Vancouver Police Union and the Surrey Police Union. Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, the riding I represent, is in British Columbia. The Vancouver Police Union wrote to the Prime Minister, saying that the Liberals, who are really upheld by the NDP, are “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.” Addressing the Prime Minister, it said, “Where do you think their guns are still coming from?” It is suggesting he should really think about it.

The Surrey Police Union wrote that the Prime Minister’s “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.” A Conservative government will deal not with duck hunters but with criminals.

Maybe the Liberals recognize their incompetence, as is demonstrated by overdose deaths. Under the Liberals, there were 47,000 deaths, and many more are dying every day. I am wearing a poppy as we are approaching Remembrance Day. Tens of thousands of Canadians lost their lives on the battlefield, but there are actually many more who have died from the opioid crisis alone.

● (1355)

There are a staggering number of deaths due to the opioid crisis, and the Liberals are just making things worse and worse. They do not know what is going on. Maybe they want the current debate to continue because they realize they are making things worse. The opioid crisis is evidence of that. I have met many people who have lost loved ones. I have personally known people who have died from the crisis. It is a terrible situation here in Canada.

On Friday I was in my constituency office. The majority of the time when I go out the back door of my office, I see shattered people taking drugs and on fentanyl highs. On Friday, three times, just behind my office, ambulances had to come. There were people lying right in the middle of the parking lot. This is what has happened under nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, and it is a shame. It is terrible. There needs to be a change.

Maybe the reason the Liberals are letting this drag on is that it is for their pensions. I sure hope not; maybe it is just a comment, but we have to wonder why they are doing this. When millions of Canadians are struggling, I sure hope the reason the Liberals are not calling a carbon tax election is not their own paycheck as a cabinet minister, or for their pension.

Maybe the reason the Liberals are not producing the documents and are just allowing the debate to go on and on is that they want to prorogue Parliament to try to reset things and deal with their internal chaos. This would be an opportune time to prorogue Parliament, to say they are not working well together and to have a leadership race.

As a matter of fact, 24 Liberal MPs signed a letter asking the Prime Minister to step down. Mark “carbon tax” Carney is waiting in the wings. Christy Clark has announced. The vultures are circling. No disrespect is meant to individuals; I am just saying that things are bleeding. I was reading today about Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former Liberal minister of justice and attorney general of Canada. She said that the Prime Minister simply is not capable of self-reflection.

The Prime Minister remains, not in the interest of Canadians and not even in the interest of my colleagues in the Liberal benches. He is not there for them. He is certainly not here for Canadians. It would appear that his interest is himself and the ability to jet-set around the world, hobnobbing with elites. That is what it would appear from here. From watching the news, I have a good idea that some of the members on the Liberal benches feel the same way.

I will introduce a teaser. Maybe I will get some questions on it. Maybe the Liberals really do have something to hide. I think that may be the reason. They do not want any more biopsies. They do not want the public to know how far the cancer has spread.

My wife had breast cancer. It has been nine years now. She had five operations. Doctors tested different lymph nodes to see whether it had metastasized. Thank God it had not. I am thankful she is here with me. She is a tremendous support. However, maybe the Liberals know that a cancer, which is what we are dealing with right now, has metastasized all throughout the government. It does not want the public to know.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day in Canada, 30 individuals are diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, and more than 100,000 people in Canada are now living with Parkinson’s, including my sister Paula and my wife, Barbara. There is currently no test to confirm Parkinson’s, and diagnosis can take time. There is currently no cure.

Tomorrow between 9 a.m. and noon in the Wellington Building, room 310, I am pleased to co-host a round table with Senator Greene and Parkinson Canada, where we will discuss the growing economic burden of Parkinson's, innovative care models and current research to improve the lives of people diagnosed with Parkinson's.

I am proud to support research into neurodegenerative diseases, like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, through our federal budget. Every Parkinson's experience is unique. Together we can ensure that a full and vibrant life with Parkinson's is still possible.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Veteran's and Remembrance Day week, let us take a moment to recognize the people who have bravely served Canada in times of war, conflict and peace. We gather at Remembrance Day services to honour and pay tribute to Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice defending democracy and human rights around the world, as well as those who continue to serve today. By remembering, we pay tribute to Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP members who serve to defend our values and freedoms.

Kelowna—Lake Country has The British Columbia Dragoons; 39 Signal Regiment; Royal Canadian Legion branch 26 in Kelowna and branch 189 in Oyama; and Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada unit 367, which all play roles supporting veterans and their families and help educate the next generation. The Field of Crosses display, a multi-partner community service memorial project in Kelowna City Park, is an impactful visual reminder of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Buying poppies supports our local veterans. May we never take their sacrifice for granted. Lest we forget.

* * *

[Translation]

OXI DAY

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Oxi Day, we pay tribute to the courage of Greece, the cradle of democracy, for standing strong against tyranny.

[English]

Eight-four years ago, in 1940, a resolute “no”, “oxi”, from Greece's Prime Minister Metaxas to the Axis Powers' ultimatum was a choice to protect Greece's sovereignty and democratic ideals from Fascist and Nazi tyranny that had swept over Europe.

This stance was not only a military decision but also a powerful moral one. Greece, with its rich democratic heritage, became a beacon of resistance, reminding nations everywhere of the profound cost and importance of liberty. In a world overshadowed by authoritarian regimes, Greece's defiance in history reminds us of the importance of protecting both freedom and democracy.

[Translation]

Today, we celebrate an act of bravery and an enduring commitment to the values we all cherish.

Statements by Members

[Member spoke in Greek]

* * *

NEW QUEBEC WHISKY

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am in a particularly good mood today and I want to spread that joy. Be happy, because I found an incredible whisky in my riding that you just cannot pass up. It is sure to become the Speaker's whisky. It is 100% organic, 100% made in Quebec and it tastes damn good.

Pembroke whisky is the latest creation of the Grand Dérangement distillery in Saint-Jacques, which has already brought us a gin, to commemorate the Acadians, and a vodka, both certified organic. The creators of this whisky are quite proud of the fact that it was designed, produced, distilled and aged back home in Montcalm. From the grain to the bottle, from our soil to your glass, let us share a drink, Mr. Speaker. I challenge anyone in the House to present you such a good, top-quality whisky.

Congratulations to the Grand Dérangement distillery on its vision and its tasty creativity.

* * *

• (1405)

KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, gave me 20 King Charles III coronation medals to present. I want to congratulate the 20 recipients for their remarkable contribution to Canada. They are Valérie-Micaela Bain, Madwa-Nika Phanord-Cadet, Déborah Cherenfant, Connie Cusano, Louis-Edgar Jean-François, Gracia Kasoki Katahwa, Manuel Mathieu, Stéphan Morin, Emilie Nicolas, Jean Ernest Pierre, Frédéric Pierre, Lucy Santos Rodrigues, Chantal Rossi, Beverly Salomon, Nathalie Sanon, Rony Sanon, Komlan T. Sedzro, Édouard Staco, Rodney Saint-Éloi and Martine St-Victor.

Congratulations to all the recipients.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, everything is broken. Its failed and woke policies made Canadians poorer and broke Canada's economy, sending two million Canadians into a food bank.

Statements by Members

The housing minister first broke immigration and now housing, as he doubled rents and mortgages. He brought record amounts of newcomers to Canada without available homes, jobs or health care. The finance minister broke the economy, as GDP per person has been in decline for six consecutive quarters, meaning weaker paycheques, higher prices and less competition. The Prime Minister broke Canada by making Liberal insiders rich, while ignoring the cost of living, housing and crime crises he created. They called anyone who questioned these radical policies racist, even though the Prime Minister did racist blackface more times than even he can remember.

Common-sense Conservatives will unleash the economy, bring home powerful paycheques and lower prices by axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget, stopping the crime and bringing home the Canada that we all once knew and still love. We are going to bring it home.

* * *

OXI DAY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Greeks around the world are celebrating the famous “no”, *oxi*, which refers to the response given by the prime minister of Greece, Ioannis Metaxas, on October 28, 1940, to an ultimatum given by the Axis forces to allow them to enter Greece in order to occupy strategic locations within the country.

[*Translation*]

Metaxas rejected the ultimatum with the words “Then it is war”, which led the Axis forces to attack Greece. They expected Greece to fall quickly, but the Greek resistance drove the Italian forces back in less than a month and forced Hitler to change his plans and delay his invasion of Russia by at least two months.

[*English*]

According to Sir Winston Churchill, “If there had not been the virtue and courage of the Greeks, we do not know which the outcome of World War II would have been.” Today we honour the Greek heroes who fought with courage to defend our values.

[*Member spoke in Greek*]

* * *

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the serious issue of foreign interference in Canada. Recent RCMP investigations have uncovered evidence linking agents of the government of India to violent criminal activities on Canadian soil, including targeting of South Asian Canadians.

This interference is a direct threat to our national security and public safety. In Markham—Unionville, which is home to a vibrant South Asian community, families are fearful and community leaders are concerned about intimidation. No Canadian should live under the threat of foreign interference or violence.

Canada will not tolerate any nation threatening our people or undermining our sovereignty. Six Indian diplomats have been ex-

ped and we urge the government of India to co-operate fully with our investigation. We will always defend our values, protect our citizens and uphold the laws of the land.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The record of nine years of the NDP-Liberal government will be one of waste, corruption and no respect for Canadian taxpayer dollars. This legacy will include a \$400-million slush fund that violated its own conflict of interest policy 186 times; a \$223,000 in-flight catering bill for one trip for the Prime Minister.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates the Liberal government will run a \$46.8-billion deficit this year. The Liberals have missed their own spending target by \$7 billion, meaning that they have blown away all of their fiscal anchors, leaving Canadians adrift among a fiscal nightmare.

Enough is enough. This runaway spending and corruption train must be stopped with a carbon tax election so that Canadians can elect a common-sense Conservative government that will fix the budget and end this inflationary spending.

* * *

● (1410)

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, attempts at foreign interference unfortunately have become a reality in Canada and around the world.

Whether it is the Indian government's involvement in serious criminal activities against Canadian citizens, or Chinese, Russian and Iranian attempts to influence our country, our leaders must be prepared to confront these challenges head-on, and that is what leaders do. They take these issues seriously. They learn about them and they work with our national security officials to prevent them. They do not stick their heads in the sand.

The leader of the Conservative Party is the only leader in the House who has chosen not to obtain the security clearance needed to review the intelligence that could keep Canadians safe. Will the leader of the official opposition come out of hiding, get the security clearance, take the security brief and keep Canadians safe?

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, life has never been so hard for Canadians after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government.

A shocking report out today confirmed that there are now more than two million Canadians relying on food banks every month just to survive. Many of these food banks regularly run out of food because of skyrocketing demand, with lines stretching for blocks.

The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. His failed agenda has forced people into choosing between paying rent, heating their homes or putting food on the table. The Liberals have only made it worse by increasing the carbon tax by 23%, with plans of quadrupling it and forcing even more Canadians to go hungry.

Canadians may not be well fed, but they are fed up. The Prime Minister must call a carbon tax election now.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the leader of the common-sense Conservatives announced that we will be axing the federal sales tax on new homes. It is going to have a huge impact on ground zero of the housing crisis in metro Vancouver and right across the country.

Homeowners will save \$50,000 on a million-dollar home purchase, reducing their mortgage payments month after month, year after year. This tax cut will also spark the construction of 30,000 extra homes every year. This means more homes for young families that are trying to get into the real estate market for the very first time.

Where are we after nine years of the NDP-Liberals? Double the rent, double the mortgage payments, double the down payment and 80% of Canadians feel that home ownership is only for the very wealthy. However, rest assured, the Conservatives will put an end to these failed Liberal housing programs and we will actually build the homes, as we have done in the past and as we are doing with today's announcement.

Let us axe the tax and build the homes.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago, we found out that a number of countries, including China, Russia and India, are trying to interfere with Canada's democratic processes.

Last June, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians tabled a report alleging that certain parliamentarians are the targets of, or witting participants in, efforts by foreign governments to interfere in Canadian politics. These serious and disturbing allegations have cast a shadow over our democratic institutions.

Statements by Members

Ever since then, all but one of the opposition leaders have obtained their security clearance so that they can take action on foreign interference within their party. The public inquiry into foreign interference clearly showed that each member of the House has a duty to fight foreign interference in our democracy.

I have an easy question for the leader of the Conservative Party. When is he going to get his security clearance, take his head out of the sand, and put the safety and security of Canadians ahead of his own partisan interests?

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

BISELL CENTRE

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for over 110 years, the Bissell Centre has supported people in Edmonton experiencing poverty and homelessness. Its mission is to save lives. It serves individuals facing complex challenges like intergenerational trauma, addiction, food insecurity, unemployment and housing vulnerability. Of those accessing its services, 67% identify as Black, indigenous or people of colour. Its holistic wraparound services go far beyond just housing supports.

Last year, the Bissell Centre supported over 9,000 people experiencing the worst outcomes of poverty. It housed over 500 people and supported an additional 675 community members in eviction prevention.

I think members would agree that organizations like the Bissell Centre are a vital resource for our communities, and I urge the Government of Canada to work with and provide urgent support for organizations such as the Bissell Centre. The workers at the Bissell Centre are the very best of us, and we owe them our tremendous thanks.

* * *

[Translation]

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of my Quebec roots, but I am also proud of my Peruvian roots, and I want to acknowledge the importance of Latin American Heritage Month.

Throughout the month of October, I have been thinking of my mother, who was born in Peru. After earning her doctorate in the United States, she chose to settle in Quebec and embrace Quebec's vision of a strong social fabric, resilience and tolerance. In fact, Latin Americans are the second-largest ethnolinguistic group of immigrants in Quebec.

Oral Questions

As October comes to a close, let us recognize the important impact of these communities made up of people like my mother. Whether they come from Mexico, Chile, the Caribbean nations or beyond, Latin Americans are known throughout Quebec for their rich culture and vitality. Shining a light on their unique contribution to Quebec society reminds us of our commitment to an inclusive and tight-knit Quebec.

As they say in Spanish, *la diversidad nos enriquece*, diversity enriches us.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians know it is not worth the cost of housing.

Nobody makes more money on housing than governments, and Canadians are paying the price. The good news is that common-sense Conservatives will deliver results. A Conservative government will axe the tax on new homes sold. On an \$800,000 house, this tax could save a homeowner \$40,000. That is \$2,200 a year in mortgage payments. A common-sense tax cut like this will lead to an additional 30,000 homes being built each year.

In Ontario and British Columbia, government charges account for more than 30% of the cost of a new home and the federal government takes the biggest share of that. That is just wrong.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, 80% of Canadians now believe that home ownership is only for the rich. The Prime Minister has doubled the rent, has doubled mortgage payments and has doubled the down payment. Common-sense Conservatives will bring home real solutions to the housing crisis that the Prime Minister created.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each and every MP is a representative of Canada in the House. Each and every MP has a responsibility to protect against foreign interference in our democracy. For the few who lead political parties, that responsibility to defend and protect our democracy is much heavier, yet the Conservative leader refuses to get his security clearance so that he can see top secret documents.

Why is the Conservative Party leader continuously refusing to get his clearance? Out of all five party leaders, all but one, the Conservative leader, has refused to get security clearance. What is he hiding? What is he running away from? The Conservative leader in no way, shape or form is qualified to be critiquing our government on matters of national security. He must not and should not have a single day in government. This is nothing but common sense.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal government, it is clear the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of housing.

He created housing hell by doubling rents, mortgage payments and the needed down payment, and as housing prices skyrocket, the greedy federal government rakes in the cash. The Prime Minister now collects more in taxes on the sale of a new home than the carpenter or electrician who actually builds the house. The solution is our common-sense plan to axe the federal sales tax on new homes. On an \$800,000 home, this would save a homebuyer \$40,000, so why not provide some much-needed relief and axe the tax off new homes?

● (1420)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the Conservatives have taken some inspiration from our plan for removing the GST to help get more homes built, but what is completely unacceptable is how they say they are going to pay for it, and this is telling about their strategy across a range of policy areas.

They want to cut the programs that are going to deliver housing for low-income and middle-class families today, just like they plan to cut the programs that are going to provide dental care for families who need it; like they plan to cut the programs that will deliver birth control to Canadian women for free; and like the way that they oppose programs to support seniors with pensions, students with student loans and families with the cost of raising kids.

It is time to build, not cut.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, the Liberals' own housing adviser said that the Liberal plan is "turning out to be nothing more than a heist of tax dollars flowing from the feds to the municipalities."

They fund bureaucracy and photo ops, not building new homes. It used to be, in this country, that it took 25 years for the average family to pay off their house. Now it takes 25 years just to save up for the down payment. Our plan on an \$800,000 home would save a new homebuyer \$2,200 a year in mortgage payments.

Eight hundred thousands dollars used to buy a mansion; now someone is lucky if they get four walls and a roof in Toronto or Vancouver, so why not adopt our plan and axe the tax off new homes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when he says to adopt their plan, their plan is to cut the supports for cities that are going to build homes and their plan is to cut the money that is actually going to build the infrastructure to make homebuilding possible. He talks about bureaucracy. He must not have read the line in his own plan that says that they want to hire new bureaucrats just to run a snitch line for those who do not like their neighbours' housing policies. The Conservatives came up with this stuff on the backside of a napkin after googling housing for five minutes.

When we actually talk to the people who have experience building homes, they will tell us how to get it done. We are going to follow the advice of the people who are building homes and talk to the people who have lived experience with housing needs.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from the minister who admitted at committee that his housing plan does not actually build homes. Their plan funds bureaucracy and photo ops. The more the Liberals spend, the less they build and the more Canadians have to pay. Since this Prime Minister started giving hundreds of millions of dollars to city politicians, housing starts are down. They are down 10% in Ottawa, 15% in Winnipeg and down 20% in Vancouver and Toronto, so why will the government not adopt our common-sense plan to build the homes by axing the tax?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is a point of clarification. Housing starts this year are actually up year over year, but up tens of thousands over the last time the Conservatives were in office when their current leader had responsibility for the agency that manages housing in this country.

However, to drive home the point that is most essential here, when the Conservatives came up with a new idea on housing, they said they were going to pay for it by cutting programs that build middle-class and low-income housing for families right across this country. They want to cut housing; they want to cut health care; and they want to cut supports to families. That is completely unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the “Liberal Bloc” is not worth the cost of housing. The “Liberal Bloc” has doubled the cost of rent, mortgage payments and down payments. The federal GST adds \$50,000 to homes that cost \$1 million.

The common-sense Conservatives will eliminate the GST on new homes sold. That means buyers will save \$40,000 on an \$800,000 home. They will save \$2,200 a year in mortgage payments. Will the Bloc-backed Liberals scrap the GST on housing, or will they continue to fund a program that is purely meant to provide photo ops?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a rare press conference, the Conservative leader gave an honest answer about his cuts plan. He said, and I quote, “We're going to cut two programs for sure, and more beyond that.”

Under the Conservatives, Canadians would have fewer homes, and they would be built more slowly. Dental visits would be more expensive. People would retire later, and families would get less support. Cuts, cuts, cuts. It is completely unacceptable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Liberal housing adviser said that the fund for Liberal photo ops, the so-called housing accelerator fund, is useless and ineffective. Quebec has always assumed that the dream of home ownership would be within young people's reach. Unfortunately, after nine years of the “Liberal Bloc”, the CEO of Desjardins has confirmed that young people have to wait 10 to 15 years longer than their parents before they can become homeowners. They are not even young any more at that point. This is urgent. A generation is waiting.

When will the “Liberal Bloc” agree to our common-sense plan to scrap the GST on new housing?

• (1425)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, today, the Conservative Party is giving us a clear example of how, for everything it wants to put in place, it is going to make a cut somewhere else. The Conservatives are going to make cuts to health and social programs, and today they are saying that they are going to scrap the housing accelerator.

How is this member from Quebec going to tell the Government of Quebec that he wants to eliminate 8,000 social and affordable housing units in Quebec? That is what he is telling Quebecers today.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone in Quebec is worried about our ability to keep taking in so many asylum seekers. Refugee applications are likely to increase because the U.S. is going to the ballot box in eight days. Candidate Trump is promising that, on his first day in office, he will launch the largest deportation program in the country's history. He said that again yesterday, in New York. He said he would deport up to 18 million people.

Many Americans are worried. The federal government should be worried, too. Does it have a plan in case migration from the U.S. to our shores skyrockets?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if people are afraid of being deported by Trump, they might want to leave the United States. Many may consider heading north rather than south. Let us not forget that the last time Trump threatened to deport lots of people, it triggered the problems at Roxham Road, the consequences of which are still being felt seven years later.

Oral Questions

Governing means looking ahead. It is not enough to answer “yes”. Eight days away from the election, without presuming to know its outcome, can the government assure us that it has a plan to deal with a massive influx of asylum seekers, rather than simply replying “yes”?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the first time I have said “yes”, and he is complaining about it.

The reality is that we have always managed the border with the United States effectively. I can say, with evidence to back it up, that this was the case during COVID-19. This will continue to be the case after the presidential election.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, abortion care is under threat in Canada. Women do not want more Liberal talking points. They want protection. Women and gender-diverse people are seeing hateful anti-choice rhetoric creep into Parliament, spread by the Conservatives under their leader's watch. Clinic 554 closed in New Brunswick and abortion care across Canada has been chipped away at.

While the Liberals' words are nice, their lack of action is dangerous. Will the Liberals stop their grandstanding, and start making sure every person in Canada has equal access to abortion care?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, absolutely, that is exactly what we are doing in working with provinces and territories to make sure that the investments that we have in sexual health are there to make sure that women have access to an abortion. That is why we are advancing the work we are doing on pharmacare, to make sure that women have both the contraception and access that they need.

Regarding the member's point, and this is an extremely important point, when the Conservatives have such a huge number of people in their caucus who are anti-choice who are standing up against women's rights, we have to call that out. A woman has full autonomy and right over her body. There is no member of this legislature or anybody who should claim to have authority over a woman's body.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to implement a right when the Liberals do not assure access. Women are scared. They are seeing Conservatives attack their right to choose. Meanwhile, the Liberals have allowed Conservative premiers to chip away at abortion care, making it nearly inaccessible, inaccessible in some provinces, when women and gender-diverse Canadians are sick of hearing these pretty words from the Liberals and they sure do not want their health care in the hands of the Conservatives. Canadians want their right to choose to be protected. Will the Liberals support the NDP in making sure abortion care is fully accessible for all?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, who puts women's

right to abortion care at risk? It is a Conservative caucus over there, with a third of their members having been green-lit by anti-choice organizations across this country. Members across the aisle have voted consistently for backdoor anti-abortion legislation and the leader will not stand up for the rights of women in this country. That is what is putting the women's health at great jeopardy in this country, and we are not going to stand for it.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals just are not worth the cost. Today, the hunger count revealed more than two million Canadians went to a food bank in March, up 6% from the previous year. Food bank use has doubled since 2019 and a third of those relying on food banks are children, meaning millions of Canadian families cannot feed their kids. The NDP-Liberals increased the carbon tax 23%, leading to record-breaking food bank use, and they are not done. They want to quadruple that tax.

Will the Prime Minister end the suffering he has caused and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we have been living through expensive times, and that is exactly why we have made investments in Canadians and their families, investments like the Canada child benefit, introducing the Canada disability benefit and increased investments in housing.

The Leader of the Opposition has continued to oppose us at each and every step and now has announced his plans to cut even further. We will fight for Canadians.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad at least one Liberal minister understands Canadians are living in expensive times that their policies caused, but let me help her with her answer. Food insecurity in Canada is up 111%, two million Canadians went to a food bank in a single month and food inflation is a staggering 37% higher in Canada than it is in the United States. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed what Canadians already know: the carbon tax is all pain, no gain.

Will the Prime Minister stop his tax tricks and give Canadians the treat of a carbon tax election this Halloween?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have known for a very long time that the Conservatives are crying crocodile tears when it comes to the most vulnerable in Canada and, today, the Conservative leader actually admitted it. He said, “We’re going to cut two programs for sure, and more beyond that.” Now we know. They are going to cut child care, they are going to cut the Canada child benefit, they are going to cut dental care, they are going to cut pharmaceutical care, they are going to cut support for seniors. That is unacceptable. We will not let them do that.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, it is not worth the cost or hunger. Food Banks Canada came out with a report that more than two million Canadians visited a food bank in March, a 6% increase from last year. One in five of those food bank users is a worker, 70% are renters and, as Canadians’ incomes declined, the government doubled housing costs and rent. Canadians’ incomes are lower than they have ever been and for starving Canadians, the woke NDP Prime Minister will quadruple the carbon tax scam.

Why not just call a carbon tax election now and let Canadians decide?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that everywhere in the world, the cost of living has been incredibly difficult to deal with. The Conservatives’ solution to cut the things that provide vulnerable people support will put them in a much worse position. Let me clarify it.

The earlier question referenced the United States. Do members know that in the United States, life expectancy is five years lower? Do they know that in the United States, the average citizen has six more years of illness and disease? That is what their cuts would bring, that is the truth of what they are offering and that is why we oppose their agenda.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the health minister who brought scurvy back to Canada. Liberals do not want to talk about the two million Canadians they sent to a food bank in a single month, a third of whom are children. They do not want to talk about going down the path of their radical plan to quadruple the carbon tax when they know one in four Canadians is already skipping meals and one in five food bank users is a worker. They also do not want to talk about the fact that their plan was to always double housing costs.

Why do they not just do everyone a favour? Why do the economic arsonists not stop gaslighting Canadians and call a carbon tax election now?

• (1435)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what else is back? We see tuberculosis, measles and syphilis. Why does this happen? It is because the slogan machines on the other side, diving deep into the threads on Reddit, are creating and spreading information that confuses the health landscape. It means that things we had long put behind us come back.

We cannot afford the kind of misinformation and nonsense they spin, not only because it is not true, but because it puts lives at risk.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost.

Today, Food Banks Canada released its 2024 hunger count, and the stats are heartbreaking and record-breaking. Over two million Canadians used a food bank in one month, and 700,000 of those users in one month in Canada were children. What is the Prime Minister’s response? He will drive up the cost of food even more by quadrupling the carbon tax.

Canadians cannot afford him. His caucus does not want him. Why does he not let Canadians decide what they want and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians are facing tough times, what should a government do? It should provide programs that provide supports to them, like the Canada child benefit, like making child care more affordable and like dental care for seniors and vulnerable Canadians.

What is the Conservative plan? It is to cut those programs. It is to take away the very supports that Canadians rely on when times are tough.

We know the Conservative plan, and it is to balance the books on the backs of Canadians. We will not stand for that. We are going to stand for Canadians.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will not stand for that gaslighting.

In the last five years, food bank usage has doubled. It is the highest in history. People who used to volunteer at the food bank are now lining up to use it. Food banks are running out of food in Canada.

Please, for the love of God, let the Liberals call a carbon tax election. The Prime Minister does not seem to understand the human consequences of his policies: When we tax the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food, we end up taxing into poverty the Canadian who has to buy the food.

It is enough. Let us call a carbon tax election.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at \$7,782 a year tax-free, the Canada child benefit has helped lift over 450,000 children out of poverty. What the member is calling gaslighting is real money that is helping real Canadians.

Who is doing the gaslighting? It is the Conservative members of Parliament, who want to sell slogans instead solutions. It is they who say they can fix things while cutting the services and programs that Canadians rely on.

Oral Questions

We are going to do real things that help real people. That is what we do on this side of the House.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon to not take the floor unless he is recognized by the Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montcalm.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 30, Quebec will finally allow requests for medical assistance in dying. However, the Minister of Health still wants to put on the brakes. He said last week that Quebec was moving too fast and even suggested that he might challenge its decision.

Quebec is not moving too fast. It has been preparing for this for years. Patients like Sandra Demontigny have been working toward this day for years.

Will the minister work with Quebec instead of standing in the way?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we always work with others. On an issue as sensitive as advance requests, it is absolutely crucial that we engage in a national conversation and make sure our system is ready.

We need to take our time on this matter because it is absolutely essential to make sure that the government is doing the right thing.

• (1440)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 30 is just two days away, and the federal government is still hindering access to end-of-life care.

For the past six months, six professional bodies have been calling on the government to align the Criminal Code with Quebec's legislation. The deadline is two days away, and doctors are concerned about the legal uncertainty because the federal government has done nothing.

Will the federal government amend the Criminal Code and stop jeopardizing sick people's access to care?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and I appreciate the Bloc member and his hard work on this file.

I want to emphasize what was said by the Minister of Health. We are well aware of what the Government of Quebec wants. We are also well aware that we need to consult all of the other provinces to come to a national consensus on this issue. That is the prudent thing to do.

That is the approach we have taken to date, and we will continue with that approach.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Ms. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not proposing preferential treatment under the Criminal Code. It is proposing a procedure to strictly regulate end-of-life care.

Our Bill C-390 simply allows provinces that have passed legislation, and that are ready, to move forward with advance requests free from risk. It respects the provinces' pace. It respects health care workers. It respects the right of sick people to control their own bodies and receive care. The government has been dragging its feet for the past year and a half.

When is it going to take action?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate my Bloc colleague's work.

I lost my grandmother to Alzheimer's. It was a very difficult time for my family. I am familiar with the subject and I know that it is an extremely delicate matter. A national conversation is absolutely vital.

I need time to talk with my provincial and territorial counterparts and make sure that the system is ready.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are simply not worth the cost.

Low-income Canadians are now spending 80% of their income on housing and food. The NDP-Liberals' housing and food inflation is forcing millions of Canadians to rely on food banks. Still, the Liberal government is hell-bent on continuing to increase the cost of groceries with its punishing carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister give Canadians the carbon tax election they so desperately need?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are making investments to help support families and children across this country. We have seen almost one million families benefit from our \$10-a-day national child care program. We have seen 3.5 million families receive our Canada child benefit each and every month, providing much-needed support. We have seen CCB help lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. These are investments we are making on this side of the House to ensure we are there for Canadians and families.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is pushing Canadians to the brink. The Liberals should be ashamed of their carbon tax fixation, which has made life's basic necessities unaffordable. Housing costs have doubled and food bank usage has soared past two million visits per month. It has gotten so dire that 30% of food banks are now running out of food.

It is quite simple. Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election so Conservatives can offer Canadians some relief?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is getting a little difficult to take seriously anything that comes from that side of the House. If there was a volition to address child poverty, maybe the Conservatives would not have sent checks to millionaires and then taxed that money back. If there was a volition to address child food security, maybe they would get behind the national school food program.

All they knows is cuts. What does that mean? That means cuts to taxes for the rich and cuts to services for those who have less. That is not what we stand for on this side of the House. We will continue to fight for Canadians.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost, and Canadians are hurting. The government has made life miserable for Nova Scotians, with a crushing carbon tax that has increased food prices by 23%. Of course, on top of that, it plans to quadruple the carbon tax. What is the result? Some 53% more Nova Scotians are going to food banks now than five years ago. Almost 40,000 Nova Scotians rely on food banks every month, 12,000 of whom are children.

Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election?

• (1445)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is extremely difficult to take a question of that nature from a Conservative member who himself goes on trips worth tens of thousands of dollars and sips \$1,700 bottles of champagne, while at the same time coming to Ottawa so he can oppose policies that give free food to kids in school.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do members know how many people are turning to food banks to be able to eat? What would be a good guess? We are talking about two million people, which is 90% more than five years ago. While people are going hungry and community groups are overwhelmed, the Liberals just sit there, looking smug.

When will they have the courage to go after the ultrarich, who are stuffing themselves silly while people are going hungry?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say that it takes both courage and heart. My colleague is quite right to highlight the difficulties facing many families, including in my own riding. That is why having a heart means supporting programs like the national school food program, which the opposition member is quite right to support.

Why, then, do the Conservative members oppose the Breakfast Club of Canada and La Cantine pour tous, organizations in my riding that feed children every day? Why are they saying these organizations just create bureaucracy?

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from Halifax to Port Moody—Coquitlam, all Canadians should be able to get where they need to go on public transit, but for people living with disabilities, public transit often comes with barriers. The Liberals told people with disabilities they would make sure cities had funding for accessible transit, but just as with every Liberal promise, it has been delayed and forgotten.

Will the Liberals finally deliver the promised funding for accessible public transit or will they keep leaving persons with disabilities behind?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we make investments in public transit, because we know the disproportionate impact it has on low-income families, seniors and, yes, Canadians living with disabilities.

We are moving forward with what will be the largest investment in the history of this country when it comes to public transit. This includes new baseline funding that will provide long-term, reliable, allocated funding to municipalities. Information will be made available to partners over the next number of weeks. We are also launching large regional plans to allow massive expansions and have significant new investments in active transportation zero-emissions vehicles and transit systems that will be accessible to make sure that every Canadian has the ability to navigate their needs in their community.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference poses a real threat to Canadians and our democracy. In this context, it is alarming that all but one of the opposition leaders obtained their security clearance.

I have a simple question for the leader of the Conservative Party. When is he going to get his security clearance, address risks within his own party and put—

The Speaker: As the hon. member knows, questions in question period need to be directed toward the administration of government.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, foreign interference poses a real threat to Canadians and our democracy. In this context, it is alarming that all but one of the opposition leaders obtained their security clearance.

Oral Questions

I would ask the federal government what we are doing to ensure that the security of our democracy is protected and that all opposition leaders get their security—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

• (1450)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague pointed out, foreign interference poses a real threat to Canada's national security. Foreign actors want to create uncertainty in our institutions. It is time for all of us to take foreign interference seriously and stop the spread of that uncertainty. This includes the Conservative leader.

Once again, I have a simple message for the leader of the Conservative Party, in three-word phrases that he is sure to understand. It is time to get the clearance, take the briefing and protect the country.

* * *

HOUSING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, they are not worth the cost of housing. They doubled rent, mortgage payments and down payments, and homeless encampments have opened in record numbers across Canada.

Most young adults believe they will never afford a home. The federal GST adds a staggering cost to home costs, and the common-sense Conservatives said today that we would axe the federal sales tax on new homes sold. For example, on an \$800,000 house, this would save homebuyers \$40,000.

Will the NDP-Liberals axe the federal tax on housing, or will they continue to fund their housing photo op programs?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is interesting because she represents a part of Kelowna. I was in Kelowna a year ago last week to announce that the housing accelerator fund would be contributing \$31.5 million to her community. Her leader announced this morning that he would cut that fund. The member is now in the awkward position of defending an increase of taxes to her constituents of \$31.5 million.

On this side of the House, we advocate for programs that get homes built, not for cuts to the communities that we represent, which is simply shameful.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' own housing adviser said this morning that the Liberals' photo op fund, the so-called housing accelerator fund, is either pointless or ineffective. The government has spent billions of dollars. In fact, housing starts are down in Canada's two largest cities. It is down 20% in both Vancouver and Toronto.

Under the NDP-Liberal government, housing costs have doubled. They are rising faster than any other G7 country. This is a made-in-Canada issue. In 2015, it took 39% of the average Canadian's income to cover home ownership costs, and now it is 60%. Conservatives would axe the federal tax on new homes over \$1 million.

Will the government listen and stop—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is very proud to stand beside her leader, who is advocating to raise taxes by \$31.5 million on ratepayers in Kelowna. One year ago last week, I personally announced that investment. I shared it with the council, including the former Conservative member of Parliament for Kelowna, and its members were grateful for this money to help them build homes more quickly.

In the House, it is unbelievable to me that any member of Parliament would listen to their constituents at home, come to Ottawa and demand that Ottawa take money from them. We are going to advance programs that build homes and support communities. It is unthinkable that a member would come here and oppose money for their own riding.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am having a hard time listening to the Liberal housing minister defend policies from his government that have failed an entire generation of Canadians, who are the Canadians from our generation who dream of owning a home one day. The minister continues to talk about the housing accelerator fund, but the Liberals' own housing adviser describes this fund as nothing more than a heist of tax dollars flowing from the feds to the municipalities. We know the NDP-Liberals have turned their backs on a generation of Canadians.

When will the Liberals stop overtaxing housing so young Canadians can buy a home?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to me how often I see Canadian Conservatives borrowing their policy positions from the right-wing populous in the United States. That might be where this particular member learned to advocate for programs that would cut affordable housing.

Perhaps it was when he was chatting with his roommate at Yale Law School that he learned how to oppose programs that would provide birth control to Canadian women. Maybe it is his engagement in the United States that causes him to deal with policies to legalize assault-style firearms.

In the House, on this side of the House, we will advocate for policies that build more homes more quickly, not oppose them at every turn.

Oral Questions

• (1455)

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the Liberal housing minister continues to turn his back on a generation of Canadians because he is clearly not focused on his job. He wants to talk about what is happening in other countries. Let us talk about what is happening in our country. The last time Conservatives were in power, houses cost half of what they cost right now. Today, under the Liberal government, nearly 39% of the total taxes on new homes in Ontario are going to politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa.

When will the government agree with Conservatives and end the federal GST on housing so young Canadians can buy a home?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members what we will never agree with. We will never agree to the Conservative agenda of cuts and austerity, cuts that would hit the most vulnerable the hardest.

The Conservatives have been trying to hide their true colours from Canadians. However, today, the Conservative leader made a mistake and admitted what he really intends to do. I am going to quote him. He said, “We’re going to cut two programs for sure and more beyond that.”

The question today is this: What are they going to cut next? We know it is everything that Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the most powerful and dangerous criminal organizations is a group called Arab Power, and both of its leaders are rotting in federal penitentiaries. However, the leader, Youness Aithaqi, and his right-hand man, Sylvain Kabbouchi, are still running the operation from behind bars.

Arson, protection rackets, murder—nothing is stopping these new criminal organizations, especially not the bars of a federal prison.

Can the minister explain to us how the gangs spreading fear and death in the streets of Montreal can be getting their orders from federal inmates?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I naturally share my colleague’s concerns. These concerns are shared by everyone in the House.

I have met with representatives of the Correctional Service Canada union and administration to discuss next steps, as well as additional tools and technologies that we can add to the technologies we are already using to eliminate situations like the one described by my colleague.

We are also working with Minister Bonnardel and the correctional service of Quebec to give them these tools as well.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to crime boss Gregory Woolley, who himself was murdered in a health centre parking lot in front of his wife and child, the Arab Power group is out of control and the next gang war is going to be a bloodbath.

The bosses are incarcerated with nothing to lose. They run their criminal operations from federal prisons on illegal cellphones. We know it, the government knows it and the media keeps telling us so.

How is it that notorious criminals still have access to cellphones in prison? Why is the minister not doing anything?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague knows full well that the government is doing a lot about this. We have invested in technology. I saw the technology in action with my own eyes at a Correctional Service of Canada institution in Quebec. For example, I saw how drones can be intercepted before they get there. Obviously, we are not going to discuss the technology publicly so criminal gangs cannot find a way around it.

The good news is that we will continue to invest in that technology and do whatever it takes to protect people from—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the “Liberal Bloc” proves to us every day that it is not worth the cost of housing.

The “Liberal Bloc” has doubled rents, mortgage payments and down payments. Only common-sense Conservatives will remove the GST from new homes. That is \$40,000 in savings, or \$2,200 a year, in mortgage payments on an \$800,000 home.

Will the Liberals, backed by the Bloc Québécois, have the courage to scrap the GST on housing, or will they continue to fund programs that are purely meant to provide photo ops?

• (1500)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague on the other side of the House.

He says that, to provide access to home ownership, he is going to cut programs that provide social and affordable housing. How will he respond to Quebecers when he tells them he is going to cut the 8,000 social housing units that are part of the housing accelerator program?

On this side of the House, not only do we provide access to ownership, but we also provide the most vulnerable with a roof over their heads.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the previous Conservative government, our leader built 195,000 housing units. Back then, the average percentage of a family's income spent on housing was 39%. Today, it is 60%.

The Liberals' failed housing policies have ruined Canadians' purchasing power. In nine years, \$8 billion in Liberal programs have doubled the cost of rent, mortgages, and down payments.

When will the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois call an election so that Canadians can finally get affordable housing?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is talking about affordable housing. Maybe he should take some time to look up the answer that was given barely a year ago to a question asked in the House. The Conservative leader, the member's own leader, built six affordable housing units across the entire country during his entire term in office.

I would encourage him to ask his leader how he got these six affordable housing units built, and where they are located. In the past few months, we have spent a lot of time looking, but we were unable to find them.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada indicated in various reports that there were only 113 privacy breaches within the Canada Revenue Agency between 2020 and 2024. However, now Radio-Canada is reporting that there were more than 31,000 security breaches that directly affected 62,000 Canadian taxpayers.

CRA is now saying that it issued payments totalling \$190 million in connection with confirmed cases of fraud since 2020.

Will the outgoing national revenue minister hand over the file to the RCMP so that Canadians can recover the \$190 million in stolen money?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that fraud is totally unacceptable and we are taking the necessary measures to address it.

It is true that the Canada Revenue Agency is a target of choice because we have a lot of personal information within the agency. Also, we administer very significant payments and tax returns. However, our systems are robust. The CRA has protection procedures for detecting and blocking fraud. Every time fraud is detected, the individual concerned is immediately notified.

I can assure the House that we are taking all necessary measures to deal with this situation.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 30 years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada established women's right to safe abortion and reproductive health.

Still, I am worried today. I am worried because Conservative Party members continue to present petitions and introduce bills. Some have even gone to Florida to attend anti-choice rallies. It is none of their business.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec reaffirm today that our government will always be there to defend women's rights?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to women's right to choose, women across the country are worried.

I commend the courage of the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who has revealed the Conservative Party's hidden agenda. He said, and I quote, “What I noticed was an increase in the number of pro-life MPs inside the organization”. He also said that powerful members are influencing the party's policies.

The Conservatives' hidden agenda is to elect anti-choice MPs, to pander to their base and then pass anti-choice legislation. On this side of the House, we protect women's rights, reject anti-choice candidates and provide free access to contraception. That is what it means to stand up for women's freedom.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal government, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

In the latest scandal to hit the Canada Revenue Agency, over 60,000 taxpayers had their personal, private information hacked. Not only is the information of these individuals floating around on the Internet, but this also cost taxpayers money. Over \$190 million has been improperly paid to scam artists because of privacy breaches at revenue Canada.

Will the minister get information and call in the RCMP about this privacy breach so that taxpayers can be repaid?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fraud is completely unacceptable. We agree on that. I can assure the House that our government is taking appropriate action.

It is true that the Canada Revenue Agency is a prime target because we have a lot of personal information. We also administer a lot of benefits and tax refunds.

However, the CRA's systems are solid. We are able to deal with and block attempts at fraud, inform those affected and ensure the necessary follow-up.

* * *

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Unifor Local 1541 has been without a contract since March 2023, and it has been on strike for almost six months. The employer has called Canadian workers lazy, refused to negotiate a wage increase and refused to bargain. He is effectively trying to bust the union. The union met with the NDP-Liberal minister almost two months ago and took the unprecedented step of asking the minister to intervene. His response has been crickets.

Why is the NDP-Liberal minister abandoning Unifor Local 1541?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is monitoring the situation closely, indeed daily. Mediators are working with the parties and are available to assist at any time. We urge them to continue their efforts to reach an agreement.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission will continue to monitor this company for regulatory compliance to ensure the safety of workers, the public and the environment. The facility remains secure. There have been no changes to the security of the site. Of course, we will not let workers down and have made repeated entreaties to the owner to return to the bargaining table.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell that the Unifor workers at Local 1541 are going to be absolutely inspired by that heartfelt response from the NDP-Liberal minister.

Why are the NDP-Liberals never responsible for anything? Two million Canadians using a food bank is not their fault. Violent thugs out on bail is the province's fault. For a local employer trying to bust a union, there is nothing they can do but read their talking points.

If the NDP-Liberals are not responsible for anything and cannot fix anything, why do they not get out of the way and let a common-sense Conservative government fix their mess?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the right-to-work Conservative Party on labour relations in Canada, the people who have stood up repeatedly to vote to remove power from unions, to force unions to reveal their financial statistics and to make sure that unions find it hard to certify in workplaces. The union-busting Conservatives will give us no lessons.

I work daily with my colleague from Kanata—Carleton on this issue, and we will make sure that these workers get the negotiations and contract they deserve.

Oral Questions

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that actors like Russia, China and India have attempted to interfere in Canada. Recently, the RCMP revealed that agents linked to the Indian government are involved in serious criminal activities in Canada—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake to please not speak out and to allow the question to be asked, as the Speaker had recognized the hon. member.

I will ask the hon. member for Davenport to start from the top.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we know that actors like Russia, China and India have attempted to interfere in Canada. Recently, the RCMP revealed that agents linked to the Indian government are involved in serious criminal activities in Canada, including extortion and the murder of a Canadian citizen. It is time for all political party leaders to put country before party.

My question for the government House Leader is this: Why will the Leader of the Opposition not do the right thing, join all opposition leaders and get a security clearance so he can act on foreign interference and protect Canadians?

• (1510)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a really important question when it comes to protecting our national security. When Canadians send us here, they think we are going to do one thing, and that is put the national security of Canada first and put Canadians first. Every leader of a party in this place has received a security clearance except for the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. The question is why. What is he hiding? What is he trying to protect? Why is he putting himself and his party ahead of the security of Canadians?

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, multi-billion dollar companies feel emboldened to use shady tactics to rip off Canadians. After the government rubber-stamped the Rogers takeover of Shaw, they promised lower costs but have snuck in price hikes for Canadians. The Liberals have done nothing to protect people. Instead, they rewarded Rogers with over \$165 million in federal money.

Rogers must be put on notice and reverse the cuts or be banned from federal contracts. Will the Liberals have the courage to do it, yes or no?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's top priority from day one has been making life more affordable for Canadians. We are focused on increasing competition and lowering prices in the telecom sector. Since 2023, we have been holding companies like Rogers accountable by eliminating switching fees and attacking extra and unnecessary fees so that Canadian consumers are empowered to find a plan that works for them.

On this side of the aisle, we are standing up for Canadian consumers by helping them regain their negotiating power.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that CBC/Radio-Canada paid its executives \$18 million in bonuses in 2024. It is really something that executives are getting millions of dollars in bonuses while hundreds of employees are losing their jobs and the public broadcaster is asking for larger and larger subsidies every year to do its job. All of that is tarnishing the reputation of CBC/Radio-Canada and all of its artists.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister. Does he agree with those bonuses, yes or no? If not, what does he intend to do to put a stop to them?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska for his question, as well as for his courage in speaking out against the Conservative Party of Canada and its position on a woman's right to choose.

I would also like to remind him that CBC/Radio-Canada is an arm's-length corporation that decides for itself how to manage its own budget. That is why we created a Crown corporation in which the government, mainly a Conservative government, cannot intervene and whose decisions it cannot dictate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports from the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. The first report concerns its participation in the 44th Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on November 4 and 5, 2023, and the Good Offices Mission in Libreville, Gabon, on November 6 and 7, 2023. The second report concerns the meetings of the Education, Culture and Communication Committee and the Parliamentary Network on HIV/AIDS, Tu-

berculosis and Malaria held in Bucharest, Romania, from April 3 to 5, 2024. The next report concerns the meeting of the Commission on Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs held in Luang Prabang, Laos, on April 10 and 11, 2024. The final report concerns the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee held in Podgorica, Montenegro, from April 24 to 26, 2024.

* * *

● (1515)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill C-277, an act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries.

[Translation]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

* * *

PETITIONS

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of presenting petition e-5054, which has been signed by 228 citizens of my riding to signify their support for the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act. The citizens are calling on the government to provide a royal recommendation for Bill C-319 in order to increase OAS by 10% for people aged 65 to 74 and to raise the maximum amount of income that can be earned without affecting GIS from \$5,000 to \$6,000.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I rise for the 54th 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 by 50% and gang-related homicides have nearly doubled. Within the last five years, the town'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's safety and economic stability. The people of Swan River are calling for jail and not bail for violent repeat offenders. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

SERVICE DOGS FOR VETERANS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, I wanted to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who want to extend tangible support for so many veterans who suffer with PTSD and who recognize that a service dog can provide better therapy than pharmaceutical drugs and is one of the best ways to provide continuing daily supports to countless veterans. It is expensive to get an OSI-PTSD service dog. It is deemed an effective medical tool for veterans in need, but even veterans who can get a service dog at no cost have the costs of veterinary care and food and daily care for their dogs.

The petitioners are asking the House of Commons to conduct a needs assessment, to identify financially vulnerable veterans seeking this essential medical tool, to provide critical funding and to do it with urgency so all of our veterans receive the support they so deeply need and certainly deserve.

• (1520)

SUDAN

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from the undersigned citizens, concerned Canadians, calling on the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to establish an emergency initiative specifically tailored to address the Sudan crisis, akin to successful measures implemented for other global emergencies. This petition asks for facilitating the swift issuance of temporary work and residence permits to Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers based on compassionate grounds and, by formulating equitable policies that outline a clear and secure pathway to permanent residency and citizenship, promoting successful integration and long-term stability for Sudanese war-surviving individuals in Canada.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise to present a petition from 513 members of my community, Richmond. The undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call on the government to implement a sustainable and continuous national ad campaign targeting those statistically most affected by the harms of the unregulated drug supply, to address the harms of using drugs alone by advertising the LifeGuardConnect app, and to present other suggestions on how to use drugs safely. These advertisements should be at points of contact for men aged 30 to 59, such as sports broadcasting, restrooms, pubs, nightclubs and online platforms in addition to advertising in federally regulated workplaces. The government should work with provinces to distribute campaign materials and advertise at job sites among the trades.

I also want to recognize the advocacy of the Tablotney family and Maria Rantanen of the Richmond News.

CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first is on behalf of folks who recognize that artists and creatives in the arts community do immeasurable good across the country, whether it is related to mental health or lifting up the voices of activists. Petitioners point out the economic impact of artists across the country, as they con-

Routine Proceedings

tribute \$54.8 billion to Canada's GDP. However, the petitioners also note that public data shows communities across the country are underfunded, including communities like mine. They note that the regional development agencies model has proven successful. This model has organizations, like FedDev Ontario, ensuring that funding for economic development is more equitably distributed across the country.

Petitioners call for three actions from the Government of Canada: first, to restore funding of the Canada Council for the Arts to its pandemic level of \$500 million annually; second, to amend the underlying legislation for the Canada Council for the Arts to require that the regional development agencies model be applied, to ensure communities are more equitably funded across the country; and third, to meaningfully consult with historically underfunded communities to ensure that this funding is directed toward under-represented and equity-deserving groups.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, my second petition notes that we are in both a climate and an affordability crisis, and that this crisis is exacerbated by oil and gas companies that are gouging Canadians at the pumps and making record-breaking profits.

The petitioners note that the five largest oil and gas companies in Canada alone made \$38 billion in 2022. They did it by gouging Canadians. They increased their profits by 18¢ a litre, from 26¢ a litre to around 42¢ a litre. They note that some folks talk a lot about the carbon tax. That went up around two cents a litre, while these profits went up 18¢ a litre. They also note that other countries around the world have put in place a windfall profit tax on the profits of oil and gas industries, where this has happened in other places around the world.

The petitioners have two very reasonable calls to action. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately put in place a 15% windfall profit tax on these excess profits and to reallocate the revenues generated toward programs that would make life more affordable for folks across the country, for example, by investing in improved service and more reliable public transit, and by investing in helping Canadians retrofit their homes.

Privilege

• (1525)

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a huge honour today to table this petition calling on the government to take urgent issue impacting the health and safety of firefighters across our country. I want to thank my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, for pulling together this petition, which is so important. It calls for immediate action to ban pre- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS in firefighting gear and firefighting foam.

PFAS are man-made chemicals known to be resistant to heat, water and oil, but their durability comes at a significant cost. Scientific evidence links these substances to severe health risks, including cancer, putting firefighters who already face hazardous conditions at greater risk. Research shows that PFAS can accumulate in the body, leading to serious health issues.

Alarming, firefighters face a higher cancer risk than the general population. We must mitigate these risks by regulating what we can control in their working conditions. I just heard from Tofino Fire Department Chief McKeogh about the loss of a great legend in Tofino, George Hubert, because of cancer. He was a volunteer firefighter in our community for decades. I also heard about this from Port Alberni fire chief Mike Owens and his members.

Several countries have restricted PFAS use. Canada must follow suit. Our firefighters deserve gear free from toxic chemicals. Let us protect those who risk their lives for us.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I rise to table a petitions submitted by firefighters from Port Moody IAFF local 2399 and Coquitlam IAFF local 1782.

This petition addresses an urgent issue impacting the health and safety of firefighters across Canada. This petition, sponsored by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, calls for immediate action to ban pre- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, called PFAS, in firefighter gear and firefighting foam.

PFAS are man-made chemicals that are known to be harmful. Research shows that PFAS can accumulate in the body, leading to serious health issues. Firefighters are already facing a higher cancer risk than the general population. We must mitigate these risks by regulating what we control in the workplace.

Several countries have restricted PFAS. It is time for Canada to follow suit. Our firefighters deserve gear free from toxic chemicals. Let us protect those who protect us and risk their lives.

[*Translation*]

OLD AGE SECURITY

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, very briefly, I would like to table an important petition concerning Bill C-319, which would increase OAS for people aged 65 to 74 to the same amount paid to people aged 75 and over, and would also increase the GIS by \$1,500. Indeed, 79% of Canadians agree. The ball is now in the government's court. The petition has been signed by 1,450 petitioners.

I have another petition containing 388 signatures, and I am tabling petition e-5054 which contains 7,154 signatures. I know

that my colleagues are tabling others too. This is an important issue. The deadline is tomorrow, October 29. The petitioners I met with all summer want the government to take action. The dignity of seniors hangs in the balance. Really, what is the government waiting for to finally help seniors?

I present these petitions on behalf of everyone who cannot understand why there are still two classes of seniors.

* * *

[*English*]

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 ask 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

• (1530)

[*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. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, not only did we have a question period where we had questions dealing with the issue of foreign affairs, but we also had members' statements dealing with foreign affairs. I think it is because Canadians have a right to know why the leader of the Conservative Party continues to refuse to get the security clearance so he can become better informed on the issue of foreign interference. The feeling is that he has something to hide, that there is something in his background preventing him from being able to get that security clearance, and this is a valid concern that continues to be raised.

While the Conservatives want to play the game of filibuster, maybe they can do some serious stuff here and give a clear indication of why the leader of the Conservative Party feels he is the only national leader who does not require a security clearance. Canadians have a right to know. Will the member give us some sense, some indication, of why his leader refuses to get that security clearance?

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hope the member opposite does not get too teary-eyed by what I have to say, but I am going to recommend him for a cabinet post: the minister of obfuscation. In lay terms, I would call that the minister of smoke and mirrors, because this is not relevant. The member is off on a tangent.

The truth of the matter is that the Speaker of the House, who is an elected Liberal member of Parliament, has ordered these documents to be forthcoming. Are they forthcoming? No, they are not. However, what has been forthcoming has been a lot of obfuscation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been waiting almost three weeks or more now for these papers to be produced, and the Liberals do not seem to be in any hurry to produce them. That makes me think there must be something really bad in them and somebody is going to jail. What does the member think?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I gave a number of reasons I thought the Liberals might be delaying this, letting the time just pass away. The fifth reason is that I think they really have something to hide. The Auditor General put forward an audit that showed, I believe, that 186 out of 230 contracts she looked into had conflicts of interest. If we extrapolate that to all the contracts, it would equal about \$800 million to Liberal insiders getting involved. It looks like even a cabinet minister had been involved in one capacity or another, actually several. We can compare that with the sponsorship scandal that happened 20 years ago. This is 10 times the amount, and that is just one scandal we are dealing with. It is right across the government.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, of course, we are supporting the motion. We do not stand for Liberal scandals, and have proven that numerous times, but we do not stand for Conservative scandals either.

I am pleased to report that the B.C. NDP has now moved ahead in the recount. My colleague will be happy to know that it looks like the B.C. NDP will form a majority government in British Columbia, which is a wonderful thing.

Tonight, of course, we have the Saskatchewan election. However, the conservative Saskatchewan Party has been cited numerous times by the ethics commissioner in Saskatchewan, including, most recently, for the \$731,000 stolen by an MLA for the conservative Saskatchewan Party, Gary Grewal.

Of course, during the Harper regime, we saw numerous scandals, which were all blocked by Conservatives. They would not let Canadians and taxpayers get to the bottom of any of those scandals, including the ETS scandal of \$400 million, the G8 scandal of \$1 billion and the Phoenix pay scandal of \$2.2 billion.

Privilege

So, my colleague can simply answer the question: Why are Conservatives so corrupt when they are in power?

• (1535)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that it does not just rest upon the shoulders of the Liberals, as far as all these scandals we are facing are concerned, including the one here on Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It rests upon the NDP because it is an NDP-Liberal government. The NDP has actually supported the government; it has kept the Liberals in power through all the scandals and hundreds of millions or billions of dollars. It rests on the NDP members, and so they have kept it. We have had non-confidence motions. They voted in favour of the government. Right now, they are allowing debate to go forward because they say they have to put a little separation between them and the Liberals, but the truth is, they vote for the Liberals constantly.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as I shared earlier, since June, Greens have supported this motion's moving forward so that we can look into the mismanagement of funds by SDTC. Of course, we support the motion as well. As I also shared earlier, we have had some 90-odd Conservatives speaking to the motion now. They have spoken for almost 50 hours. They have spent over \$3.3 million of House time speaking to it. There are opportunities for around 20 or so left.

Could the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge comment on how many more Conservatives will speak to the same motion, spending more money to do so?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, that question really needs to go to the Liberals because they are the ones who are not producing the documents ordered by the Speaker. Why are they allowing the House to continue this debate? We do not support most of their legislation as it is; at the same time, this is ridiculous. It is just going on and on. It seems as though it is an excuse for them to prorogue government or just to keep the facts from being presented to Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is a Conservative motion that, ultimately, the Conservatives are filibustering in order to deal with any other legislative issues. It is, what I would argue, a contempt of sorts that we are witnessing. Now, today's leader of the Conservative Party was the parliamentary secretary to Stephen Harper, the only prime minister in the history of the Commonwealth that has been found in contempt of Parliament.

How does it demonstrate leadership when we have a Conservative opposition leader who is virtually in contempt of Parliament again and, at the same time, refusing to get the security clearance on the important issue of foreign interference? Why does the Conservative Party continue to support a leader that puts his party ahead of the nation?

Privilege

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, once again, this is smoke and mirrors, not talking about the facts before us, as has been ordered by the Speaker. If the member is so adamant on this position, then he should present it to the Speaker to make a ruling. We are dealing with a motion of privilege. They can do one of two things: Either they can produce the documents, which would be what has been ordered, or they can at least admit that the documents incriminate friends, family and probably members of Parliament on the Liberal side. They can admit that they do not want to produce them, because they know none of them will get elected in that case.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recall a time when this hon. member was actually running to be the Speaker of the House; when they came to caucus, they talked about procedural fairness. However, here they are, having clearly put forward a motion to frustrate the entire House of Commons. They can move the motion. It can be dealt with today.

Why does the member bank on the stupidity of his party's base in order to mislead Canadians to continue this farce? Madam Speaker, talk about ridiculous.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, they actually support us in this motion, so it does not make any sense. It is obvious that they are trying to make an excuse to say they are going to let this slide, that they will support the Liberals once again in their scandals. That is typical NDP.

Mr. Matthew Green: You bank on stupid.

* * *

• (1540)

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sorry; I do not know the riding name of the member who was just speaking, but he referred to the other member as a word that I do not know if I can say in the House here. It is unparliamentary, Madam Speaker, and you might want to address this.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I was in the process of introducing another member, so I did not quite hear what was said. I will certainly look at Hansard to see if we can hear what was said and come back to the House if required.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—University.

* * *

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. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, Liberal insiders are getting rich. That is what is happening here. This is what this all boils down to. I am often asked what is going on in Ottawa. Back in the riding, people want to discuss what it is truly like out here. In essence, the privilege motion we are debating today does just that.

An unfortunate series of events led us to this position. When asked by our constituents what is happening in Ottawa, we say that Liberal insiders are getting rich. In this case, \$400 million in questionable spending has resulted in 186 conflicts of interest being identified so far.

How are Liberal insiders getting rich? We have to go back to what this program was for, how it was set up and how the board was picked to see how Liberal insiders got rich. We have a program, the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, which should be helping Canadians to leave our environment better than it is today. It is for technology. It is for initiatives that could help green our economy and our country, which is a noble goal for one fund.

However, as soon as the Liberals were elected in 2015, things changed. First, the Liberals changed the board. They also changed the chair of the board to an individual who, as the Auditor General has found, is in a conflict of interest. The actual chair of the board, who decides where all this money goes, was hand-picked by the Prime Minister. Can we guess which companies she picked? They were her very own. That is Liberal insiders getting rich.

It is not just the case of the chair of the board; we found conflicts of interest over 180 times, with the board of directors investing in companies for the environment. However, they were really doing it so the Liberals could get rich. We have seen this with the Minister of the Environment, who is the owner of a company that got money. It is interesting to go through some of the details regarding who got rich, who owns shares and who owns some of these companies that got money. It is frustrating because the Auditor General found this; they found the corruption and the conflict of interest in these cases.

What happens when there is a crime? Do we call a meeting of local people to discuss that crime, or do we call the RCMP? This should be going to the RCMP. I am not the one saying this; many people have testified that it is questionable, regarding the different groups that got rich from this.

We are very grateful to the whistle-blowers out there. I thank the men and women who work in the public service for the work that they do and for doing what, I believe, is what is right for our society. The work that the bureaucrats do is administrating the wishes of the government. Therefore, when selecting a new board, the names would have been forwarded by the Prime Minister; maybe there would have been some quick background checks and some procedural things to get the people on board. I am very grateful for these bureaucrats, who work tirelessly to make sure that Canada provides for its citizens as much as they need, and it is with the disdain of these people's views of what actually happened—

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The interpreters are saying that there is a telephone causing interference. That can hurt the interpreters' ears and damage their hearing.

We need to listen to them.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There may be a telephone sitting on a desk that seems to be causing some interference, whether it is on the member's desk or somebody else's. I would ask members to put their telephone on airplane mode or to remove it from their desk.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, because it is becoming a repetitive issue, perhaps you could remind speakers that their phones need to be taken off their desks when you recognize them, so we are saving the hearing of our interpreters.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate that. Maybe we could have all the House leaders or the whips make sure that their members are reminded about that. I would tend to think that is the proper way to go. I will certainly speak to our Speaker on this matter as well.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the SDTC program was set up to help Canadian companies and individuals with technology and programs related to the environment. It was set up to help meet the needs of the challenges we have with the environment.

One of the signature pieces of the Liberal platform was the environment. However, what happened when the Liberals got control, when they got keys to the bank and to SDTC? It did not take long. There were \$400 million and 186 conflicts of interest. This is why we owe a debt of gratitude to whistle-blowers. This is the evidence that needs to be turned over to the RCMP. That is why we are here today.

When people back in our constituencies, or anyone who is watching from Saskatoon—University right now, ask us what is going on, it is Liberal insiders getting rich. This is the prime example. The Prime Minister's hand-picked board of the green slush fund has doled out over \$400 million improperly.

I think of Jill who runs a cafeteria. She is an entrepreneur. I know how hard she works. I remember the conversation about some of the struggles she has had in the last few years and how hard she has to work to pay her employees, pay her rent and pay her taxes. I think about how much the average person earns in a year and how that person is forced to provide money to the government to go into programs like the green slush fund, that \$400 million account. The government turned around and gave it to Liberal insiders, people on the board who had conflicts of interest. It is a crime that should be investigated by the RCMP. That is why we are seized with this debate today.

There is an order of the House of Commons. The majority of members agreed that the evidence should go to the RCMP. The Lib-

Privilege

erals said that they would send the documents, but then blocked it all out. They redacted the details that were sent to the RCMP. It is a sad day in Canada when the federal government does not trust the RCMP. That is why we are here today. We want that evidence turned over to the RCMP.

Canadians should have a great deal of gratitude for some of the people who worked on this file, people who could not take the corruption, and they became whistle-blowers. They alarmed the public. They alarmed the opposition. They alarmed anybody who would listen to them. There is something that stinks with this green slush fund. Let us hear from them.

I want to read some quotes from a SDTC whistle-blower:

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... 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

The criminality is for a judge and a court to decide down the road, but the first step is for the RCMP to get all of the evidence to understand who got rich and why.

The whistle-blower continued:

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.

What is in full authority to investigate? It is cabinet documents and it is evidence that shows how Liberal insiders got rich.

• (1550)

The whistle-blower said:

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

This is key. It is the old adage that sunlight is the best disinfectant. We should open up the books and jail the crooks if there are insiders getting rich on just this fund. This is \$400 million, which is an eye-watering amount, but we should not forget all the pandemic spending. That is tens of billions of dollars and more.

This is where Canada finds itself right now. The current government has added more federal debt than all other prime ministers combined. This thing stinks. We are talking \$400 million here and tens of billions of dollars of questionable contracts during COVID. This is like the 1990s again, but in the 1990s, it was cheap. The Liberals only stole \$30-some million in the sponsorship scandal. This scandal alone is \$400 million.

Privilege

Think of the good that we could do in our society with that money. Think of the two million people every month relying on the food bank to feed themselves. Think of the 1,400 encampments in the city of Toronto that could be helped. We could give people the dignity of a space until they get off the ground and onto their feet. That is what a government should be doing instead of making sure that Liberal insiders are getting paid. That is what has happening here. There is so much need.

I would like to talk briefly about why the SDTC was set up, which was for environmental initiatives in Canada. It is quite clear that the government pretends to care about the environment and that it wants fewer emissions. Meanwhile, we have a Prime Minister who jet-sets anywhere in the world at a drop of a dime anytime he wants, and he does jet-set around the world. The carbon footprint and hypocrisy in that is outstanding. It is not like there is a need.

In a fund like this, I think of nuclear workers, especially in Ontario. If they are watching this, I know the Liberal government has insulted them, included them in sin stocks and ignored the importance of nuclear power. We are in Ontario and these lights are probably kept on right now by nuclear power. It's how our country, specifically Ontario, got off coal. Nuclear power is why we do not have smog days anymore in Toronto. I thank the men and women who work in the nuclear industry, which relates to this \$400 million that went to Liberal insiders, the men and women who work on the refurbishment of the CANDU reactors.

Anyone who works in the supply chain for our reactors in Canada and around the world knows that AtkinsRéalis has a need for some federal support, especially with the MONARK reactor that it is trying to get off the ground. We would think this would be a perfect fit for the SDTC fund. It is a sustainable development technology. It is nuclear. It is what got Ontario off coal. It is what is delivering clean, affordable electricity to the people of Canada. It is technology, not taxes, that is going to solve the problem. It may have been mentioned before that it is technology, not taxes, but it is the men and women who work in the nuclear industry today and their technology. It has always been technology that has solved the challenges that we face as a country and as a society.

• (1555)

When I was young, acid rain was a terrifying idea. The media said that the rain would wash away our bridges, roads and buildings. As a young boy, I was very concerned about acid rain. It was not a tax that fixed that problem, it was technology. A similar problem was the ozone layer and the hole that was being created in our atmosphere. It was technology, not taxes that fixed that problem.

Once again, if we had a government, maybe a newly elected government with some common sense, it would take a program that is meant for environmental technology and take that fund and invest it in nuclear, which actually reduces emissions and helps our environment.

The most frustrating thing about this is that the waste taking place could have actually solved some problems, especially in the environment. If AtkinsRéalis had had some support from the federal government, maybe the MONARK would be able to fly by now. However, it did not happen. Liberal insiders got rich.

It is not just me who is saying this; it is the whistle-blowers who came forward with all the conflicts of interest that took place. I am going to read a couple more quotes from some whistle-blowers.

One quote reads:

The true failure of the situation stands at the feet of our current government, whose decision to protect wrongdoers and cover up their findings over the last 12 months is a serious indictment of how our democratic systems and institutions are being corrupted by political interference.

Another quote reads that if a person works in nuclear, and that person wants us to continue to be the leader that we are on clean, affordable nuclear energy, it must boil the blood to read these government whistle-blowers talk about how a fund that should help industry helped Liberal insiders instead. This is wrong, and we know that. It is wrong that the companies of insiders, either board members or the chair of the fund itself, were funded. They voted and attended meetings and had discussions about this.

How much worse will we find in the evidence that this place voted for? This place has voted that the evidence should be turned over unredacted to the RCMP for a full investigation.

Anyone who knows what has been going on in Ottawa knows there is a lot more money than \$400 million that has been misspent, misappropriated and blown on insiders. The day is coming and the dawn is breaking. Canadians are coming out of the dark period that has categorized the last nine years of failure and this failing regime is coming to an end.

There is a breath of fresh air coming, and the disinfectant we need is the sunlight that will uncover who got rich and who ordered which companies to receive funds. We know the environment minister has investments in Cycle Capital that received millions of dollars from this fund as well.

An hon. member: \$200 million.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, it was not a full \$200 million to Cycle Capital, I do not believe, but it is enough to probably feed some of those two million Canadians who are right now relying on the food bank to eat.

This is a statement we would never think would be uttered in a country like Canada, a country that is so rich with resources, technology and hard-working people who wake up every day and go to work so they can provide for their family, a country where people can hopefully have meaningful employment and can create a Canada that we would be proud to hand down to the next generation.

I think of the Liberals on the other side. What is your legacy going to be? How can you defend this much waste—

Privilege

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member is to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the other side of the House.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, to the other side, was it worth it? Did they hold their noses and look the other way? When the truth comes out about SDTC, this might be the largest scandal that could dwarf the sponsorship scandal tenfold.

The government needs to hand over all evidence to the RCMP unredacted today.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the RCMP commissioner has spoken often to the Canadian public, so I am sure the member is aware as well. The commissioner was on CTV News and confirmed that there is an investigation going on. He confirmed that he has received the first load of documents from the chamber and that the RCMP has not looked at them.

When asked why the RCMP did not look at them, he said that we have charter rights, that there are processes within this country and that the way it obtains the materials actually matters. The following question was posed to the commissioner: If the RCMP received more documents, would it look at them? He basically said that it needs to look at what information it has first, and it has to look at the way that the documents are being obtained.

Does the member agree that charter rights should be respected when documents are being obtained? Does he believe that we should be focused on Canadians and on ensuring that we do protect their rights and freedoms?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, that is a bit rich coming from a government that violated people's charter rights and freedoms. However, it is also coming from a government that has, I would say, put our reputation around the world and our institutions in the sewer.

I think of the proud history of our RCMP. To pretend to have the RCMP giving coverage to the Liberal government over the turning over of evidence is farcical. There are limitations on the evidence's being used in court, but it would show the RCMP who got rich and which Liberal insiders profited from a \$400-million taxpayers' fund that was supposed to help out the environment but instead helped out insiders.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is giving speeches on his own motion and delaying the Conservatives' own motion, and it is kind of a waste of our time.

I want to take this opportunity to say that, this morning, I was proud to find out that 240,622 people in Quebec have received dental care thanks to the work of the NDP, which made this negotiation happen and reached this agreement with the minority government. These 240,000 people were able to get dental care thanks to the work we did here in the House.

If, by some misfortune, his party were to take power in the next election, can my colleague promise these 240,000 people that the Canadian dental care plan will be maintained?

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, how did we get here? It is because the NDP and the Liberals are one and the same. The New Democrats pretend their coalition is over, but meanwhile they continue to support the government. They ripped up the agreement but then voted with the Liberals.

How much can we believe about anything the NDP says, when the evidence is in front of us about the fact that it is not really an opposition party? It is really just a satellite branch of the Liberal Party. Unfortunately, I think the NDP is going to find out shortly that voters have no time for the NDP-Liberals and what they have been up to, because the NDP is also implicated in the scandal. Let us remember that the current government, supported by the NDP, is the government that put \$400 million into Liberal insiders' pockets instead of into important initiatives that could help our environment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I was surprised to hear my hon. friend, the member for Saskatoon—University's, vigorous defence of SNC-Lavalin and the call for the government to give it more money. The fact that it changed its name to AtkinsRéalis does not change anything; it is the same corrupt corporation it was before. I certainly favour, and I wonder whether the hon. member for Saskatoon—University also favours, continuing an RCMP investigation into the ways in which SNC-Lavalin, now AtkinsRéalis, got away with the corruption in Libya and now continues to get hundreds of millions of dollars.

The member's claim that the federal Liberals do not support nuclear is not borne up by the facts. I wish it were. I would like to ask him whether he still supports nuclear so vigorously while knowing that the corporation promoting it, which now owns the CANDU reactor model and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and bought all of what was AECL except for some of its more long-lived nuclear waste at Chalk River, is actually the beneficiary of all the largesse, of which the member wants more.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the question is an important one because it is about nuclear energy. For the nuclear workers who are watching the debate today, people in the Liberal Party, maybe 75% of them, view nuclear in the same way the last speaker did. It is embarrassing that nuclear workers have been shunned by the Liberal government and by the Greens, who meanwhile are saying that we need to lower emissions, everyone has to do their part and everyone has to pay more tax.

However, there is nuclear technology that is emissions-free and has been providing reliable, affordable electricity for decades here in Canada. It is a shame that not more Canadians or more parties other than the common-sense Conservatives know that nuclear, not a tax, is the solution.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not know how many times the member actually said, "Liberal insiders got rich." I think that was the statement he said quite a bit.

Privilege

As we are debating this round, the Liberals did not ask about things that have to do with why we are here. The NDP, of course, did not ask about the issue we are debating or why the documents are not going over. Now the Green member is not even asking about what we are actually debating.

Here we are after three weeks. The House has basically been shut down because the Prime Minister will not hand over documents, when the Auditor General has proven there are 186 conflicts of interest, over 334 million dollars' worth.

How can the government actually look at itself in the mirror at the end of the day? What will the Prime Minister's legacy be?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the member is right. How is this possible? It is because of the NDP, which is propping up the Liberal government.

NDP voters who are watching the debate right now should know that their vote is really a vote for the Liberals. It does not matter anymore. The Conservative Party is the only party in here that is standing up for the taxpayer and for what is right for our country, saying that insiders' getting rich from contracts handed out by insiders at the SDTC needs to stop today. The evidence needs to go through to the RCMP for a full investigation on which insiders got rich and why. We know there are a number of Liberal ministers who hold companies that got rich from the fund.

It is such a shame because common-sense Conservatives believe in technology. We believe in science. We believe that technology is the solution to our problems that we face today. If the fund had been managed properly, we would not be in the shape that we are in as a country.

• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Liberal insider whom the member continues to make reference to was actually an adviser to Stephen Harper and to Jim Flaherty. She donated thousands of dollars to the Conservative Party. The member has the audacity to call the person a Liberal insider and base his whole argument on that in regard to the issue of the Liberal Party.

Meanwhile, the real issue is this: Vote and the matter would go to committee and be talked about, or play the Conservative game, disrespect Canadians and filibuster the House of Commons. Why is the Conservative Party putting its personal interests ahead of the interests of the nation?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the Liberals want to sweep it under the rug. We just heard it: "We are going to send it to committee. Do not worry about the evidence; the RCMP will get its guys." The RCMP will; it is very good at getting its guys.

The member insinuates that we just need to have a committee and talk about it. The problem is that the Liberals are propped up by other parties. The issue will go nowhere unless we stand our ground and demand that the evidence get turned over to the RCMP today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are other voices coming from both sides of the House. I just want to

remind members to please be respectful, and if they have any questions and comments, they should wait till the appropriate time.

We are resuming debate.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just checking whether we have quorum or not.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We do have quorum.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I get the sense that the Conservatives are running out of speakers. They do not have to speak; they can just allow the question on their motion, and then we can get it to committee if that would be more helpful to the members opposite.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not point of order; it is a point of debate.

The hon. member for Waterloo is rising on another point of order.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have been notorious for leaving their cell phone right beside the microphone, causing feedback for the interpreters, so I just want to make sure the member has put his phone away before he starts speaking.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did raise this a while ago, and I am sure that members who are setting up to speak are taking that into consideration.

The Honourable Member for Calgary Signal Hill has the floor.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to have a Liberal try to look after a Conservative, but I was—

Hon. Bardish Chagger: The kids have to be reminded. See, we care. I care for the interpreters actually.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member for Waterloo that it is not time for questions and comments. If she has anything to contribute, she should wait until then.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill has the floor.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I have been in this game for a long time. In fact, I was probably involved in this game before the member for Waterloo was even born, so I know what to do with my cellphone when I am up to speak. I thank her for sharing her concern. I am sure we will have an opportunity to share some concerns during questions and comments.

Privilege

It is always a pleasure to get up in the House of Commons on behalf of the constituents of Calgary Signal Hill. However, I wish it was on an issue or item that is more relevant to them and what they want us debating. They already know the government is corrupt.

Remember, it was the Speaker who ruled that the government needs to provide the documents, so all we as an opposition have been doing for several days now is supporting the Speaker, who happened to be elected as a Liberal member of Parliament. For Liberals to stand up in the House and say the Conservatives are the ones delaying the business of the House could not be further from the truth. The Conservatives are here to keep the government accountable. An order was issued by the House, the Liberal government refused to heed that order and then the Speaker ruled in favour of the question of privilege. I do not know how much more clear it can be. It is almost a trend of this particular government, which has no respect for institutions.

As I said at the outset, I have been in this game a long time. I served in the Alberta legislature, and I cannot imagine that any member of that legislature, given the almost eight years I served, would put up with the nonsense happening here with the government. It is a lack of respect for the institution and the Chair for the Liberal members to stand here and try to put the blame on the opposition.

We have been elected by Canadians as members of the loyal opposition. Our job is to keep the government honest and look after taxpayers' dollars on their behalf, because we have a government that cannot be trusted. It is unfortunate that we have to continue this debate, but I can assure members that the will of this caucus is to get to the bottom of it. Unless the Liberal government tables the documents as ordered by the Chair, we are going to be here through Christmas if we have to be, so the government will have to come up with these documents.

In preparation for my remarks today, I did a little googling, and Wikipedia has a list of political scandals in Canada. The list is fairly lengthy, but consider that we have been a country for over 150 years, which means we have been governed by the current government for one-fifteenth of the time, and almost half of the political scandals on Wikipedia's list have happened since 2015. Many of them have been enunciated here in speeches by my colleagues, but I will start with "elbowgate". I can't mention who it is attributed to, but we will guess. He happens to sit in the Prime Minister's chair, or "the big chair" as he called it in answer to our party leader's question one day.

Then we we had the cash for access scandal, the Aga Khan scandal and the cultural appropriation scandal. I was not quite sure what that was, but it explains that the Prime Minister went to India and donned some traditional garbs and did some dances. Wikipedia considers that a scandal.

• (1615)

Then there is the next one. I was surprised that it was labelled this way, but it is called "Trudeau Grope Gate"—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member knows not to mention the name of the Prime Minister or any other names of members who sit in the House.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

• (1620)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw the name of the individual, but the label is the individual's name and it is called "Grope Gate".

We then went on to the SNC-Lavalin affair, and we all know what that was about. We had a situation where the Prime Minister was trying to get the attorney general of Canada at the time to break the law so that his buddies with a firm in Canada could continue activities that were probably a little suspect. It was another situation where there was no respect for the institution and no respect that the attorney general had a job to do and could not have done that job if the Prime Minister had had his way. We all know how that ended.

We then went to something called the blackface scandal. Of course, who is it attributed to? There is that name again.

We then got to sole-source contracts. That is not him; that is the Minister of International Trade.

We then got to the WE Charity controversy. That was the same individual and another guy named "Bill no more". He is no more.

We then have a big one. This takes up the whole page. It is called arrive scam. That one is not even finished yet. That one is still well under way.

Then there is the sister-in-law ethics commissioner. We all know who that was. We then have Chinese government interference. Wikipedia names the Government of China, CSIS, the Liberal Party, the guy again and another member, who is an independent now. Then we see the Hunka scandal. While I cannot say the name again, the last scandal happens to be the Leader of the Opposition's "wacko" comment. Wikipedia calls that a scandal.

When we read all of the scandals that Wikipedia lists, the only one that is attributed to the Conservatives is the comment that our leader made about the Prime Minister, which I do not consider a scandal. I consider it an accurate assessment. That highlights where we are at and why we are in this debate today.

I will leave the scandal-plagued government to figure out its next move. I want to talk a bit about the last nine years in this country and what has happened to our economy and the standard of living.

Much of it is because the government has been totally inept. We have a government led by a leader who is quoted as saying that he has an admiration for the Chinese dictatorship. That in itself should cause a lot of concern. If we look at what has happened over the last nine years in the country, it so much reflects China, Cuba or other dictatorships. This is what we have had running this country.

Privilege

Canadians cannot wait. Canadians have said loud and clear that they are sick and tired of this guy and it is time for him to go. His members, some of whom are afraid they are not going to win the next election, are starting to rebel. We will see where that goes, but as has been the case when it comes to certain situations, this individual seems pretty set in his ways. I happen to have a bet on it. I will not say which way I have gone, but right now it looks like I am losing.

As the Conservative Party, nothing would make us happier than to run in the next election against the Liberal leader, the guy who is referred to as “little potato”. I did not make that up. That is a fair assessment. We would dearly love to have the opportunity to run against the little potato and go into an election. I am afraid the results would not be pretty for all the fellows and ladies over there. In fact, I am looking at a couple of their ridings and the polls do not look good. I would be polishing up my résumé, especially if I were the member for Waterloo. It is going to be tough for the Liberal MPs to sell this.

• (1625)

We started off with sunny ways, and Canadians bought into it. Politics changes in cycles and clearly in 2015 Canadians decided they wanted a change. They changed to sunny ways, but it was not sunny for very long before the clouds started to set in.

This particular Liberal government has done more to harm the Alberta economy than any government in this country's history. Even today there are announcements coming out. Look at the most recent immigration announcement, and look at it deeply to see how it is going to impact Alberta negatively.

It is about time the government put its record on the line and called an election to see what Canadians really think. The Liberals seem to feel like pollsters have it all wrong, that Canadians still see sunny ways out there, but I am afraid we are well beyond that.

I would like to wrap up by saying that this particular scandal—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind members that there will be plenty of time for questions and comments, 10 minutes, and that making comments interrupts members who are speaking.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill has the floor.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, it is the same member that a point of order was called on earlier. I heard the same thing the member for Kelowna—Lake Country heard, which was about calling the member who spoke two members earlier a name. I will not say what the word was—

Mr. Matthew Green: What was the word?

Mr. Ron Liepert: “Stupid” is the word you said.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I indicated during the point of order that we would be listening to what was said and would come back to the House if need be. I would ask the hon member to stick to his speech, and I would ask

the hon. member for Hamilton Centre to please wait if he has questions and comments.

I ask members to please be respectful. When someone else has the floor, please do not interrupt them.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill has the floor.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, maybe while I am on my feet and while the NDP wants to get into the conversation, let us talk a bit about what the NDP has done over the last three years. The first six years were not so bad, but the last three years are why we have the government we have today, why bad decisions have happened and the reason for our cost of living.

Today we heard the March food bank statistics. The member, I am sure, has plenty of people in Hamilton Centre lining up at the food bank, mainly because of policies of the Liberal government that the New Democrats have supported. Every NDP member is on the bubble when it comes to the next election. Members had better believe it. All they have to do is look at the polls. I bet they have looked at the polls—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Again, I want to remind members to please hold on to their questions, comments or thoughts until it is the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill has six and a half minutes left.

Some hon. members: More, more.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, there will be other speakers, and there may even be amendments we can speak to again, so they may get their wish if they want more.

Let us get back to the scandal before us. If we did not have the NDP consistently supporting the Liberals at committee, we might have a little confidence that something would happen there. However, I am afraid that when this goes to committee, as the speaker before me said, it will be swept it under the rug and the Liberals will filibuster. It is about time the Liberals stood up, respected the ruling of their own Speaker, tabled the documents with no black lines in them and let the RCMP do its investigation. If they do not, we could be here for many more days, or maybe weeks or months. It is hard to say.

I feel sorry for the poor member for Hamilton Centre, who will have to sit and listen to this for what could be days, weeks or months, but I can assure him that it is going to happen unless the documents are tabled. That is an easy way to finish this.

With those comments, I will wrap up and say that I look forward to answering any questions the members for Hamilton Centre and Waterloo might have.

Privilege

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started off by talking about the lack of respect for the institution. What we are witnessing from the Conservative Party of Canada every day is just that. I would ultimately argue that it is a form of contempt of Parliament, every day, from the Conservative Party. Canadians should not be surprised because the only prime minister in the history of the British Commonwealth found to be in contempt of Parliament was Stephen Harper. The parliamentary secretary to Stephen Harper at the time was none other than the leader of the Conservative Party today.

Why does the leader of the Conservative Party believe he can have so much disrespect for the Parliament of Canada? Why does he refuse to get the security clearance to deal with the important issue of foreign interference? When will the Conservative Party, and the leader of the Conservative Party, specifically, start putting the interests of the nation ahead of his own personal interests and the interests of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, the leader of our party has been travelling this country for the last two years and meeting with Canadians of all walks of life on their home turf. All we have seen, since that time, is that the popularity of our leader continues to increase because he is talking with Canadians about things that they care about.

This particular member, who says he goes to McDonald's in Winnipeg on Saturday mornings to check out what his constituents have to say, should maybe pick a few other McDonald's locations and check out what they have to say. Canadians are telling us that they are fed up with the government, they are sick and tired of the Prime Minister, and they want an election now.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was eagerly waiting to hear what the hon. member had to say today because, quite frankly, I have not heard from him in quite some time. If there is one positive outcome for him here, perhaps it is that he has finally had a chance to speak. As a proponent of freedom of speech, I am glad he has that ability here today.

I do have to ask the hon. member a question because I know he is from Calgary, but it appears the signal is not quite getting to the hill. Did he not watch committee? Does he not understand that I was actually the one who uncovered this in the first place? There is this whole nonsense about this being about us, but why does he not just come clean with his base, stop misleading them, stop banking on the stupidity of the base and come clean with the fact it is them holding us up in the House? It can go to committee. It can be dealt with.

Does he have the integrity and the courage to at least be honest with his base?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. How many committees have we had filibustered? Stuff gets swept under the rug because the NDP votes with the Liberals every time. Why would we send this to the committee?

The Speaker has made a ruling, and if we have any desire to uphold this institution, we should be doing what the Speaker says and they should provide the documents, unredacted, now.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Calgary Signal Hill to maybe elaborate a bit. Some have said that this place is now in a state of paralysis over the Liberals' refusal to comply with the order the House that was already voted on, but, of course, there is a remedy. The remedy is an election.

If there is urgent business we cannot attend to because the members cannot agree to get past this issue, why will they not just call an election?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, the member is one hundred per cent correct. We have been saying that now for three and a half weeks. There are many options that can happen. Number one, obviously, is to table the documents and the House goes back to regular consideration of business, or, if the Liberals are that afraid to table the documentation, there is another option. Actually, there is enough time yet. There are 58 days between now and Christmas, when we could actually have an election. I would challenge the deputy House leader to make that recommendation to his leader at caucus on Wednesday.

• (1635)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thought the hon. member for Hamilton Centre made a very good point. I know that a number of members have worked on exposing what went on at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, and it is not really a partisan issue. There was a breakdown of basic functionality in a committee that had worked well before.

In addition to the work of Conservative members, would the member for Calgary Signal Hill like to acknowledge the work of the member for Hamilton Centre?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I have no faith in the Liberal-NDP government or anything going to committee. Neither one of those two parties want to go to an election right now, so whatever it takes to filibuster a committee, they are going to do it. I have no faith in the committee system in the House under the current Liberal-NDP government, and that is why we need the documents tabled, as ordered by the Speaker. There is an easy way out.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to say to my colleague across the way that I was really enthused by his speech and I could not contain myself. I do apologize for getting a bit loud, but I do appreciate hearing his voice. It is a voice we do not hear often in this chamber, and it is quite refreshing to see him. I will refrain from digressing too far.

The member talks about an election and this issue. I think it is a very important issue. I would like to ask the member if there is any member of Parliament or any political party that does not agree with the advancement of this question of privilege?

Privilege

The second comment I would like to make is that the member refers to the Speaker as the government's Speaker. That is not the way this place works. The member has been around for a long time. The Speaker is elected to represent all the good people and to play a very important role. Does the member believe, as per the Speaker's ruling, that this work should go to committee?

The Conservatives have been kind of misrepresenting what the Speaker said. The Speaker said we should be able to call the question and let the committee do its important work. I believe we should have confidence in the RCMP to do its work.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, if I gave the impression that somehow the Speaker was biased, that was not my intention. What I said was that the Speaker was elected as a Liberal MP. Yes, he was elected by the House as the Speaker, but he is a Liberal MP. The Liberals are not even supporting one of their own colleagues when he makes a ruling that is unbiased.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member to be very careful. He knows that every MP who is elected in the House has an opportunity to elect the Speaker, who is then impartial. I just want to leave it there. If the hon. member can finish answering the question, there will be time for another question after that.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I think that was the point I was trying to make. For the member for Waterloo to somehow intimate that I was saying the Speaker was biased is not correct.

I will answer the question the member raised that I think is important. I do not understand why we cannot do both of the things the member suggested: table the documents and go to committee. That is pretty simple, but it is only the Liberals who are standing in the way of moving it to committee right now.

My recommendation is for the member for Waterloo to go to caucus on Wednesday to say that the Liberals are losing this battle and to ask them to just cave and table the documents.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. member for Waterloo that she had an opportunity to ask a question. If she has anything else to add, she needs to wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Calgary Signal Hill for his talk today. Just last Wednesday, we were studying this issue in public accounts. We actually had someone from the Privy Council Office tell us that they would not honour the order of the House of Commons until they received permission from one of the board's directors of the green slush fund, who had been convicted of violating the conflict of interest law.

What does it say about the government that the Privy Council Office is seeking permission from someone who violated our laws before they will honour the orders of Parliament?

• (1640)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I am not sure that there is much that I could add to that, but nothing that comes out of this

particular government, or testimony at committees about dealing with this particular government, surprises any of us anymore. It is a corrupt government. It is a government on its last leg. It is time for an election. There are 58 days before Christmas.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Mental Health and Addictions; the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Service of Canada; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Democratic Institutions.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the subamendment arising from the Speaker's ruling in finding a prima facie question of privilege following the failure of the Liberal government to abide by a clear and unambiguous order of the House that was passed on June 10 by a majority of members. In fact, all members representing all of the opposition parties collectively voted in support of the motion that led to the order.

The order is very straightforward. It simply calls upon the Liberals to turn over all documents under their control with respect to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, better known as the Prime Minister's billion-dollar green slush fund, to the Parliamentary law clerk so that the Parliamentary law clerk can then hand over those documents to the RCMP. The order provided that the documents were to be handed over unredacted, and it should be noted that the RCMP has confirmed that it is investigating conflicts, corruption and potential criminality at this billion-dollar green slush fund during the time that the former minister of industry Navdeep Bains and the current minister of industry oversaw that slush fund.

I want to emphasize that the order of the House is not merely a request. It is not optional. It is not for the government to pick and choose which parts of the order it abides by and which parts it does not abide by. It is an order of the House that goes to the heart of parliamentary supremacy and the privileges of all members in the House. It is an order that has constitutional weight.

In that regard, I would draw attention to section 18 of the Constitution Act 1867, which states, "The privileges, immunities, and powers to be held, enjoyed, and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons, and by the members thereof respectively, shall be such as are from time to time defined by Act of the Parliament of Canada". Among those privileges is the power of the House to call for persons, papers and records. Those powers are not in any way limited pursuant to the Standing Orders or any act or resolution passed by the House.

Privilege

According to Bosc and Gagnon, at page 984, “The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format, and that they are located in Canada.” That was reaffirmed by the parliamentary law clerk when he testified at the public accounts committee last Tuesday. He said, as quoted in the blues, with respect to the production order, “the power of the House to compel the production of documents is a constitutional power that is a parliamentary privilege. It supersedes ordinary law”. The parliamentary law clerk further observed that the privileges of the House, including the power to order the production of papers, records and persons, fall within the ability of this House of Parliament to exercise its core functions. Among those core functions is the ability to investigate and to hold the government to account.

• (1645)

That is precisely the basis of the production order, to see that Parliament can get to the bottom of the conflict, mismanagement and corruption with respect to the green slush fund and that those documents are turned over to the RCMP so it can pursue a criminal investigation and lay charges where appropriate.

As I noted, the order was passed on June 10. The government had 30 days to turn over the documents. It has not come close to complying with the order. It has turned over some documents, but they are redacted. When the representative from the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, came before the public accounts committee, the bases upon which she asserted the redactions had been made were the Privacy Act, the Access to Information Act, solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence. Of course, that is completely unacceptable because, as the law clerk noted, the production order supersedes all of those things. The parliamentary law clerk was clear. The order supersedes ordinary law, so it will prevail over the Access to Information Act, the Privacy Act and, for example, solicitor-client privilege.

Notwithstanding that, representing, again, the Prime Minister's department, the witness made it very clear that the government has no intention of abiding by the order of the House. The position of the government is to thumb its nose at Parliament. While thousands of documents have been redacted, tens of thousands of other pages of documents have been completely withheld. For example, the Department of Justice at present is withholding 11,000 pages of documents relating to SDTC. The justice department is hiding documents from the House that were ordered to be produced to the House and turned over to the RCMP.

The government is in complete contempt. It begs this question: Why have the Liberals gone to such lengths to obstruct and literally paralyze this place to hide documents relating to the billion-dollar green slush fund? Having taken a fairly close look at what happened under the green slush fund, I think the answer is that it is really bad. That was confirmed by the explosive report of the Auditor General that led to this House adopting the motion that led to the production order the government has obstructed, three and a half months after the date it was due to turn over the documents. In that regard, the current Minister of Industry, as well as former Liberal minister of industry Navdeep Bains, have a lot to answer for.

The Auditor General wrote that as much as 400 million taxpayer dollars may have gone out the door improperly at the green slush fund. The current minister would have Canadians believe that SDTC, or the green slush fund, was an arm's-length foundation; that he and his officials really had nothing to do with it; and that when the whistle-blower came forward, he took action. However, that is not close to accurate with respect to what happened.

• (1650)

The minister and his department had a responsibility to provide appropriate oversight of what was happening at SDTC, and the Auditor General concluded that such oversight was completely lacking. Indeed, the Auditor General found that \$59 million went out the door of the green slush fund to ineligible projects. Putting aside the conflicts and the corruption that took place at SDTC, \$59 million went out the door to ineligible projects. That is gross mismanagement.

With respect to the responsibility of the minister and his department for oversight, the Auditor General was scathing in her conclusions. There are entire sections on the failure of this minister and the previous Liberal minister. For instance, one heading on page 21 of the Auditor General's report says, “The department did not sufficiently assess whether the foundation complied with the contribution agreements”. The department did not sufficiently assess that. We are talking about a billion taxpayer dollars. The minister and his predecessor were not providing sufficient oversight. Another heading in the Auditor General's report says, “The department did not sufficiently assess and monitor the foundation and its use of public funds”.

That happened under this minister, and the previous minister, and he has a lot to answer for, about why there was that total and complete lack of oversight. He cannot run away from it. He cannot say it was just some arm's-length foundation. Yes, board members at SDTC bear responsibility, but ultimate responsibility rests with the current minister and his predecessor, Navdeep Bains.

In addition to mismanagement, there were many conflicts of interest. There were instances of board members sitting in and deliberating on board meetings, and then voting to approve funding for projects that was then funnelled into companies they had interests in.

One such board member was the Liberal hand-picked chair Annette Verschuren, who moved two motions to funnel money out the door under the guise of providing so-called COVID relief payments: \$38.5 million went out the door that the Auditor General said should not have. Again, it was staggering mismanagement. However, \$220,000 of that went into her company NRStor, a company in which she was the majority shareholder, founder and CEO. This was a total and blatant conflict of interest.

Privilege

Then there was the Minister of Environment's pal Andrée-Lise Méthot. The Minister of the Environment was a lobbyist for Méthot's venture capital firm, Cycle Capital, lobbying the government almost 50 times prior to his election to this place. Méthot sat and voted to funnel \$650,000 to companies she had interests in, as part of those COVID relief payments. Not only that, but she has admitted at committee that several of her companies received millions and millions of dollars from the green slush fund while she sat on the board.

• (1655)

She was defiant in her testimony that she had recused herself and therefore, somehow, that was okay. However, when I asked her to explain if she had read the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act, and more specifically section 12, which states that “no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities”, she threatened to walk out of committee today, thumbing her nose at a parliamentary committee because that is precisely what she did. She violated the act when millions of dollars went into companies she had interests in. Whether she recused herself or not, the letter of the law in the SDTC act is clear. That was another matter flagged by the Auditor General in her report.

We have mismanagement to the tune of \$59 million, we have millions of dollars that members funnelled into their companies that they had interests in and there are incidents worth millions more where members technically recused themselves but money went into companies they had interests in, in contravention of the SDTC act.

It begs the question: Through it all, where was the current minister and where was his predecessor Navdeep Bains? At each and every one of the meetings during which those votes took place and money went out the door improperly or in conflicts of interest or in contravention of the SDTC act, the minister had a representative, the assistant deputy minister.

One of two things is possible in the case of Navdeep Bains and the current minister: they were completely asleep at the switch, or they turned a blind eye and were complicit in the mismanagement, conflict and corruption at SDTC. I have to say that I think the second scenario is the more likely scenario.

I and other members of the public accounts committee have questioned how it is that Navdeep Bains tapped Annette Verschuren on the shoulder to serve as chair of the green slush fund. Navdeep Bains claimed he appointed her pursuant to an independent merit-based process, but as it turns out, Navdeep Bains rigged the process by bypassing a short list provided by a selection committee and hand-picking Verschuren. Notwithstanding that he knew she had a conflict of interest, insofar as her company NRStor was receiving \$12 million from the green slush fund at the time, Navdeep Bains appointed her anyway. When he came to committee, instead of answering basic questions, he obstructed the committee so much that the committee came very close to holding him in contempt. If he does not show up by this Wednesday, it is almost certain he will be held in contempt. It speaks to a government, a current minister and a former minister who seem to be doing everything they can to

not answer questions, to obstruct and to not be transparent. They have a lot to answer for.

In the meantime, we are going to continue to insist, in the face of what is a massive scandal, that the government for once show some respect for this institution, show some respect for the taxpayers and show some commitment to seeing that there is accountability, including if there was criminal wrongdoing. The way the government can start in that regard, for the first time in nine years, is to turn over the documents now.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member says “show some respect for this institution”. The motion the Conservative Party brought to the House at the instruction of the Speaker was that we should pass this issue over to the procedure and House affairs committee. The Conservatives have put up 100-plus speakers on the issue and they are consistently filibustering—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not remember acknowledging anybody else to rise to speak. I would ask members to please be respectful.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are consistently filibustering the interests of Canadians. The leader of the Conservative Party was the parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the only prime minister to ever be held in contempt of Parliament, not only in Canada but the entire Commonwealth. We can see through this current leader of the Conservative Party, and the behaviour that we witnessed for the last three weeks, that he is the one who ultimately needs to be held accountable for his actions of contempt of Parliament, in my opinion.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary refers to the standstill over the Afghan detainee documents, and there was ultimately a solution in the face of that impasse dealing with a matter that dealt with serious national security matters in an active war zone, by the way. Prime Minister Stephen Harper called an election, and do members know what Canadians did? They re-elected Stephen Harper, delivering a strong, stable Conservative majority government. Do members know what they did to the Liberals? They reduced them to 34 seats. I suspect that the member knows that is where the Liberals are headed whenever the Prime Minister calls an election.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would say that there are probably a few people in the House who are further away in their politics than myself and the member. However, we do share common ground when it comes to demanding transparency and accountability from this government.

I find it highly suspicious that the member's colleagues would like to rewrite history and pretend that somehow, while we were at committee, I was not holding this government to account. I would like the hon. member to stand up and do the honourable thing and just perhaps reconfirm that, at every instance along the way, the NDP voted for the demand of documents. In fact, I am not sure there has ever been a motion in a committee that I have been at where I have not supported a demand for documents. So, just for the welfare of many of the backbenchers who do not know the file and who are learning it for the first time, could the member please just clarify the facts of the matter?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, while I would have plenty of criticism for the member's party on many matters in terms of supporting this government, I will concede that he has worked cooperatively on committee, along with the Bloc, on this particular matter.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, when my hon. colleague said that it must be something really bad, it got me to thinking. I had a constituent who came, very meekly, about something he wanted to get off his chest. He was a consultant and successful in obtaining a multi-million dollar grant from the government. It was his job to read through the contract, and in reading through the contract, part of the requirement was that 20% of the grant had to go to a business that the government specified for unspecified services. Now, my constituent smelled something very bad, and for all he knew, that business that was getting the 20% cut could be sending it back to the government. He actually said he wanted nothing to do with the grant after all the work that he did to get it.

My question to my colleague is: Is it possible that some of this really bad stuff that the Liberals do not want us to see has to do with kickbacks to the government, or maybe the minister himself?

• (1705)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, using the language used by the member for Hamilton Centre, what I do find highly suspicious is that a committee ordered that the government turn over all documents and emails between former minister Bains, the PMO, the Department of Industry and the PCO with respect to the appointment of the conflict-ridden chair, Annette Verschuren, and surprise, not a single communication, not a single email can be found. We are talking about a government appointment hand-picked by the minister involving overseeing \$1 billion in taxpayer money. It simply, on its face, does not pass the smell test. It is all the more suspicious given what we learned last week, which is that an IT official within this government was working to destroy emails to cover up the government's \$60-million arrive scam.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as the Conservatives have continued to play this game, I have raised many other issues. I will pose a question to the member opposite. There is a need for all leaders of the House to recognize the value of getting a security clearance, and concern has been raised about why the Conservative Party leader has chosen not to get a security clearance.

Is there something in the Conservative leader's past that he is concerned would disqualify him from getting a security clearance? Does he believe that Canadians have a right to know?

Privilege

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, this is a bit rich given that the Prime Minister was repeatedly briefed about Beijing's interference and turned a blind eye to it. He was briefed that one of his candidates was compromised by interference in one of the nomination campaigns, and as Madam Justice Hogue concluded, he ignored it out of electoral concern for himself. There we have it from Madam Justice Hogue: The Prime Minister put politics ahead of national security and addressing foreign interference.

With respect to the Leader of the Opposition, he will take the same briefing the Washington Post and the Prime Minister received, but what he will not do is allow the Prime Minister to play games by being the arbiter of what information he can see and then determine whether he upholds his oath to secrecy. He is not going to participate in the Prime Minister's circus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to take advantage of my colleague's speech to ask him the same question I asked one of his Conservative colleagues earlier, although I received no answer.

I think that this is something I am going to have to emphasize over the next few days and weeks. I was very pleased to find out that 240,622 Quebecers have used the new dental care program and are getting their dentists' bills paid thanks to the NDP's work in the House.

If my colleague's party were to come to power following the next election, will these 240,000 people receive assurances and a guarantee that this dental care program will still be available to them?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, all I can say is that the sooner we have a carbon tax election to get rid of the corrupt government, propped up by the NDP, the better off this country will be.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have great, breaking news: Site C dam has just opened up in British Columbia, which is very important for the production of hydroelectricity. It was pushed forward by the party I was in when we were in power and also by the leader of the B.C. Conservative Party, John Rustad. Despite the fact that the NDP and the Greens pushed back very hard against it, people like Bill Bennett and many others pushed it forward.

Privilege

Could the member share his thoughts about this and the fact that Conservatives believe in creating good jobs, in clean electricity and in keeping the lights on for people rather than keeping them in darkness?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that it is very good news, despite the NDP and the Greens.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak today to this important motion. Sometimes it gets lost in this place when we are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars or a billion-dollar green slush fund. What does it all mean? I was thinking about that as I was driving to the airport this morning. I passed a Tim Hortons that had trucks lined up there. Construction workers were on their way to work hard all day, as well as a nurse who was commuting to the hospital to take on a shift in very hard circumstances. I drove by the many farms that line my riding of Fundy Royal. The farmers were up and at it.

This is a government that is all too happy to tax the hard-working Canadians who make this country what it is and make everything work. It taxes them when they earn income, it taxes them when they save and it taxes them when they spend. We can imagine how irate it makes overtaxed Canadians when they hear about this kind of waste, this kind of mismanagement and this kind of absolute corruption from the government.

Canadians are fed up after nine years of the Liberal government's corruption and, indeed, obstruction. This debate today is evidence of that. At the core of the issue being debated today is the hundreds of millions of dollars that was funnelled to connected Liberals on the board of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC. It has now become known as the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund. That is because the government turned the SDTC into a slush fund for Liberal insiders. There is no surprise there. During an investigation, the Auditor General was not given full access to documents in order to assess the full scope of corruption that had been taking place. In June, the House voted to call on the government to provide all relevant documents directly to the RCMP. That made abundant sense, but now the government is defying the will of this House. It is refusing to hand over documents after the public learned of hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars that ended up lining the pockets of Liberal-appointed board members. However, it gets even worse. Canadians did not know about the corruption that was taking place, but the Liberal government had been aware of the board's unethical practices for years. The government let it continue, regardless.

Canadians deserve accountability from their government. That is why this debate today is so important.

SDTC was established in 2001 as a federally funded non-profit and for many years it carried out its mandate of helping Canadian companies develop and deploy sustainable technologies, so how did we get here? How are we in the mess that we are in today? When did the corruption and conflicts start to take root? It will be no surprise to anyone in this chamber that they started to take root under the Liberal government.

In 2018, the minister responsible for SDTC was former Liberal industry minister Navdeep Bains. He was not happy with the chair

of the board at the time because the chair was publicly expressing concerns with government legislation. As we know, with a Liberal government, if there is one thing it cannot tolerate, it is any criticism of its actions. We all know that the Liberal government does not take criticism well at all. We know, first and foremost, that the Prime Minister does not take criticism very well. That was fully evidenced this week as well. Thus, in 2019, the former industry minister began appointing new executives to the board of SDTC, despite the fact that many of these new executives had conflicts of interest. Therein is the root of the challenges that we are facing here now and exposing for Canadians. The minister went so far as to appoint a new chair of the board of directors who was already receiving SDTC funding through one of her companies.

● (1715)

To be clear, I will say that SDTC had never had a chair with interest in companies that had been receiving funding until this point. However, the minister proceeded with this appointment despite being fully aware of this serious conflict of interest. We now have a chair of the board tasked with overseeing the very same funds her company was receiving. We do not need a degree in ethics to see that this is not right. The Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office were even warned of the risk associated with appointing a conflicted chair; however, no action was taken.

The whole scandal is a sad reflection of what Canadians have come to expect from the Prime Minister. We all know that he will do whatever suits him and his friends, regardless of right or wrong. We have seen this time and time again. I do not want to rehash all these things, but they are pretty instructive. Whether it is taking vacations on a billionaire's island, violating ethics; pressuring the Attorney General to look the other way when SNC-Lavalin was facing prosecution and, indeed, firing ministers just for doing their job; or trying to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to the WE Charity, despite conflicts of interest involving his own family, the entitled Prime Minister has a track record of these kinds of actions.

Greed, corruption and obstruction have become not just a pattern for the Prime Minister; rather, they have become his playbook. As with any government, it is up to the Prime Minister to lead by example and to set the tone for his ministers as to how they should be expected to conduct themselves. The Liberals' green slush fund is just one example of how ministers have followed the Prime Minister's lead when it comes to disregarding rules around ethics and conflicts of interest.

In addition to appointing a chair of the board with an existing conflict of interest, former minister Bains appointed two board members who would go on to engage in behaviour in breach of the Conflict of Interest Act. They approved funding to companies in which they held ownership stakes.

Canadians, the hard-working taxpayers that I mentioned at the start of my speech, know that we cannot have a situation where individuals are awarding contracts and funding to their own companies. This is so basic. It should go without saying, but we cannot take these kinds of things for granted with the current government. It is not rocket science. The board members' behaviour was obviously unethical and even contravened long-standing rules against conflicts of interest.

The Liberals did not intervene to stop the corruption. Instead, they allowed SDTC to enter into a five-year, \$1-billion agreement with the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. It was around this time that the Prime Minister appointed a new industry minister, who still holds this role today. As his predecessor did, he would allow the SDTC to continue its unethical practices.

Two years ago, whistle-blowers started to raise their concerns internally. The Privy Council Office, the top bureaucrats in the country who were tasked with assisting the Prime Minister and his cabinet, were briefed on the funnelling of taxpayer dollars to board members' own companies. It is so unfortunate, as is often the case with the government, that we have whistle-blowers putting their own careers on the line in order to expose the government's wrongdoings instead of having ministerial accountability.

Despite being well-informed of the misappropriation of funds and breaches of conflicts of interest, the Liberals still allowed the corruption to continue. In fact, it was not until September 2023 that SDTC's funding was finally suspended, nearly a full year after whistle-blowers first raised the alarm of possible corruption.

After years of the Liberals knowing exactly how board members were lining their own pockets, why did they decide to suspend SDTC's funding now? What had changed? Why, after all that time, was some action taken? It was not the unethical practices of the board, the hundreds of millions of dollars that went into their own companies or the disregard of conflicts of interest rules that ended up forcing the Liberals to suspend SDTC's funding. Rather, it was the fact that the whistle-blowers made their allegations public.

After inaction from the government over months made it clear that nothing was going to change, the whistle-blowers had to go public. That is the only reason any action was taken. Shortly after SDTC's funding was suspended, the Auditor General announced that she would be conducting an audit of SDTC to support parliamentarians in the oversight of government activities and the stewardship of public funds.

- (1720)

While the Auditor General conducted this audit, Conservatives in the House of Commons worked to better understand the full scope of corruption that had been allowed to take place under the Liberal government and the amount of taxpayer dollars that were being misappropriated.

Privilege

In February, after months of allegations of corruption, Canadians learned that multiple board members were under ethics investigations. In one case, we learned that a board member was placed under an ethics investigation for funnelling \$400,000 through SDTC to a company that he owns. Another case was uncovered in which a former board member admitted to funnelling funds to a firm that they had a stake in. Another member of the board funnelled money to not one, not two, not three, but four companies that they had ownership stakes in.

Conservatives exposed the fact that the CEO and at least two directors used the fund to direct money to their own firms. The Liberal-appointed chair, a friend of the Prime Minister, confirmed that she used SDTC to give her own company more than \$200,000 in grant money. After nine years under the Prime Minister, his government's policies have left Canadians with less money, while Liberal-appointed board members of his billion-dollar green slush fund took taxpayer' dollars to line their own pockets.

While Liberals are making off like bandits, everyday Canadians are struggling. We need only to look around us in all the communities we represent. Food bank usage has increased every year that the Prime Minister has been in office. Members should think about what I just said. I know we throw this information out, but what a terrible track record for the Prime Minister. For the nine consecutive years that he has been Prime Minister, food bank usage has increased every single year. That is absolutely appalling.

Two million Canadians are now visiting food banks every month. According to Food Banks Canada, food bank visits have gone up 90% since 2019. The cost of housing has doubled under the Prime Minister, and tent cities are popping up everywhere. In communities where tent cities were never a thing, they are everywhere. This was unthinkable just a few years ago, and it is now the norm across the country. In New Brunswick, in the riding I represent, and right across the country, we have tent cities in every city and in many communities throughout our great country.

Why is this? Why is this happening under the government? Is it some great coincidence? No, Canadians know that this is a direct result of the oppressive actions that the government has been taking against taxpayers. As one example, the Liberal carbon tax has jacked up the cost of everything from home heating to gas and groceries; this makes a real difference in people's ability to make ends meet.

Privilege

Every Canadian who goes grocery shopping would tell us that they have seen a remarkable increase in the cost of food. I know the Prime Minister would probably like to explain it as some kind of international phenomenon. The fact of the matter is that food prices have risen 36% faster here in Canada than in the U.S. over the last four years. What is the difference? It is the government's greedy carbon tax, which takes from those who are the least able to afford it.

Reckless spending under the government saw inflation reach a 40-year high. According to Statistics Canada, this country is currently faced with the biggest gap between rich and poor in our recorded history. While Canadians worried about how they would pay their bills, feed their kids and keep a roof over their head, Liberals worried about protecting their friends on the board of SDTC.

For months, Conservatives have been peeling back the shocking layers of corruption concerning the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund. In an effort to stop more damaging information from coming out, the Liberals and NDP members on the ethics committee tried to prevent a whistle-blower from sharing their testimony at committee. Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars had been misappropriated, yet the NDP-Liberal coalition wanted to silence the whistle-blower, who had originally unveiled evidence of corruption and who courageously came forward with serious allegations while testifying at committee.

• (1725)

In June 2024, the Auditor General of Canada released her scathing report. After the Auditor General's analysis of how SDTC had been conducting its business became public, the industry minister abolished the organization and transferred its funds to National Research Council Canada. This action by the industry minister is in stark contrast to how Liberals had previously approached the corruption going on, which was to do nothing and say nothing. After years of complacency, what was in the Auditor General's report that was so bad that the government was finally forced to act?

First, the Auditor General found that SDTC had demonstrated significant lapses in governance and in stewardship of public funds. This was not just a serious allegation; it was backed up by volumes of evidence. Of the SDTC projects examined by the Auditor General, she found that nearly 20% of the funding went to companies that were ineligible to receive it. The projects did not meet the government's own criteria for funds but were approved anyway. The ineligible projects received over \$58 million of hard-working taxpayers' money.

The Auditor General was given a sample of 226 transactions to examine for the purpose of the audit, and 82% of the transactions were conflicted. This was not a one-off. It was not just a slight deviation from the norm; 82% had conflicts. The price tag of the conflicted transactions totalled \$330 million.

The Auditor General's investigation uncovered \$390 million in funding that was awarded to projects that were either ineligible to receive funding or were awarded to projects in which board members were conflicted. This is not just a scandal of epic proportions; this is pure, unbridled corruption.

Following the release of the Auditor General's report, the House passed a motion calling on the government, SDTC and the Auditor General to send all documents related to the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund directly to the RCMP. Instead of abiding by the will of the House, federal departments either outright refused the order or turned over documents that were heavily redacted, citing provisions of the Privacy Act or the Access to Information Act.

The problem is that neither the Privacy Act nor the Access to Information Act permits federal departments to redact documents that have been specifically requested by the House. The House has the absolute and unfettered ability to order the production of documents, which is not limited by statute. These are powers enshrined in the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Parliament of Canada Act.

The government's reaction to the motion as passed by the House has been absolutely unacceptable. In fact, the government's response went so far as to breach the privileges of the House. The Conservative House leader raised these concerns as a question of privilege last month, and the Speaker agreed to look into the facts of the case that Conservatives had laid out.

After examining the events that had transpired, the Speaker ruled that the privileges of the House had in fact been breached. The Speaker's ruling on the question of privilege has led us to the debate we are having today. The debate is about more than just respect for Parliament; it is also about respect for democracy and about accountability to taxpayers and our constituents, who send us here to Ottawa to work on their behalf.

The government is doing everything it can to withhold the documents, so it begs the question of what the Liberals are trying to hide. They are willing to sacrifice their entire legislative agenda rather than simply comply with the will of Parliament and hand the documents over to the RCMP.

The Liberals must have weighed the pros and cons of the situation and decided it was more important to withhold the documents than it was to do the work their constituents elected them to do. The Liberals have no one to blame but themselves. They can choose to respect the Speaker's ruling and the will of the House, or they can continue to obstruct the work of Parliament.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the lack of respect for the House of Commons is actually being administered by the Conservative Party of Canada and the leader of the Conservative Party. I am not going to play the game they play of consistently spreading misinformation. The motion should have been voted on, and it should have gone to committee. That is what the Speaker is saying.

Privilege

I am going to go back to the issue of foreign interference and the terrible rationale that the Conservatives use.

It is interesting, in regard to the leader of the Conservative Party and his dealings with the issue of foreign interference. Here is what iPolitics says, and I love the headline: “[Leader]’s approach to national security is ‘complete nonsense,’ says expert.... Wesley Wark, who has advised Liberal and Conservative governments on national security, said [the] Tory Leader...is ‘playing with Canadians’ by refusing to get a top-level security clearance and receive classified briefings on foreign interference.”

This is a serious issue. Can the member give any indication whatsoever of what it is about the background of the current leader of the Conservative Party that might not allow him to get the security clearance? Is the fear that there is something about his history, his background, that would not allow him to get—

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

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, this is a desperate attempt by a desperate government to try to talk about anything but what we are talking about today and to try to muzzle the leader of the official opposition. That is not going to happen. The leader of the official opposition is going to continue to speak out on issues that are important to Canadians, important to our national security and important to all of us.

What the member obviously did not want to talk about was what is found in the Auditor General’s report, which is what we are debating here today in this motion from the House. I did not get a chance to mention the recording of a senior civil servant slamming the “outright incompetence” of the government, which gave \$390 million in contracts inappropriately. That is what we are here talking about today. This Liberal-NDP coalition has undermined taxpayers and allowed this to continue, but we are not going to stand for it.

Canadians deserve parliamentarians who will stand up and be accountable for taxpayers’ dollars, and that is what is going to happen here today, whether the hon. member wants it or not.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about the failures of the Liberal government, and there are many things I would agree with him on there, but he seemed to blame absolutely everything on the Liberals. I wonder if he could comment on the fact that people in his province blamed everything on the Conservative government in New Brunswick and soundly defeated it in the last election.

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I think the remarks I gave were fact-filled remarks. I pointed to the fact that SDTC had existed since 2001, but these conflicts began under the current government. There is an old expression I remember from when I was just a child: Sometimes the truth hurts. The truth of the matter is that these appointed individuals had conflicts. The individuals on the board’s awarding of millions of dollars to their own companies was unprecedented. It did not happen under the previous Conservative government; it happened under this government. The change in approach happened under the Liberal government, and Canadians are demanding accountability from the government for the waste in the green slush fund.

• (1735)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague brought up the Liberals’ benefiting themselves. We are talking about \$58 million to 10 ineligible projects and \$334 million, over 186 cases, to projects in which the board members had conflicts of interest.

When we think about that just benefiting Liberal insiders, what kind of repercussions would that have to the Canadian taxpayer?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, that is why, at the outset of my remarks, I mentioned the farmers and nurses in my riding, as well as the construction workers I saw going off to work this morning when I was on my way here. It is easy for us in the House to talk about hundreds of thousands of dollars misappropriated to an individual’s company or \$390 million over a number of cases where the money should not have been awarded because of a conflict of interest or ineligibility. However, where did that money come from? There is only one source for all this money, and that is the taxpayers whom we all represent.

Taxpayers work hard for their money. When they earn that money, they are taxed on it; when they spend that money, they are taxed on it. They deserve, from each and every one of us in this chamber, absolute accountability for the money that has been spent. However, accountability is what the government, at every turn, has sought to avoid under the green slush fund. It hurts the Liberals very badly that we are not going to stand for that. Conservatives are going to expose that every day.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the government is being asked to gather information and hand it directly over to the RCMP. However, the RCMP has said that it does not like the Conservative tactic. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada has said that it does not like the tactic. The former law clerk of the House of Commons has said that he does not support the tactic. There is a genuine lack of respect for these institutions that is being driven by the leader of the Conservative Party.

However, whether it is those institutions or the issue of the security clearance, members of the Conservative Party caucus collectively put their head in the sand and ignore what Canadians have a right to know. Again, we have experts saying that the leader of the Conservative Party should get the security clearance. Why will those in the Conservative Party not be honest with Canadians and tell us why their leader would not qualify for security clearance, as I am beginning to believe is the real reason?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, that is an effort, on full display, to talk about anything but the millions of dollars wasted, misappropriated and sent to insiders under the green slush fund. These were not general insiders but Liberal insiders from the Liberal government, and it is the last thing they want to talk about.

Privilege

This is not from me. It is the Auditor General of Canada who said that 20% of the projects were ineligible and \$58 million was sent for ineligible projects. Out of 226 transactions examined for the audit, 82% were conflicted. The price tag of these conflicted transactions was \$330 million. Members do not have to take the Conservatives' word for it; this is directly from the Auditor General, and that is an inconvenient truth for the government.

As we heard from the Liberal member opposite, Liberals want to speak about anything but what we have exposed here and what the Auditor General has exposed. Conservatives will not stop fighting for accountability for every taxpayer dollar that was spent and misappropriated by the government.

• (1740)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal member just complained about the tactic. However, does my friend believe that this production order would have been necessary if the government had done the right thing from day one? As soon as the whistle-blowers started raising the alarm about conflicts of interest and money being funnelled to Liberal insiders' own companies, the government should have called the police in right away instead of filibustering at committee and engaging in a cover-up. Would we even be here today if the government had done the right thing from the get-go?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I gather that my colleague knows the answer to this question as well.

Of course, had the Liberals done the right thing at any stage of this debacle, this would not be necessary. However, doing the right thing and the Liberal government do not go hand in hand. Taxpayers' money has been wasted. All of this could have been avoided if the Liberals had done the right thing. However, that is why we are here today: They did not.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I should not say it is a pleasure to still be debating this privilege motion, because it is very unfortunate. We are now on a subamendment, which I would like to share my views on with the House today, but I should remind members of the government caucus that their refusal to comply with a lawful order of Parliament, with a lawful production order, is the reason the House is still debating this motion. The Liberals control 100% of what business will be debated in the House. All they have to do is comply with the production order, and then they can call whatever piece of legislation they want. However, we are still talking about this because they would rather grind Parliament to a halt for three or four weeks.

I think we started debating this motion on September 27. Was it September 27?

An hon. member: It was the 26th.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I am off by a day, September 26. It is now October 28. They have paralyzed Parliament for a month rather than simply complying with the production order.

What is a production order? For those watching on CPAC who want to know the intricacies of this parliamentary word, I note that Parliament has the power to compel every government agency, institution or department to produce information. To do our jobs and

make good laws and sound decisions, we have the ability collectively, when the House decides that it needs documents or wants to hear testimony from witnesses, to send for persons or papers. We are talking about papers right now.

We have uncovered, thanks to brave testimony from whistle-blowers who unveiled the depths of this corruption at great risk to their own careers, that Liberal-friendly insiders sitting on a board, who had control of a billion dollars' worth of taxpayers' money, got to determine who got millions of dollars' worth of government grants. What the Auditor General found out, thanks to the tipoff by this whistle-blower and thanks to my hard-working colleagues sitting on the committee that litigated this scandal, is that insiders were funneling taxpayers' money into their own companies, which is outrageous. It was 400 million dollars' worth of corruption. The Auditor General found that \$58 million went to 10 projects that were completely ineligible and had nothing to do with the mandate of the fund.

The fund was originally set up to help Canadian companies innovate and find solutions to environmental problems. The government would help underwrite some of the costs of innovation. The thinking was that, as a benefit, Canadians would perhaps get the commercialization of whatever innovative products came out of that. Then of course there was the environmental benefit of having cleaner ways to do things and make things, fewer emissions going into our atmosphere and fewer pollutants going into our lakes and rivers. The key point was that it had to have something to do with the environment.

The Auditor General found that 10 projects for \$58 million were completely ineligible. That is a lot of money. Just to put that into context, the sponsorship scandal started off at about \$40 million and people went to jail for it. There were criminal prosecutions.

I should point something out to my hon. colleague from Winnipeg, because I anticipate that he might get up. Every once in a while he likes to get up for questions and comments to make his views known and to ask Conservatives for their take on some of the things he is interested in. He will somehow paint the spectre that as long as Parliament is doing anything with this, there should be a complete, pristine cone of silence around any kind of investigation. I will point out to him that there was a lot of investigation into the sponsorship scandal. In fact, there was a full public inquiry, a judicial inquiry, called the Gomery commission.

I was in the House at the time. I remember the daily drip of details that came out, the sordid facts of Liberal insiders and even Liberal cabinet ministers at the time who were sitting around the table when a scheme was concocted. It was to take money that was supposed to protect our national unity and spread the message of a cohesive and strong country and to instead put it into the pockets of Liberal insiders. It was very similar.

● (1745)

The inquiry, the debate in Parliament and the litigation at committee did not prevent the RCMP from successfully prosecuting and convicting wrongdoers in that case. I just want the member to know that; it might save him some time when my speech is concluded. Hope springs eternal.

We found out more. I do not have it printed out, but I have it. One of my colleagues, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, found out something today about the owner of Cycle Capital, which by the way is the same firm that the current Minister of Environment is involved in. A lot of people say there were Liberal insiders on the board and ask what the link is to Liberal ministers and the government of the day. Here it is: The Minister of Environment is a partial owner in the company called Cycle Capital.

Annette Verschuren's company was valued at \$140 million when she was appointed to the Prime Minister's slush fund. After years of funnelling millions in taxpayers' money to companies she owns, Cycle Capital is now worth \$600 million. This is exactly like GC Strategies. It is never better than when Liberals are in power, for government lobbyists and well-connected Liberal insiders. That is why Canadians should care about the issue.

Let us think back to when Canadians were locked down, the economy was suffering and many people were going through severe hardship. Think about all the devastating impacts that had on the lives of Canadians. All members know of people in their communities who lost everything. They lost their businesses, sometimes businesses that had been in the family for two, three, four generations. People had to sell their home, families were broken up and people had to move to other parts of the country to find work.

Some of the redirection of money, the misuse of taxpayers' money, was happening during that time, and the Prime Minister was saying that he was plunging the country into debt so Canadians did not have to go into debt. We should never forget that during that incredible time of hardship, Liberals got a Liberal. They found a way to enrich their friends and help their partisan supporters. That is the crux of the issue.

This could all end today. Every once in a while, I chat with a Liberal member in the hallways of this place, and they ask me how long the debate is going to go on for. The ball is in the Liberals' court. It will end on the day they respect the order of Parliament, the day they direct all their departments to comply with the lawful order of Parliament so the information can be handed to the RCMP and the RCMP can have all the information.

The Auditor General has the “follow the money trail” kind of thing. She has the documents about where money was paid and how decisions were made, and she understands the conflicts of interest. However, there is a lot of information behind the scenes.

A whistle-blower said that with respect to intent, when one has the information that is contained in the production order, they will see the intent. We believe that, at the very least, the RCMP should be able to access the documents so it can make the proper determination. It is a very important principle that we, as the guardians of taxpayers' money, are able to let it do that. That is why the motion

Privilege

is so important, and that is why it is so important for the government to comply with the order.

I should point out another argument that I anticipate. I hope I addressed an issue that the member might have gotten up on, but just to give him some rest and maybe to avoid having to answer another question about it, I will add this: He might also say that there is somehow some terrible precedent being set and that complying with the production order would somehow taint the investigation and create a terrible precedent for future cases. I should point out that some departments have complied with the order.

In fact, I believe the Office of the Privacy Commissioner has complied with the production order. Some departments did provide documents, so the Liberals cannot on the one hand claim they cannot comply with the order because doing so would taint the criminal investigation, which is some bizarre argument about violation of charter rights. I should point out that the charter is not there to protect the government; it is there to protect the people from the government.

● (1750)

The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot go ahead and say that it is somehow going to damage the integrity of the RCMP investigation while simultaneously some departments are complying with it. Those two arguments are mutually exclusive. Only one of those scenarios can be true.

We believe that some departments did the right thing and complied with it. Some departments decided to ignore a lawfully passed production order by the elected body of the people of Canada, whose money, by the way, was taken out of their pockets or off their paycheques to go into this fund that was then redirected to these Liberal insiders.

For that reason, I hope that today, after a month of Parliament not being able to proceed to other business because the government has chosen to paralyze Parliament rather than comply with this order, might be the day the Liberals all go home, reflect on what was said today and wake up tomorrow with a renewed sense of democracy and of proper stewardship of taxpayer money. That is my hope. It is not just a hope for myself and my Liberal colleagues, but for the Canadian people, so they can once again have faith and confidence in their institutions.

The member talks a lot about institutions and preserving the integrity of those institutions. How about preserving the integrity of the institution of Parliament? How about restoring the integrity of the concept that taxpayer money is used properly and that the government does not reach into the pockets of Canadians through the use of its monopoly on force? Nobody has the choice as to whether or not they pay their taxes. The government has that awesome power to force people to fork over when it decides to make them fork over. At the very least, what should accompany that is the money that is raised in that way only goes to what the government says it is supposed to go to and not to enriching the well-connected partisan friends of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Privilege

We are almost at the end of today's session. Let us all take that hope home with us, reflect on that tonight and send positive energy or say prayers that we will all wake up tomorrow, or at least the Liberals will all wake up tomorrow, with a bit more wisdom, a little more respect for the Canadian taxpayers and comply with this production order so the RCMP can get to the bottom of this sordid affair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know you know that I love being able to contribute in a positive way. Hopefully, the member opposite will understand why I would rather not take advice from the Conservatives. After all, what they are suggesting is that there is nothing wrong with the production of papers and that all we have to do is get the information and hand it directly over to the RCMP.

I have a choice. Do I listen to the commissioner of the RCMP or do I listen to the self-serving Conservative Party of Canada?

Here is a quote I would like to provide the member opposite from Mike Duheme, "There is significant risk that the Motion could be interpreted as a circumvention of normal investigative processes and Charter protections." That is not me, the Liberal Party or the government saying it, but the RCMP commissioner.

That was reinforced in different ways by the Auditor General of Canada and by the former law clerk of the House of Commons. This is something the Conservative Party completely ignores, so when the member talks about a lack of respect for the institution, the Conservative members need to look in a mirror. This is no surprise, because he was a part of a government when his leader of the Conservative Party was the parliamentary secretary to the prime minister, that saw the only prime minister to be held in contempt of Parliament.

I wonder if the member opposite would share with us why the Conservatives believe they do not have to be responsible because they are in opposition, when I would argue there are some things they could do. They could show some goodwill and get the leader of the Conservative Party to agree to get the security clearance.

• (1755)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, that last point was just a ridiculous red herring that has nothing to do with the debate at hand.

I want to go back to something my colleague from New Brunswick said in response to my question. Why are we here today debating this motion? The government party has a whole bunch of people who sit around the cabinet table. I am not sure how big cabinet has expanded to these days, but a lot of people sitting around the cabinet table were aware of what was going on. They did nothing. Not only did they do nothing; they tried to sweep it under the rug. The whistle-blower had to come to committee to testify because all of his efforts to get the due diligence and the proper oversight and scrutiny fell on deaf ears.

What can be so problematic with complying with a production order if several departments have already complied? Again, and I had hoped that I had pre-emptively addressed this, that is the hypocrisy of the member's position. When many departments have

fully complied but many have not, then the argument cannot be made that any compliance with it will somehow taint the process.

At the end of the day, if we go back to that beginning point, had the Liberal government members done their due diligence, they would have said, "Wait a second. These people we appointed to the board were doing something wrong; they were funnelling money into their own companies and they placed themselves in conflict of interest."

The members of the board had this scheme where one person would leave the room, the rest of them would vote in favour of the funding going to that person, and then that person would come back in the room and do it for their friends. If the Liberals had said, "Whoa, that does not fly. We are calling in the cops; we are handing them all the information", we would not be here today. However, they did not, because those people on the board making those decisions and funnelling that money were their partisan friends and supporters. That is why we are still debating this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I almost miss the days when the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was the leader of the Conservative Party. He was just talking about taking the time to reflect and have a bit more wisdom. I wonder if it takes wisdom to come to the House and say that nurses are no longer going to work because there is no heating at the hospitals, that teachers are no longer going to work because there is no heating at the schools, that people are applying for medical assistance in dying because they no longer have anything to eat and that electricians, by some miracle, are catching lightning to light up rooms. I wonder if that is wisdom.

I find it interesting that in the same breath the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is talking about the need to have confidence in institutions. I get the impression that a political party that is obstructing the work of Parliament, that says it wants to trigger an election but is not giving itself the opportunity to do so and is trying to fuel the public's discontent with the government, is doing everything but strengthen public confidence in institutions.

I wonder what my colleague thinks of that.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, we are not the ones who decided that Parliament had to debate this motion. It was the Speaker. The government is the one that decided not to abide by the Speaker's ruling. That is why we are continuing to debate this motion. It is not the Conservative Party's decision. It is the decision of the Liberal Party and the government.

Only the government can comply with the order of the House. Only the government can comply with the Speaker's ruling. No one in the Conservative caucus can call the head of a department to tell them to send all the documents to Parliament. Only the government can do that.

If we are here this evening debating this motion, it is because of the Liberal government's decision.

• (1800)

[English]

I will just say one other thing. Regarding the argument the member makes about all the hardship facing Canadians, I will point out that every time the government pretends it is trying to make life better for Canadians, it makes life worse. Let us take housing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as I have shared many times throughout the day and in recent days, Greens supported the original opposition motion from the Conservatives to look into the mismanagement of SDTC, back in June. We support the terms of this motion as well.

The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle just finished sharing with the member from the Bloc Québécois that this is actually on the government side, that the Liberals are the ones continuing this debate.

I wonder if the member would test that theory. If only another Conservative would not get up after the member spoke, what might happen next? Can he tell us, if another Conservative did not speak after him, what would happen next?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member what would not happen: The government would not comply with the production order.

It all comes back to the “who made who” type of thing, so let us go all the way back. Corruption happened at SDTC. Liberal insiders lined the pockets of their own companies, knowingly putting themselves in conflict of interest positions. One of the board members actually ran away from a Zoom call. She just darted off camera because she did not like some of the questions she was getting.

Government officials, including senior cabinet ministers, knew about this and did nothing. They did not call in the cops, did not try to get Canadians their money back and did not try to hold anybody accountable. They tried to sweep it under the rug.

As the details came out at committee, the Liberals continued to filibuster and stonewall to try to prevent Canadians and parliamentarians from knowing what happened. Our last recourse as the opposition was to use our powers as a collective to produce these papers. The Liberals continue to refuse to do that. That is the reason we are still debating this motion.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear a response to the question from the member for Kitchener Centre. It was an excellent question. What would happen if no other Conservative stood up and spoke to the subamendment to the amendment of the motion? It would be great if we could get an answer from the hon. member.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I already addressed that. What is important is what would not happen. The whole point of being here to get this information is to prosecute wrongdoers and try to get Canadians their tax money back.

I ran out of time to talk about what happens when the Liberal government tries to fix things. They only make things worse. If we

Privilege

look at housing, our leader had a fantastic announcement today about axing the tax on new homes—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, one thing the opposition House leader mentioned was that this was another GC Strategies, but it might even be worse. He talked about Cycle Capital. One of the board members gave money to it and it more than tripled in value. I believe the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is a part owner of that company, and he, as a minister of the Crown, was part of the GIC that appointed the board member. If he is receiving a benefit, is that not in direct violation of section 119 of the Criminal Code, which says a holder of public office cannot take an action that benefits themselves or their family?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, that is a fantastic and timely point made by my colleague. Perhaps she is on the right track to finding out the motivation as to why the Liberals are going to such great lengths to keep this hidden.

I know what this is like, as an opposition House Leader, as someone who was Speaker and as someone who sat in the government benches from 2006 to 2011. Being willing to sacrifice a month's worth of House time is an incredible price to pay to keep corruption hidden. There clearly must be something devastating in these documents that the government is willing to go to this great length to keep the information hidden.

I will just point out again that every single time the Liberals try to solve something, they make it worse. Housing costs have doubled under the government, and that is why—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start where the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle left off: Under the Liberal government, housing costs have doubled. Let us start by getting this down to layman's terms to explain to Canadians what has gone on.

There are a lot of acronyms. There are a lot of terms of art and legal terms from the various conflicts of interest, ineligible—

• (1805)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, do we have quorum?

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, we do. We have 20 members.

The hon. member.

Privilege

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for being attentive, but when I speak, there are usually lots of people in the House. It is not usually a problem for me.

Let us get back to the matter at hand. There are lots of technical terms, legal linguistic terms and acronyms, such as SDTC, that we can utilize. Of course, there are different names.

What we need to understand is that there was a pool of nearly a billion dollars that was established by the Liberal government. The government then entrusted this money to a group of individuals who came under the auspices of SDTC, the then minister Navdeep Bains and eventually the current Minister of Innovation. SDTC was given this billion dollars and told what the government wanted SDTC to do with it. What the government was selling to the Canadian public was that this money would be used to get a cleaner, greener, more efficient and more productive economy.

Let us not forget where that billion dollars came from. It came from single moms, seniors, high school kids and folks working two or three jobs trying to get by in this ever-diminishing Liberal economy. One might say we would get this money from the wealthy, but that is not the reality. A large portion of Canadian tax dollars comes from the most vulnerable and, in fact, the poorest of our society. For example, people would probably be shocked to know that, with clawbacks and taxation, there can be folks earning less than \$40,000 a year but paying more than 70% of their dollars to clawbacks and income tax.

The government is taking this money from people who are struggling to get by every day, to get that last meal of the month. The government is taking millions of dollars. In fact, as I said, it was \$1 billion. The taxpayers do not get a choice as to whether they pay. Either people pay or they go to jail. The government took a billion dollars in hard-earned tax dollars, taken under a threat of force. What did the government do with it? It told the Canadian public that it would make the environment clean and more efficient. It said that it would make the economy more productive and get patents and intellectual property that would grow our economy. Nothing could be further from the truth of what actually happened.

In this cabal of individuals, we saw \$58 million given to 10 ineligible proposals. This means that these proposals did not fit the criteria. Once again, there is that billion dollars, which had rules attached to it. There was an agreement on how that money was going to be spent because it came from all those hard-working Canadian taxpayers. SDTC decided which people it was going to give the money to. What has been found so far is that it flagrantly disregarded those criteria with 10 proposals. There were \$58 million that went out the door for things that did not fit the criteria of making the economy cleaner, greener, more efficient or more productive.

The question of whom SDTC gave this \$58 million to needs to be asked, as well as why it did that. This is what I will talk about in the latter part of the story. There were also 186 cases in which board members held a conflict of interest. We will get back to that.

There was a group of individuals in charge of this billion dollars. As I said, it was to get a more efficient economy. It would make sense that it was not there to benefit this group of individuals. We do not need complex conflict of interest regulations or policies; if a

billion dollars is given to grow the economy, one would just assume that the money is not going back to the people who are deciding where that money is going.

I will say that again. One would presume that billion dollars would not be going back to the individuals who are deciding where the money is going. Obviously, they are not going to be objective, and this creates the opportunity for corruption. Clearly, we have seen some things Canadians would not be proud of. There was millions more given to parties that did not perform the contracts.

• (1810)

The way it works is that there are tranches of money that are given out. Usually, certainly in the private sector, if someone does not meet certain criteria, and “specific performance” is the legal term, then the rest of the money is not given to them. In the case in question, however, the money kept flowing and flowing. We have seen so far that millions of dollars of the billion-dollar pot was given out either where there were conflicts of interest or where contracts were clearly ineligible.

What is it that Conservatives asked for in the privilege motion? What did we possibly ask that is trampling the rights of the charter, interfering with a police investigation, or other red herrings the parliamentary clerk has said are not the case? In fact, the people through their representatives have the ultimate and unfettered right to ask for any documents they require. What is the awful step we have taken? We have just asked for documents. At the end of the day, we want more information to find out what went on so the RCMP can proceed with its investigation, unimpeded by the Liberal government.

The member for Winnipeg North might say that we should just let the RCMP decide, and that would be well and good if what I am going to describe had not happened, which is a series of different scandals that have occurred over the last nine years. This forms the context as to why Conservatives feel it is important that we help get the documents across the way to the RCMP.

We have to go back to December 2017, when, just two years after the Prime Minister was elected, Canada's Ethics Commissioner ruled that the Prime Minister had broken the conflict of interest rules by accepting vacations, gifts and flights in 2016. He had been elected less than a year before and had already started a pattern of corruption. It was the first time a prime minister had ever been found guilty of such a transgression.

There have been a number of things between then and now. Clam scam was in there as well, and a number of other scandals, but we will just jump forward and hit some of the highlights of the corruption.

In February 2019, former justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould accused the government of inappropriately pressuring her to help construction giant SNC-Lavalin avoid a corruption trial. Public works minister Jane Philpott also quit, citing loss of confidence in the Prime Minister. The Ethics Commissioner ruled that the Prime Minister and officials had breached ethics rules.

In 2020, there was one of the larger scandals, and there are quite a few. It was another nearly billion-dollar scandal, with the WE Charity. Of course, with the WE Charity, the government took the opportunity, just like with SDTC, of the cloak of COVID in order to promote its corrupt agenda, which included a \$912-million program that the Prime Minister promised as part of a \$9-billion COVID-19 financial aid program for post-secondary students.

Shortly after, the Liberal government announced it was awarding the sole-source contract to WE Charity, and it came to light that the Prime Minister's family had a connection there. Once again, underneath the cloak of COVID, the government took the opportunity to stuff the pockets of Liberal insiders full of hard-earned Canadian taxpayer dollars.

We go on with the scandals. We jump forward to a more recent one, the arrive scam scandal. It came out on February 12, 2024, with the Auditor General's report in which she said that there were so many dollars spent and the bookkeeping was so bad that it is impossible for anyone, including the Auditor General, to know exactly how much money was wasted on arrive scam.

• (1815)

Just so everyone remembers, ArriveCAN was an app that IT professionals said could have been designed and completed in a week-end for a quarter of a million dollars. In fact, because the bookkeeping was so bad, they could not even determine exactly how many resources were dedicated to the creation of the ArriveCAN app. Estimates put it at least \$60 million. It resulted in a single update sending 10,000 Canadians to quarantine despite doing everything right. It resulted in a massive scandal involving dozens of senior officials in the public service.

As I said, it should have cost a quarter of a million dollars. Instead, it ended up costing \$60 million. The app had numerous other issues. An interesting one, in terms of corruption, is that after so many self-inflicted issues with the Ethics Commissioner, the Liberals attempted to appoint the sister-in-law of the minister of public safety as the interim Ethics Commissioner.

I wonder what the Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners would look like. They would be sitting there having turkey, discussing how the grandkids are, saying they are great, and what about that little ethics violation we had there? We will be able to take care of that over a couple wings of turkey and pass the cranberries and eliminate the corruption, please.

Of course, in May 2022, the Ethics Commissioner opened up an investigation into the minister of international trade's conduct from spring 2020, involving approximately \$17,000 in a contract for media training given to a company co-founded by a Liberal strategist. The commissioner determined the minister broke the rules for refusing to recuse herself from the process that led to the decision to award the contract to a public relations firm due to her nearly 20-

Privilege

year friendship with the firm's co-founder. In that one, we had a Liberal consultant who was getting onto the payroll for media training for \$17,000. The Ethics Commissioner found that broke the rules, but that should be no surprise to anyone.

Here is an interesting one, given that the themes of today seem to involve foreign interference. I would remind the member from Winnipeg North about this. It became well known that the Communist regime in Beijing used donations to the Trudeau Foundation to attempt to influence the Prime Minister.

Information published by La Presse and The Globe and Mail raised even more concerns about the \$200,000 donation directed by Beijing. The foundation misled Canadians when it said the controversial donation made by two Chinese businessmen qualified as a Canadian donation. Testifying before the House of Commons ethics committee, Pascale Fournier said her predecessor, Morris Rosenberg, told the National Post in December 2016 that the foundation did not consider the donation to be foreign money because it was made by a company incorporated in Canada.

We see over and over again, from the sponsorship scandal on out, this culture of entitlement and of corruption, where when times are tough for Canadians, when that single mom is desperately working that extra overtime shift just to make sure she has enough money to pay for her son's hockey, or her daughter's soccer, the government members take the opportunity to stuff their jeans full of as much cash as they can. In this case, it was underneath the cloak of COVID.

One has to remember that, actually, if not for the Conservatives, during COVID, if we can believe this, the then finance minister, Bill Morneau, came to this place and tried to sneak in a piece of legislation. Because of COVID, we were moving quickly, and we were working largely in good faith and consensus. He tried to sneak in that the government could spend as much money as it wanted for whatever it wanted.

If not for our current leader of the official opposition, the then finance critic, that would have gone through. We are hearing so far, in these recent days, we have SDTC that is good for a billion dollars of corruption. We have the WE scandal that is a billion dollars worth of corruption. That is just what we have found so far, and there are more Auditor General reports to come.

Privilege

• (1820)

There has been, over the last week or two, a lot of use of the word “reflection”. The Prime Minister and the cabinet may be immune to this reflection. It appears that when he has important decisions, the Prime Minister’s max reflection time is about 18 hours or so. However, I would hope the Liberal members back there would have some reflection on what their government has become, including a leader who is clearly unpopular.

There is a reason they are cruising toward single digits in the polls. There is a reason that, when I walk and talk with my constituents, the number one question is: “When is the Prime Minister leaving, and can we help him pack his bags?” That is what I hear, and not just from Conservative voters but also from some folks who I know have never voted for me and are lifelong Liberals.

At a certain point in the life of a caucus, members have to stand up for their principles and beliefs. They have to decide if power is really worth it. Is power worth \$1 billion in corruption through SDTC? Is it worth having \$1 billion taken from hard-working Canadians and an attempt to have it given to WE Charity? Is it worth supporting a Prime Minister who is habitually convicted by the Ethics Commissioner for ethics violation? Is power really worth it?

We are asking for something entirely reasonable. We are asking for documents to be handed over to the RCMP. Some government offices have already complied, so we know it is possible. We are hoping that reflection comes to folks as they think about their hard-working constituents who, just like my constituents in the great riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, are working day and night to get by and are giving, sometimes, 60%, 70%, 80% of their paycheques to the government. We hope they will think, “This is not right, and we should have the RCMP.”

There is going to be some discussion about how much time this has taken in the House, but the debate could end right now. All the government has to do is deliver those documents so the RCMP can look into this and hopefully, and I might be dreaming too big here, Canadians could get some of that \$400 million back to help them pay for their kids’ hockey, afford their rent or afford a meal so they do not have to go to the food bank this week. The government should get that money back, get those documents and let us end this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member was having some flashbacks, but they were limited to 2015.

There is an interesting booklet, “The Evidence Compiled”, on Stephen Harper that includes abuses of power, scandals and corruption. The list is long. There are at least 70: “Senate Hush Money”, “Contempt of Parliament”, “Refusal to Share Budget Info”, “Cabinet Staffers...Immunity from Testimony”, “Falsify Reports and Documents”, “Repeated Duplicity in Afghan Detainees”, “F-35 Fighter Jets” scandal, “Blames Statistics Canada”, lying and all sorts of stuff, if members want to talk about abuse of power.

Anyway, that is not what today is about. Today is about having the Conservatives shut up and allow the debate to come to a conclu-

sion so we can actually comply with what the Speaker is suggesting: that the issue be handed over to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It is no surprise the Conservatives want to continue the filibuster, at a great expense. They are serving the Conservative Party as opposed to the interests of Canadians.

Why does the Conservative leader consistently do things against the interests of Canadians, even when he was parliamentary secretary to prime minister Stephen Harper when that prime minister was held in contempt? He does this all the time.

• (1825)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I am going to put aside the irony of the member who has the most words on record in this debate saying it is us filibustering.

This can be ended today. All the Liberals have to do is hand over the documents. This is absolutely in our rights; the law clerk referred to this. We can end this today if they just go out there and bring the documents in.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like the member. I have worked with him and enjoy his sense of humour.

As he knows, the NDP is supporting the motion. Whether we are talking about SDTC, WE Charity or SNC-Lavalin, NDP members believe we have been instrumental in getting to the bottom of Liberal corruption.

To the credit of the Liberal government, despite the fact that there are these scandals, it has allowed Parliament, because it is a minority Parliament, to get to the bottom of things. That was not the case, as the member well knows, during the Harper regime, when a Conservative majority steamrolled Parliament and parliamentary traditions and transparency.

I mention this because my colleague asked this question: Is power really worth it? Was power really worth it for the \$400-million ETS scam that we never got to the bottom of because the Conservatives refused to allow us to get any sort of transparency? Was power really worth it for the \$1 billion spent on the G8, another scandal the Harper regime shut down? Was power really worth it for the \$2.2 billion misspent on the Phoenix pay system? Was power really worth it for the \$3.1 billion lost in anti-terrorism funding?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I like the member as well, but it is not shocking that the NDP runs to the rescue of the Liberal government, as it has been propping up the government through scandal after scandal.

The New Democrats look the other way as corruption happens, and what do they get? They get fake promises of things that will not happen. They run interference for the Liberal government. They run outside and say the Liberals are terrible, but then at vote time the New Democrats are 100% in. They are for the Prime Minister and support him all the way—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South for laying out the various problems we have with the Liberal government and the ongoing culture of corruption.

He mentioned a number of the scandals before us, including the one we are dealing with, the green slush fund. Almost \$400 million has been stolen and misappropriated by Liberal insiders, even to the benefit of the environment minister.

When I was first elected 20 years ago, we were dealing with the ad scam. At \$40 million, it was a small thing compared to this scandal. It caused the defeat of the government of the day under Paul Martin and occurred under Jean Chrétien. There was also the billion-dollar boondoggle of the ineffective and useless long-gun registry. Let us not forget the lost \$2 billion spent on Human Resources Skills and Development Canada that nobody was ever able to find.

Does my colleague know why the Liberals are so corrupt so often?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I really do wonder what happens in a Liberal's life. I assume they start like everyone else. They want to accomplish good and want to make this country better. I do not know what happens to them in the process of being a Liberal that they start looking the other way when \$400 million goes out the door to ineligible companies with conflicts of interest, that they start looking the other way with billion-dollar WE scandals and that they start looking the other way with multiple ethics violations.

It is a time of reflection. There will soon be snow. Perhaps it is time for a walk. I will ask this again: Is power really worth it?

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I am back tonight to continue to raise the alarm on the impacts of the poisoned drug crisis on my community and, specifically tonight, on the federal funds that are needed to act. The reality is that, in my community, this crisis continues to have devastating impacts. This year alone, there were 72 more deaths from poisoned drugs. In fact, just in the period from October 11 to October 21, earlier this month,

Adjournment Proceedings

there were five more suspected poisoned drug deaths, each one a loved member of my community, such as Alby, who I spoke about in the House recently, or my friend Hudeyfa, who passed away earlier this year. Every single one was a preventable death.

In the midst of this crisis, the federal government has a program specifically for prevention, harm reduction and treatment initiatives. It is called the substance use and addictions program, or SUAP for short. It is a \$359-million program. There is good news for the government: We have two experienced, credible organizations who applied for this very fund from Waterloo region, Sanguen and Community Healthcaring.

Sanguen has even been funded by SUAP before. I was thrilled to join the then minister of mental health and addictions, our former colleague Carolyn Bennett, alongside my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga last year, to announce a previous extension of SUAP funding for Sanguen's community health van, yet this year, for both applications from Waterloo region, neither one was successful, meaning that zero SUAP dollars are going to Waterloo region.

Even if we received just the average across the country, in recent years program funding varied between \$104 million to \$145 million a year. If we were to average that out across the five ridings across Waterloo region, it would mean between \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

This is at a time when we need more of everything in the face of this poisoned drug crisis: more treatment, more mental health supports, more safe consumption sites, more safer supply and more harm reduction. Instead, both provincially and now federally as well, our community is actually getting less. This is why I met with the minister and her team when we began to hear news of these funding decisions back in July.

The best they can do is talk about a new fund being set up that non-profits and charities in my community, and others across the country, will not even be eligible for, with a hope that more money might get announced in the future. That means that organizations such as Sanguen and Community Healthcaring are going to have to begin to wind down programs by March 31 of next year if nothing more is done, at a time when we need them doing more.

The other reality, though, is that, beyond those two organizations, what we need is SUAP money, not words of aspiration, to be delivered to communities like mine.

Adjournment Proceedings

Will the minister commit to reviewing these SUAP decisions to ensure that hot spots such as Waterloo region are not overlooked?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the overdose crisis has impacted far too many lives across our country, affecting all Canadians. Each loss of life due to the dangerous, illegal, toxic drug supply is tragic, creating a heartbreaking reality for families, friends and communities throughout our nation. This pain ripples through society, leaving grieving families and communities struggling to heal.

The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about the devastating effects of substance use, particularly the ongoing overdose crisis. We are committed to taking decisive action to combat this crisis and save lives. Addressing the overdose crisis requires a comprehensive approach rooted in public health and public safety.

[Translation]

Since 2017, we have committed over \$1.2 billion to support access to evidence-based prevention, treatment and harm reduction services. We have also supported research and consolidated enforcement activities to combat the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. We have invested more than \$650 million in over 420 projects through Health Canada's substance use and addictions program, or SUAP. For example, more than \$15.5 million has been allocated to projects in my colleague's community of Kitchener—Waterloo. Across the country, community organizations are working tirelessly to reduce stigma and provide much-needed support to people who use substances.

In line with our ongoing commitment under budget 2023 to fight the overdose crisis, we have allocated \$144 million to fund more evidence-based community supports and health interventions following a national call for proposals through SUAP. The initiative generated a lot of interest. In all, close to 700 proposals were submitted and over \$2 billion in funding was requested. These proposals were carefully reviewed. The successful proponents were selected based on their ability to implement innovative, community-led projects that are viable and that could eventually be scaled up. The unprecedented number of applications received highlights the severity of the overdose crisis in communities across the country, and confirms that our work is far from done.

Together, we will continue to make the health and well-being of all Canadians a priority and to fight this crisis. Now, we are announcing \$150 million over three years as of 2024-25 to implement an emergency treatment fund for municipalities and indigenous communities. This fund will make it possible to quickly respond to urgent needs related to the overdose crisis, increase links to treatments and expand harm reduction services across Canada.

These investments reflect our commitment to making the health and well-being of all Canadians a priority. We will continue to work with our partners to effectively address this crisis.

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that my friend and colleague, the parliamentary secretary, spoke about past funding that has come to Waterloo region. However, I hope she and the minister can realize that the argument that we got a lot of applications and money ran out is not good enough.

First of all, the member is part of the government that set the total dollar amount, which obviously was not enough. Second, no one has done any thinking to say, wait a second, Waterloo region is a hot spot; we have had 72 people die in this community this year already. It is not okay in a community like mine to say we ran out of money.

Zero dollars for Waterloo region in the midst of this poisoned drug crisis is not okay. I have been trying to raise, for months now, a request for the government to look at hot spots such as Waterloo region and find the money to ensure that we are not left without any funding at all to stand up to this poison drug crisis.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, health care decisions should be made by experts. Funding decisions for that program are also made in partnership with provinces and territories, indigenous communities and people with lived and living experiences. They, not politicians, are the best placed to identify projects that should receive funding.

I know that the member had multiple meetings with the minister and the minister's office to discuss proposals from his region. We are happy to continue these discussions with him to make sure that he understands how funding is allocated to achieve the best results and to fund the best proposals.

[Translation]

I also want to point out the historic investment that we made in health care in 2023, recognizing that the provinces and territories are in the best position to invest in their health care priorities.

[English]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to follow up on a question from June 17. Admittedly, it was a very long time ago, but the nature of the world of adjournment proceeding questions is that sometimes they follow considerably after the original question was asked. An unhappy coincidence is that none of the issues that were raised on June 17 have been resolved.

This relates to training in federal penal institutions. I asked about non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs, as opposed to Red Seal apprenticeship programs, which I had asked about on another occasion. I asked about non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs, and why CORCAN does not provide them.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would like to expand on this question tonight and ask if the minister has read the Office of the Correctional Investigator Annual Report 2019-20. There are reports produced every year. I picked this one because it highlights points raised in five previous reports from the Office of the Correctional Investigator.

This report renewed calls from previous years to improve various aspects of correctional vocational training for inmates. There were five calls repeated from previous years, as I have indicated. Number one was repeated from the 2012-13 report and from the 2018-19 report. It was a call for more meaningful work opportunities, including increased availability of apprenticeships and work releases.

Number two, from the 2014-15 report, was a call to modernize CORCAN to retool the employment and employability program in demand areas, including significantly increasing Red Seal trades and apprenticeships, as well as sales, marketing and IT training.

Number three, from the 2015-16 report, was a repeated request for the development of a three-year action plan to meet demand for meaningful work, increase vocational training skills and increase participation in apprenticeship programs.

Number four, repeated from the 2016-17 report, was a request for the Minister of Public Safety to conduct a special study on inmate work and CORCAN. Finally, call number five was a repeat from the 2018-19 report to modernize the CORCAN manufacturing sector to ensure it aligns with current labour market trends.

Will the minister commit to modernizing CORCAN's employment and employability program, as well as CORCAN's manufacturing sector, to better provide inmates with current workplace skills to better reduce recidivism?

• (1840)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always look forward to my colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston's comments and interventions in the House. He always seems to elevate the level of debate and discussion.

I am thankful for the opportunity to rise in the House this evening to speak to the positive benefits offered by Correctional Service Canada's employment and employability program. Employment programs and services help build essential skills related to employment while connecting offenders with resources that assist them with finding community employment after release.

The benefits associated with correctional programming have long been demonstrated. In fact, going back a decade, research has noted a direct impact between employment and positive reintegration results upon release. We know that inmates who participate in CORCAN employment programs while incarcerated are more likely to be granted parole. Similarly, inmates who participate in CORCAN employment programs while incarcerated are more likely to get a job in the community. Also, offenders under community supervision who find employment in the community have reduced recidivism rates.

Without the holistic approach of the CORCAN offender employment and employability program, offering a diverse range of correctional interventions and services over the course of their sentence, offenders would not be as well positioned to find employment. As research has demonstrated, programming works to build safer communities for all Canadians to enjoy by providing them with the skills necessary to safely adapt to life upon release.

That is not the only benefit to Canadians. Additionally, community programming works to save Canadians money. The daily cost of maintaining an inmate in prison amounts to six figures annually. When an inmate can be safely returned to the community and find employment, they are working to financially support themselves, are required to pay taxes and are no longer incurring six figures to the Canadian public. That is why I am happy to note that there has been a year-over-year increase in opportunities for inmates to undertake CSC programming.

In fiscal year 2023-24, employment coordinators, including staff and contractors, directly assisted offenders under community supervision to obtain 2,441 community job placements. In 2023-24, on-the-job training opportunities were provided to 2,624 offenders, within one of CORCAN's five business lines. I am proud to note that a total of 22,300 vocational training certificates were earned by inmates of all backgrounds in 2023-24, representing an increase of 5,855 from the previous year.

Throughout the apprenticeship program, offenders have the opportunity to register, accumulate hours and take block training to become Red Seal journeymen in a specific trade. Since September 2020, a total of 201 offenders participated in apprenticeship programs, of whom 68 have completed certification, with many more continuing to work toward it.

It has been alleged that vocational certificates offered to inmates are meaningless participation awards. This is an unfair characterization considering the nature of Correctional Service Canada's agreements and partnerships for vocational training and employment services. For example, CSC forms partnerships directly with indigenous communities to further increase project availability, and they provide indigenous offenders with additional on-the-job training opportunities.

CSC works with provincial trade associations to track apprenticeship hours in a number of different trades. It also works directly with colleges and universities, as well as private industries that provide established curricula to provide vocational training to offenders. These curricula are also offered to Canadians coast to coast and in the ridings that we represent in a number of different trades and jobs. I am—

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I hope the parliamentary secretary will understand my point when I note that one of the numbers he cited makes the whole point here: 68 inmates have completed Red Seal certificates since 2021. That is in three years. That is 22 or 23 per year, which is not much in a country with thousands of inmates. It points to the problem that the reports I was citing get at. Our programs are vastly inadequate, whether in scope, which would be the problem going on here, or perhaps in direction.

I would make the suggestion that we could benefit from, perhaps more than anything else, looking at the successes that have occurred in other systems. There are many other penal systems, most of which attempt some form of retraining inmates for re-entry into the community. Some of them, no doubt, are worse than ours. Many, I suspect, are better. We can look at all of Europe, the Americans, the Australians and so on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, as stated, correctional interventions work to provide meaningful employment and employability program opportunities for offenders, increasing the likelihood of safe and successful reintegration. As part of this, CSC works with partners in the academic, private and not-for-profit sectors to access learning materials that mirror those available to the general public and to develop courses in line with community employment standards. The resulting vocational certificates are issued, in most cases, by the third party.

The collaboration between CSC and existing partners provides offenders with the support, referrals and services to address their employment needs and contributes to offenders' ability to find and maintain employment in the community. Research clearly demonstrates that offenders who are employed in the community are less likely to reoffend or return to federal custody. This benefits offenders by providing them with the means to support themselves and their families and by creating community support networks.

For Canadians, there are benefits in safer communities through less recidivism as well as by adding to the workforce availability and through the socio-economic benefits such as offenders' custody—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, we are back this evening to try to get to the truth behind why the Prime Minister, who once held NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, in such high esteem, has suddenly changed his tune. The Prime Minister had once said he thought NSICOP was well-suited to examine foreign interference in Canada's democracy and our democratic institutions, but that does not seem to be the case anymore. What was the reason for the change in the Prime Minister's glowing support for NSICOP? What brought about this change? Could it have been a release of an NSICOP report that shed some light on the willingness of some members of the Liberal Party to accept political and financial benefits from foreign sources, most notably from agents of the Chinese government?

I had asked the Prime Minister if he still felt that “Canadians need to have faith in their institutions and deserve answers and transparency”, his words; or, had his party's Beijing masters intervened and indicated a need for a reversal in that faith?

In the reply to my question the Minister of Public Safety had the audacity to suggest I was making things up. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not me saying these things. The minister notes that NSICOP, the Hogue commission and even national media have done some deep digging to get to the bottom of foreign interference. The truth is that the Liberal government does not want what has been uncovered to come to light and, perhaps most important, it does not want Canadians to know about it. After all, if everything is going so well in the government's eyes, why is it that the Canadian people are still in the dark about the so-called “11”? Why are these people not arrested and why are they not before a court?

There are laws in the Criminal Code that address treasonous acts. Subsection 46(2), paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) to be precise, sets out what constitutes the act of treason and it is quite clear. Subsection 46(2) states:

Every one commits treason who, in Canada,...

(c) conspires with any person to commit high treason or to do anything mentioned in paragraph (a);

(d) forms an intention to do anything that is high treason or that is mentioned in paragraph (a) and manifests that intention by an overt act; or

(e) conspires with any person to do anything mentioned in paragraph (b) or forms an intention to do anything mentioned in paragraph (b) and manifests that intention by an overt act.

Additionally, subsection 46(4) notes:

Where it is treason to conspire with any person, the act of conspiring is an overt act of treason.

Therefore, how is it that those unnamed 11 people are able to evade our laws, our courts and our justice system? Who are these special 11 people benefiting from the Liberal government's tacit if not implicit protection? Why does Canada even have treason laws if the government of the day decides by itself to suspend the use of these laws?

For some time now, Canada's democracy has been under attack by authoritarian regimes and chief among these is the People's Republic of China. I hosted a press conference earlier today where I was joined by three leading experts on foreign interference. We wanted to address a question that many Canadians have been asking: Who are the parliamentarians who have been identified in that confidential NSICOP report? How can Canada have an election if Canadians do not know whether the people they are voting for have their best interests at heart? Some observers may also wonder if the current government is serving another master.

Now, nearly every opposition party leader has called for release of the names of the parliamentarians identified in the NSICOP report, but the Liberal government still refuses to do so. Why is that? Why will the government not come clean to Canadians, and defend our democracy?

• (1850)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the vital, ongoing work that the Government of Canada is doing to protect Canada's democratic institutions.

As all members of the House are aware, threats to Canada's democracy do not affect only some Canadians; they affect all Canadians. This is why the enhancements to safeguard Canada's democratic systems and processes against foreign interference set out in Bill C-70 are supported across party lines. Indeed, the Government of Canada's ongoing work to protect Canada's electoral systems and democratic institutions includes efforts to maximize public transparency while protecting what and how government documents are shared. This is because the nature of some records, as well as how they are intended to be used, is fundamental to the functioning of our democratic system of government.

I would like to take this opportunity to make clear what cabinet confidences are and why they are treated so carefully by the government. In this way, any misunderstanding along these lines can be put to an end. Cabinet confidences are documents prepared for members of cabinet. They include memoranda to cabinet, discussion papers, records of cabinet deliberations or decisions, records of communications between ministers, records to brief ministers and draft legislation.

The Canadian government is a Westminster system of government and has been since Confederation. This means that the principle of keeping cabinet confidences secret is older than Canada itself. It originates from the United Kingdom's Westminster Parliament, which dates back many centuries. Cabinet confidences are central to how the Westminster system functions because of another foundational principle called "cabinet collective responsibility". The two principles complement each other. Members of cabinet consider all material at their disposal; they deliberate freely, and even disagree, around the cabinet table. Once the deliberations are finished, cabinet makes a collective decision, and all members are responsible for it.

Therefore, the secrecy of these deliberations and of the materials that are used to make cabinet decisions is paramount to the system functioning as designed. This has long been understood by successive Canadian governments, which have upheld the principle of cabinet confidences.

In addition to the government, the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that cabinet confidentiality is essential to good government. Protecting Canada's democracy also means protecting our democratic institutions and ensuring that they can function as intended. Protecting cabinet confidences is not a nefarious act; rather, it is a fulfillment of the government's duty to uphold the long-established principles of Canada's system of government.

Adjournment Proceedings

While fulfilling this duty, the Government of Canada continues to support the ongoing work of the public inquiry into foreign interference, which it has done since the inquiry was established last year. The set of cabinet confidences specified in the terms of reference for the commission were already provided during the commission's first phase of work, and those terms were developed and agreed to by all recognized parties in the House.

As it has done all along, the government will continue to provide thousands of classified documents to the commission and to make government witnesses available to answer the commission's questions. The Government of Canada looks forward to the commission's final report in December, and it will consider how its recommendations can further help to enhance Canada's measures against foreign interference in its electoral systems and its democratic institutions.

• (1855)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I am proud to wear my country's uniform, and I take my oath of allegiance to Canada seriously. Does the parliamentary secretary?

Let us be clear: If foreign interference had permeated elected officials in the U.S. Congress and Senate, there would be a special prosecutor appointed within minutes. However, the government is dragging its feet on getting to the bottom of this. Why is that? Reluctance is abetting. Why is the government protecting individuals who are out to harm our country, our democracy and the Canadian people?

I call upon the Liberal government to tell Canadians why. I for one am fed up with paying for it.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada continues to support the important work of the public inquiry into foreign interference, which it has done since the inquiry was established last year. The government continues to provide thousands of classified documents and to make government witnesses available to meet with the commission to answer its questions. While supporting the commission's work, the government will also continue its ongoing work to protect Canada's democratic institutions.

Protecting Canada's democracy is not a partisan activity. It requires constant vigilance and an ongoing effort to meet the ever-changing threats to our democratic systems and processes. The Government of Canada takes this duty seriously and welcomes the efforts of all parliamentarians who are committed to this important work.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, October 28, 2024

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	26989
Mr. Leslie	26989
Mr. Lamoureux	26992
Mr. Perron	26993
Ms. McPherson	26993
Mr. Calkins	26993
Mr. Lake	26994
Mr. Lamoureux	26996
Mr. Kmiec	26997
Ms. Chagger	26997
Mr. Kelly	26998
Mr. Aboultaif	26998
Mr. Lamoureux	27001
Mr. Perron	27001
Mr. Bachrach	27001
Mr. Morantz	27001
Mr. Lewis (Essex)	27002
Mr. Lamoureux	27005
Ms. Chabot	27005
Mr. Soroka	27005
Mr. Morrice	27005
Ms. Idlout	27006
Mrs. Gallant	27006
Mr. Lamoureux	27009
Mr. Trudel	27009
Mr. Kelly	27009
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	27010
Ms. Chagger	27010
Mr. Beaulieu	27010
Mr. Dalton	27010

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Parkinson's Disease

Mr. Longfield	27012
---------------------	-------

Remembrance Day

Mrs. Gray	27013
-----------------	-------

Oxi Day

Ms. Koutrakis	27013
---------------------	-------

New Quebec Whisky

Mr. Thériault	27013
---------------------	-------

King Charles III Coronation Medal

Mr. Dubourg	27013
-------------------	-------

The Economy

Mr. Hallan	27013
------------------	-------

Oxi Day

Ms. Lambropoulos	27014
------------------------	-------

Foreign Interference

Mr. Chiang	27014
------------------	-------

Finance

Mr. Lawrence	27014
--------------------	-------

Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Sheehan	27014
-------------------	-------

Government Priorities

Mr. Davidson	27015
--------------------	-------

Housing

Mr. Van Popta	27015
---------------------	-------

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Drouin	27015
------------------	-------

Bissell Centre

Mr. Desjarlais	27015
----------------------	-------

Latin American Heritage Month

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	27015
-----------------------------	-------

Housing

Mr. Aitchison	27016
---------------------	-------

Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Zuberi	27016
------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Housing

Mr. Scheer	27016
Mr. Fraser	27016
Mr. Scheer	27016
Mr. Fraser	27017
Mr. Scheer	27017
Mr. Fraser	27017
Mr. Berthold	27017
Ms. Freeland	27017
Mr. Berthold	27017
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	27017

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Therrien	27017
Mr. Miller	27017
Mr. Therrien	27017
Mr. Miller	27018

Health

Ms. Kwan	27018
Mr. Holland	27018
Ms. Blaney	27018
Ms. Hajdu	27018

The Economy	
Mr. Barlow	27018
Ms. Sudds	27018
Mr. Barlow	27018
Ms. Freeland	27019
Mr. Hallan	27019
Mr. Holland	27019
Mr. Hallan	27019
Mr. Holland	27019
Ms. Ferreri	27019
Ms. Gould	27019
Ms. Ferreri	27019
Ms. Gould	27019
Justice	
Mr. Thériault	27020
Mr. Holland	27020
Mr. Thériault	27020
Mr. Virani	27020
Mr. Thériault	27020
Mr. Holland	27020
The Economy	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	27020
Ms. Sudds	27020
Carbon Pricing	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	27020
Mr. Virani	27021
Mr. Ellis	27021
Mr. Fraser	27021
Taxation	
Mr. Boulerice	27021
Mr. Duclos	27021
Persons with Disabilities	
Ms. Zarrillo	27021
Mr. Fraser	27021
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Sorbara	27021
Mr. Virani	27022
Housing	
Mrs. Gray	27022
Mr. Fraser	27022
Mrs. Gray	27022
Mr. Fraser	27022
Mr. Jivani	27022
Mr. Fraser	27022
Mr. Jivani	27023
Ms. Freeland	27023
Public Safety	
Mr. Fortin	27023
Mr. LeBlanc	27023
Mr. Fortin	27023
Mr. LeBlanc	27023
Housing	
Mr. Gourde	27023

Ms. Martinez Ferrada	27023
Mr. Gourde	27024
Mr. Duclos	27024
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Paul-Hus	27024
Ms. Bibeau	27024
Women and Gender Equality	
Mrs. Chatel	27024
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	27024
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Chambers	27024
Ms. Bibeau	27024
Labour	
Mr. Seeback	27025
Mr. MacKinnon	27025
Mr. Seeback	27025
Mr. MacKinnon	27025
Democratic Institutions	
Ms. Dzerowicz	27025
Ms. Gould	27025
Telecommunications	
Mr. Masse	27025
Mr. Turnbull	27026
CBC/Radio-Canada	
Mr. Rayes	27026
Mr. Guilbeault	27026

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Samson	27026
Committees of the House	
Health	
Mr. Casey	27026
Petitions	
Old Age Security	
Mr. Beaulieu	27026
Public Safety	
Mr. Mazier	27026
Service Dogs for Veterans	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	27027
Sudan	
Mr. Green	27027
Opioids	
Mr. Bains	27027
Canada Council for the Arts	
Mr. Morrice	27027
Oil and Gas Industry	
Mr. Morrice	27027

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances	
Mr. Johns	27028
Ms. Zarrillo	27028
Old Age Security	
Ms. Larouche	27028
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux	27028

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	27028
Mr. Lamoureux	27028
Mr. Dalton	27029
Ms. Gladu	27029
Mr. Julian	27029
Mr. Morrice	27029
Mr. Green	27030

Points of Order

Alleged Unparliamentary Language

Mrs. Gray	27030
-----------------	-------

Privilege

Reference to Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Motion	27030
Mr. Tochor	27030
Ms. Chagger	27033
Mr. Boulerice	27033
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	27033
Mr. Mazier	27033
Mr. Lamoureux	27034
Mr. Liepert	27034
Mr. Lamoureux	27037
Mr. Green	27037

Mr. Kelly	27037
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	27037
Ms. Chagger	27037
Mr. McCauley	27038
Mr. Cooper	27038
Mr. Lamoureux	27040
Mr. Green	27040
Mrs. Gallant	27041
Mr. Boulerice	27041
Mr. Dalton	27041
Mr. Moore	27042
Mr. Lamoureux	27044
Mr. Cannings	27045
Mr. Scheer	27046
Mr. Scheer	27046
Mr. Lamoureux	27048
Mr. Simard	27048
Mr. Morrice	27049
Ms. Mathysen	27049
Ms. Gladu	27049
Mr. Lawrence	27049
Mr. Lamoureux	27052
Mr. Julian	27052
Mr. Bezan	27053

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Mental Health and Addictions

Mr. Morrice	27053
Mrs. Brière	27054

Correctional Service of Canada

Mr. Reid	27054
Mr. Kusmierczyk	27055

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Vuong	27056
Mr. Kusmierczyk	27057

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>